

Assertive Outreach for Suicide Prevention

Case for Support

Suicide is a difficult subject, for some even a difficult word to say.

Every year more than 4000 Canadians die by suicide, nearly 10 every single day. Suicide is one of the leading causes of premature death in Canada and the second leading cause of death amongst youth aged 15 to 24. While the causes of suicide may seem complex, what can be done to prevent suicide can feel even more daunting. How do we create a suicide-safer community? How do we provide care and direction for those in their darkest moments?

There are three tiers in a suicide care model: primary prevention, intervention and postvention. The Canadian Mental Health Association, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge Branch (C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R.) works actively in all three areas.

We work to provide education and training, helping to increase the knowledge and skills to promote mental health and resiliency.

Through our caregiver supports, we offer care for those who have been impacted by suicide and mental illnesses. Finally, we provide direct intervention: qualified mental health professionals who are able to recognize the potential signs of suicide and build plans to work to keep people safe.

Through this work, we found that more could be done and in partnership with a local suicide awareness initiative, Team55, the Assertive Outreach for Suicide Prevention (A.O.S.P.) program was created.



Mission/Vision/Values

Our branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association has a clear mission and vision. Our mission is to work in partnership with clients, families and the community. We provide best practice services through education, advocacy, therapeutic supports and assistance with social determinants, to improve mental health recovery and quality of life. We feel that through this our vision of mentally healthy people thriving in an inclusive society free from stigma is possible.

We are able to do this by building upon our three foundational pillars: Knowledge, Hope and Belonging. These pillars allow us to deliver client and family-centered care, ensuring that the services and support we provide are centred on those that need it. Ideally, in supporting youth to become more equipped, we focus most intently on the pillar of knowledge.



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge
Mental health for all

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History

C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. was established in April 2013 following the amalgamation of two local branches. The Canadian Mental Health Association Kawartha Lakes (C.M.H.A. K.L.) and Peterborough (C.M.H.A. P.T.B.O.) branches merged and created one new branch servicing the City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton County, Northumberland County, Peterborough County and the City of Peterborough.

The previously existing branches had established deep roots within their communities. The C.M.H.A. Victoria County Branch (later renamed Kawartha Lakes) was established in 1989 and had provided mental health support to anyone 18 and older in the then Victoria County. C.M.H.A. P.T.B.O. was established in 1959 and offered mental health support for anyone aged 16 to 65. Following the amalgamation, C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. found common ground supporting anyone 16 and older.

A large piece of the amalgamation was the Four County Crisis portfolio, consisting of a variety of services including a 24-hour crisis line, short-term case management, safe beds, the integrated outreach program and more. It was clear that the A.O.S.P. project would fit perfectly under this umbrella of services.

What We Have Done

As the result of a generous donation from Team55, the A.O.S.P. program commenced operations in partnership with the Peterborough Regional Health Centre (P.R.H.C.) in June 2016. The design was to provide a highly skilled mental health clinician, whose aim it was to follow up with individuals who have experienced a serious suicide attempt. Referrals for the program came directly from the P.R.H.C. psychiatric inpatient and medical units. Within the first year, this program provided direct care for 42 people, all of whom had a prior suicide attempt, all of whom were still alive following this intervention.

Recognising the success of the program in Peterborough, another community member sought to bring the position to the City of Kawartha Lakes. Through their sole donation, the A.O.S.P. worker position was expanded to Ross Memorial Hospital. This meant another highly qualified mental health clinician was brought on board to work with people who had experienced a serious suicide attempt. Now even more who had a prior suicide attempt could receive highly-skilled level mental health care and support.

Within a year, the program became even more dynamic. Through an additional community event, the Merrett Home Hardware Run for Mental Health, the A.O.S.P. program expanded to incorporate a Family Education and Support Worker. Recognising that suicide impacts not just the individual but the caregivers surrounding that person, the A.O.S.P. Family Education and Support Worker provides care to the caregiver, acting as a resource in these often confusing and frustrating times.



Neil Sanderson of Three Days Grace and Dave Pogue, founder of Team55, at the 2018 Friday Night Lights event supporting the A.O.S.P. program.

This program has allowed for a significant gap in the mental health system to be met, aiming to ensure that individuals are connected to the right service at the right time. It aims to help those who have attempted suicide to connect immediately to skilled, compassionate and qualified professionals, making ours a suicide-safer community.

Outcomes and Proof of Impact

From June 2016 to March 2018, more than 120 people have received direct support from the A.O.S.P. program and another 50 have received family care. Of those who were receiving direct support from the program, nearly one-third were aged 25 to 34.

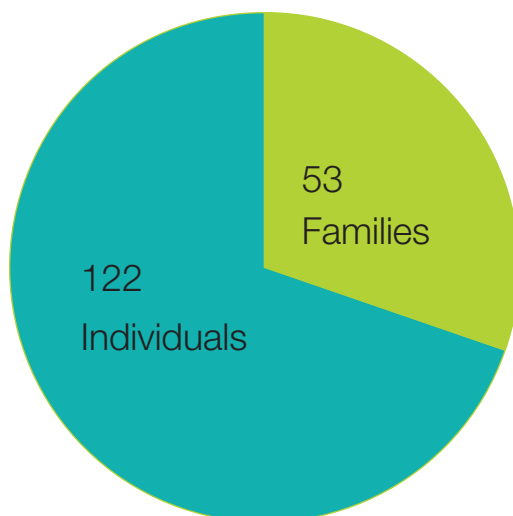
Through safety planning, we have worked with individuals to identify what will be helpful for them, what help they need to stay safe, and what can they do when they are having thoughts of suicide.

For some individuals this means going to hospital when they are having suicidal ideation or using their individual strategies to minimize the potential of suicidal ideation. Simply put, we are building skills to create safety and supporting individuals to find hope and reasons to live.

This safety plan provides a practical resource for individuals. It is often developed with the individual and their family together. That support network gives the individual a tailored plan, unique to their needs for when they are at their most vulnerable.

Most importantly, no individuals have died by suicide while receiving support from the A.O.S.P. program.

Families/individuals supported June 2016 to March 31, 2018



Testimonials

"I think this is an amazing program that has really helped me to get to know the real me and open up and speak about things that I have held in for a long time. It feels so good to be able to get everything out. I think they need more programs and people like this."

"When our son went into the hospital – our first concern was if he was going to survive, he was given a 50/50 odds of survival. Then we had to worry about if he would walk, talk, eat, recognize us etc., we also had the added burden of paralyzing fear. We are so afraid he may attempt suicide again. But when I became aware that I would now have access to community support from C.M.H.A. – my stress level reduced immeasurably. That way, I am now able to focus on my own mental health so that I can be a support for my son."

"We need to support this program. It is an urgent need in our community. I am glad this program is getting media attention so that those in the community in need know about it."

"It will save lives."

Financial Needs

The A.O.S.P. program has three full-time positions. Two Assertive Outreach for Suicide Prevention Workers and one Family Support and Education worker, working in partnership with the Peterborough Regional Health Centre and the Ross Memorial Hospital. The total annual operating cost of the program is \$294,000. While attempts have been made to obtain annualized funding with our provincial government, to date those attempts have been unsuccessful. We rely entirely on community and donor support to continue this service.

The annual costs break down as follows:

A.O.S.P. Worker	\$80, 000
Family Support and Education Worker	\$67, 000

Your donation could work to support:

One Individual	\$1350.00
One Caregiver	\$1130.00

How Can You Help?

Your donation to the A.O.S.P. program would go directly towards life saving measures supporting some of our most vulnerable populations and working towards keeping them alive. For this nominal amount, you could aid in saving someone's life. This program works, but it needs your help.

Donations can be made by completing the donation form online through Canada Helps or by printing a donation form and returning it to our administrative office.

For more information on giving to C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R., contact Jack Veitch, Manager of Community Engagement and Education at jveitch@cmhahkpr.ca or 705-748-6687 extension 1015.



Team55 hosts annual Friday Night Lights football events in support of the A.O.S.P. Program.

Donation Form

☐

I wish to donate to the Assertive Outreach Suicide Prevention program through Canadian Mental Health Association, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge.

Amount: \$ _____

Name: _____ Organization: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Postal: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Payable to: CMHA HKPR

Please forward to:

Jack Veitch

CMHA HKPR

415 Water Street Peterborough, Ontario K9H 3L9

Please note: Donations of \$20.00 or more will receive a charitable donation receipt for tax purposes.



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