

Youth Mental Health Education

Case for Support

“I want to help, but I don’t know what I’m actually supposed to do.”

This was the sentiment of a young student after learning about her friends’ struggles with mental health. It was a sentiment shared by many of her peers. Across all school boards, the theme remained the same: students wanted to help, but didn’t know how.

Every single year in Canada we experience approximately 4000 reported suicides. Ranging in age from as young as 10 to as old as 90, Canadians are dying by suicide. Even more startling are the rates of youth suicide. Suicide continues to be the second leading cause of death for youth aged 15 to 24. Mental illness rates continue to climb as well.

It is estimated that 10 to 20% of Canadian youth are living with a mental illness. Our branch alone supports approximately 900 youth every year. While we work to support those actively experiencing mental distress, it’s often those on the periphery that feel helpless.

“I want to help, I just don’t know how.”

For a young student desperately wanting to support their friend, this feeling can be devastating.

The good news is that there is an option; there is a way that any student can reach out and provide support to a peer experiencing mental distress, to learn to recognize the signs and have the confidence to direct that person to someone who can help. There is help available.

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

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge Branch 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.

Both 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 16 to 65. Following the amalgamation, C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. found a common ground supporting anyone 16 and older. One area of growth following this merger was in the delivering of Health Promotion and Education, now referred to as Community Engagement and Education.

What We Have Done

Mental Health First Aid (M.H.F.A.) is the help provided to a person developing a mental health concern or experiencing a mental health crisis. Just as physical first aid is administered to an injured person before medical treatment can be obtained, M.H.F.A. is given until appropriate treatment is found or until the crisis is resolved. The course is run across Canada by a variety of specially-trained mental health professionals.

In the autumn of 2017, a pilot project was coordinated with C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R., Trillium Lakelands District School Board (T.L.D.S.B.) and Fenelon Falls Secondary School (F.F.S.S.). This particular course was made possible thanks to a generous donation from a private community member. It was the wish of this donor to provide mental health and suicide intervention training for community members within the City of Kawartha Lakes. Due to current policies in place within the Ontario schoolboard system, mental health and suicide intervention courses such as Mental Health First Aid, safeTALK and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training had not been readily available to students.

Working within current policy provisions, a special framework was established. C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. Manager of Community Engagement and Education Jack Veitch, working in close partnership with the T.L.D.S.B.'s Mental Health Lead and F.F.S.S. Principal, formulated a guideline to deliver a Mental Health First Aid Basic Adult course to a select group of F.F.S.S. students.



Participant Selection Process

F.F.S.S. maintained the position that they hoped participants would reflect all levels of academic skill level. Participants would be selected and identified by key members of leadership within F.F.S.S., including principal, vice-principal, guidance and student success counsellors. Those individuals would then be screened by F.F.S.S. and offered the opportunity to participate within the course. Participation in these sessions was voluntary.

F.F.S.S. requested that participants reflect a variety of ages and academic levels with the hope of spreading new skills learned from the course diversely throughout the school. An understanding was reached that students from Grade 10, 11 and 12 would be eligible for the course, so long as they were adequately screened.

What We Have Done (cont.)

Parental Consent

In order to participate within the M.H.F.A. course, all participants were required to obtain parental consent. A standard permission form was sent home to potential participant's parents outlining the M.H.F.A. course, the trainer and other background information. Participants were required to have the form signed and returned to F.F.S.S. in order to participate.

Faculty within the Classroom

It was agreed that for each MHFA session held, a member of the FFSS faculty would remain in the room to act as additional support. If a student required personal support regarding subject matter or personal wellness, a faculty member would be able to provide that support privately and immediately. Faculty that attended sessions included:

- Principal
- Vice-Principal
- Student Success Teacher
- Teacher

Age Exception

As the standard participant age requirement for the M.H.F.A. Adult Basic program is 18 years old, special permissions were required from the Mental Health Commissions of Canada to deliver to Grade 10 and 11 students. Consent was requested and received from Denise Walgora, M.H.F.A. Training and Delivery Specialist with the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Ms. Walgora allowed participants under 18 to attend this particular course, so long as they were adequately screened.

Funding

The M.H.F.A. course operates at a standardized cost of \$175 per participant at the C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. branch. Thanks to a generous donation, this course was provided to the students at F.F.S.S. for no cost. This allowed students of all socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunity to participate.

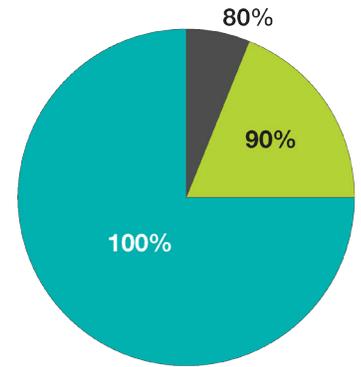
"I really enjoyed it. The material was extremely useful."

"It is a great course and I totally recommend to others. Very easy to understand and very good information."

"It was easy to understand and think everyone should take it."

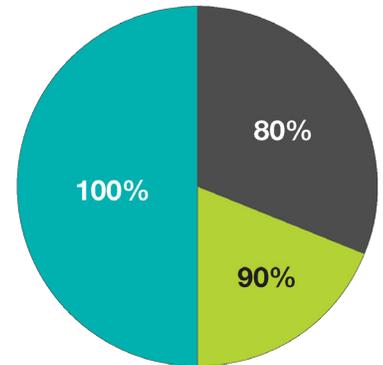
Outcomes and Proof of Impact

The feedback we received was outstanding. All participants believed the course was relevant to them.

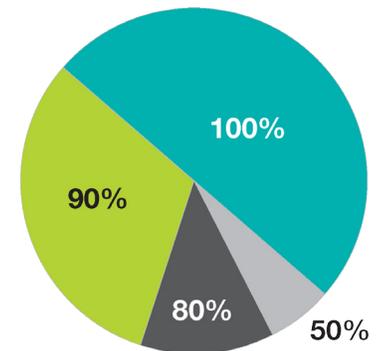


Ratings of course presentation

Students felt more confident to help a peer in distress and more likely to connect that person with the appropriate supports. While some students had some understanding surrounding mental health, much of the material was new to them. The majority found the information easy to understand, even though for many these were new ideas. All participants scored the course presentation an eight out of 10 or higher. In fact, 75% of participants gave the course presentation a perfect grade.



Ratings of relevancy.



Ratings of ease of understanding.

Participants made it clear they felt "it should be offered everywhere."

Another student in the pilot went on to comment, "I am looking forward to using the information I learned. I have a lot of friends who struggle with different issues and this course has given me more confidence in how to support them. Everyone should have this training".

The results were simple: students felt more confident to help one another. By building capacity in students, it built capacity in the school. When more people know how to help, more people can help.

Financial Needs

The unfortunate reality is that these courses cost money; the cost of materials, venue and facilitation all present a prospective barrier to providing students with these potentially life-saving skills. After accounting for all course expenses, a full M.H.F.A. course costs \$4375.00 to deliver to 25 students. In many cases we're able to work with participating organizations to reduce the cost to \$2500. That means that for just \$125 per student, you can be giving a person the skills to support a friend. Much like CPR/First Aid provides that potential to save someone in distress, M.H.F.A. provides the skills to recognize when someone may be unwell and how to bring that person to help as soon as possible.

Through donations, we are able to offer this course to even more students across more schools. This means that youth living in cities we support such as Haliburton, Cobourg, Lindsay, Peterborough and more will receive this training. Our goal is to have as many youth as possible equipped with these skills. With your donation, we can make that goal a reality.

How Can You Help?

Donations to C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R support us in continuing to work towards mental health for all in the communities we serve. Your donations are greatly appreciated, and will directly support mental health programs and services in our region.

Donations may be made to general funds, to specific programs, or in memory of a loved one. 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.



FFSS students donated \$600 to Youth Mental Health Education.

Donation Form

I wish to donate to Youth Mental Health Education 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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