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Denise Davy

PCMH
Reaches Out

Financial Sus-
tainability

PCMH Mem-
bers Get In-
volved

The Hamilton Spectator Mar 30, 2010 Denise Davy

It was a double whammy for funding-starved children's mental health agencies across Ontario last week. First, the Ontario budget revealed no new dollars would be available for children's mental health services, for the third year in a row. Now, non-unionized children's mental health agencies have learned they'll be among those who are hit by the new public sector salary freeze that came into effect March 24. No new dollars and no pay increases for staff will inevitably spell longer wait times for children, say agencies. With pay frozen, workers are attracted to higher-paid jobs elsewhere, so it's hard to have enough staff. You whittle away and whittle away at your budget to make it work but this is the year we don't know how we can do it," said Cindy I'Anson, executive director of Woodview Children's Centre, which has centres in Hamilton, Burlington and Brantford. Provincial funding freezes are so common in this sector that over the past 15 years, agencies have had less than an 8 per cent increase in their base funding, while the cost of living has risen about 36 per cent. Woodview relies on the province for about 90 per cent of its funding and will be looking at staff layoffs this year, and may be forced to close its Burlington residential program. This is the toughest year yet," said I'Anson, adding that waits for services are growing as a result. A poll by Children's Mental Health Ontario, which represents 85 accredited agencies, showed the lack of funds is taking a major toll on agencies. Forty-six per cent reported having to cut programs or lay off staff in the last year and almost one-third expect staff cuts by the end of this year. Lynwood Hall in Hamilton will be cutting staff hours to try to prevent cutting programs. It has also reduced its psychiatric consultations and cut the training budget. We are having to reduce our staffing in order to salvage our programs," said executive director Alex Thomson. Those are the kind of decisions we have to make week to week." Thomson said staff retention is a constant problem because staff leave for higher paid jobs in the school and hospital sector, which pay 20 to 30 per cent more. "We train them, then we lose them," said Thomson. At Charlton Hall, which runs day and residential treatment programs for children with severe mental health problems, news of the funding freeze was met with shock and disbelief. Executive director Deirdre Finlay said Charlton was forced to close a residential training program for kids in the past year. "We're just constantly shuffling the deck chairs," said Finlay, adding that recruitment of new staff has become more difficult. "We feel like the training ground for the health and education sector." Gordon Floyd, executive director of Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO), said three of its member agencies announced staff layoffs immediately following the budget and he predicts more will follow. This is the type of service that has to be delivered by people, so if you cut people, you're going to extend wait times," said Floyd. Agencies in the Hamilton-Niagara area already have the longest waits in the province, according to a poll by CMHO, which showed only 22 per cent of kids needing services got them within a month.

Parents for Children's Mental Health, a provincial advocacy and support group, sounded an alarm around suicide rates, saying without funding help, that rate will go up. We definitely believe that another year of no funding is only going to lead to further loss of life," said president Sarah Cannon, of St. Catharines.

A spokesperson from the Minister of Child and Youth Services could not be reached for comment

PCMH REACHES OUT TO NEW CANADIANS

Amanda a Humber College Student has been doing her work placement with PCMH and has been working on an Outreach Initiative for New Canadians. She has been doing some research, and development of possible initiatives that could be undertaken by PCMH to provide support and outreach to New Canadians, and Ethnically diverse communities. To assist, Halima has been working with Amanda in providing information, as well as connecting her with the families of her community. Amanda has been meeting with members of the Somali Women's Community to discuss their needs and see what types of support and outreach they feel would most benefit them. Halima has also linked Amanda with a contact from the Arab Community who was also interested in working with us on this initiative. program. Amanda had designed a presentation, and resource guide after working with a group of Somali women in connection with Halima. The presentation had been made recently to approximately 35 people with good response. From the presentation a Somali Support Group Leader was identified, and a PCMH Support Group for this network will be formed. Also, a new group of attendees to the conference was identified. There are plans to grow the program and train new Canadians to present to their own ethnic communities.

There are plans to conduct Focus Groups as well as future meetings to help further develop this initiative. It is hoped that at the end of the project, Amanda will have a complete initiative plan, and substantive information that can then be used in application for grant funding to develop and implement the program further.

From the Inside Workshop – Funding Initiative for the “From the Inside” Workshop has been approved, which means that further development, consultation, and evaluation of the program can be carried out as well as plans to deliver the workshop across the Province. It is hoped that with the Initiative Funding received, the From the Inside Workshop will be an eventual source of income for PCMH to help build financial sustainability.

Calendar Sales: Profit from calendar sales was approximately \$1000. As this was the first year of the campaign, it was launched on a small scale to evaluate its success. Now that a “prototype” is available and such positive feedback has been given, it is felt that this campaign will grow and become more profitable each year, as well as becoming an effective Advocacy Tool.

Conferences: The conference that was held in October did earn a revenue of approximately \$4000. It is suggested that one main conference, with a smaller fall conference be planned each year as both an advocacy/awareness/education/support tool and a revenue stream.

Fundraising: Fundraising is going to become an important component of PCMH’s financial sustainability in coming months/years. We hope to develop a fundraising development plan that is innovative, creative, and helps to both support awareness and the efforts of PCMH.

Sponsorship: All community leaders were supplied with a template letter to present to some local businesses in an effort to get some sponsorship from them to support their local support groups and the web-based support system. It was suggested that for a donation to PCMH of \$200 the local business would have their logo and contact information on the web-page advertising the local support group (PCMH website).

Sarah will also be creating a sponsorship package for larger corporations and distribute.

Grant Applications: PCMH has applied for a Healthy Communities Grant in Elgin County in partnership with the Elgin St Thomas Health Unit, Big Brother/Big Sisters Elgin County, East Elgin Secondary School and The Talbot Teen Centre. As the lead organization applying for the funding for The Child and Youth Mental Wellness Program Elgin County 45 new partnerships have been wrapped around PCMH in that community to move the project forward. We eagerly await response to the grant in the hopes of mobilizing this very motivated community.

Realtors Care Foundation another grant application being sent out by PCMH. If you know of any realtors that are willing to bring forth PCMH as a charity of choice in their community please let us know so that we can put forth a grant application in your community.

If you are aware of any funding opportunities please let us know!

**PARENTS FOR
CHILDREN'S
MENTAL HEALTH**

600 The East Mall, 3rd Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M9B 4B1

Phone: 416-220-0742

or

416-921-2109

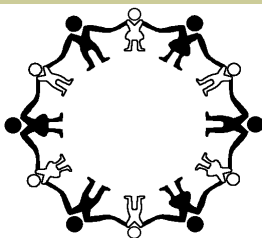
Fax: 416-921-7600

E-mail: admin@pcmh.ca

Website: www.pcmh.ca

**Life is about 10% how you
make it...**

And 90% how you take it.



Together we can make a difference

PCMH Members Get Involved

Quick Reference RE: Child and Youth Mental Health in Ontario

FACTS:

Suicide is the leading cause of non-accidental death in Ontario's youths aged 10 to 19

Mental illness is the strongest risk factor for youth suicide

About 654,000 youths in Ontario currently suffer from mental health disorders

Only 1 in 6 have access to or receive treatment

Existing mental health services are underfunded and under-resourced, and the new budget does nothing to address that

- Due to chronic underfunding and the continued neglect to properly resource Child and Youth Mental Health agencies – 66% of Ontario Child and Youth Mental Health Agencies are anticipating staff cut-backs – translating to approximately 2000 more children who will not have access to services
- Approximately 54% of agencies anticipate having to reduce services due to the continued lack of funding
- 15% to 21% of children in Ontario suffer from mental health issues (Source, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ontario, October 5, 2009)
- 75% of children with mental health disorders do not receive specialized treatment (Source, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ontario, October 5, 2009)
- Rate of inflation from 1992 to 2009 35.94% (Source, Bank of Canada)
- Increases in Core funding to Child and Youth Mental Health 1992 to 2009 7%
- Children's mental health needs are "the most neglected piece" of the Canadian health care system. (Source, Senator Michael Kirby, CMA Journal August 30, 2005)

Parents for Children's Mental Health is committed to being a collaborative partner in bringing the issues of children and youth mental health to the forefront in our Province.