



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Huron Perth
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
Huron Perth
La santé mentale pour tous

Our Vision: A society that values human dignity and enhances mental and emotional well being for all.

Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth

Services in Response to Ontario State of Emergency – COVID-19 March 19, 2020

In an effort to reduce the impact of COVID-19 CMHA Huron-Perth, in conjunction with other community organizations, is making some modifications to the provision of its services.

Most of CMHA HP staff work from a home-based office, and this long established practice will continue during the period of the emergency. Over Monday and Tuesday of this week our staff reached out to agency clients to determine their reaction to the increasing severity of government responses to the pandemic. A telephone staff meeting was held Wednesday (March 18, 2020) to determine how best to continue our services. For the most part clients indicated that they were managing well and were comfortable with telephone connections with our case managers. We were also made aware of a number of situations, due to unique client circumstances and rural geography, where telephone contact is not sufficient.

Our office location in Stratford where our reception function is located will continue to operate daily between 9 am and 5 pm (Monday to Friday). In addition to the HP Crisis Support Program, CMHA's after-hours response line continues to be available after hours and weekends (519 274 2848). Clients and office visitors will be encouraged to telephone rather than visit our office. Symptom screening will take place in Stratford office and other office locations when they are open. Business functions – rent collections, payments, and other financial functions will continue from the Stratford office.

If a case manager responds in person to a client situation, symptom screening will take place. The response by CMHA staff may not be the assigned case manager. It is recognized that each staff member has unique circumstances which may limit who may respond when a face to face contact is required. We need to anticipate that we may lose some of our staff due to isolation requirements, family situation, or illness symptoms.

Program Supervisors are authorized to approve special needs requirements for clients – food, medication, transportation and other needs based on requests from clients.

CMHA HP offers a number of clinics which allow clients to have contact with a case manager. These clinics run in our Stratford office every Wednesday 1 pm to 4 pm, Goderich office every Thursday 1 pm to 4 pm, Seaforth office 1st and 3rd Thursday 1 pm to 4 pm. Telephone contact will be encouraged at clinics, however, face to face meetings will be held in each of these three locations. Monthly clinics held in Listowel and Wingham are held in community locations which are now closed. Only telephone contact will be available.

Administrative support capacity in our Seaforth office will be restricted to allow this staff person to work from home. Regular presence and contact with house residents is important and will be accomplished by 1 to 2 hours working from this office location on alternating days.

James' Place (Safe Bed) is an important program which provides an alternative to hospital admission for many clients in acute stress. The program normally operates Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. In our effort to defer clients in mental health crisis coming to emergency departments and psychiatric units, CMHA HP may provide additional nights of support if we are able to maintain staff support. Program Supervisor, Sarah Puddicombe, will determine priority for admission to James' Place on nights outside of the regular schedule.

CMHA HP has direct responsibility for 6 residents at Caledonia Street in Stratford. This program, under Community Homes for Opportunity, must provide 24-hour care to residents. The schedule must be maintained and staff from other program areas may be assigned, if staff capacity is impacted by symptoms or isolation. Visiting support workers (PSWs) and residents are screened. Residents in both CHO programs are encouraged to remain close to home to avoid exposure. No outside social or recreational events are planned at this time.

In addition to Caledonia Street, CMHA HP has other residential homes which have residents with private rooms but shared common kitchens, living rooms etc. Isolation of residents may become necessary if a resident shows symptoms or there is a confirmed diagnosis.

CMHA HP sponsors 10 peer groups in Huron County which provide social and recreational opportunities. Although this social interaction is essential at this challenging time, we have suggested that groups not hold meetings for the rest of this month. Many of the groups use community locations which are not available at this time. We are looking at using our teleconference system to hold virtual meetings for members and other ways to maintain contact. Our Peer Support in Hospital staff person will restrict visits to the psychiatric unit based the advice of hospital staff. A planned trip to a maple syrup farm in April has unfortunately been postponed.

CMHA's participation in SIMPLE, a DBT group with the Stratford Family Health Team, will be postponed for 2 weeks. This will be evaluated after this time.

All CMHA office locations will increase cleaning schedules and sanitation.

New requests for service will continue to be taken, our intake staff will conduct interviews by telephone.

Additional updates and information will be provided as we continue to monitor the situation.

John Robertson
Executive Director