

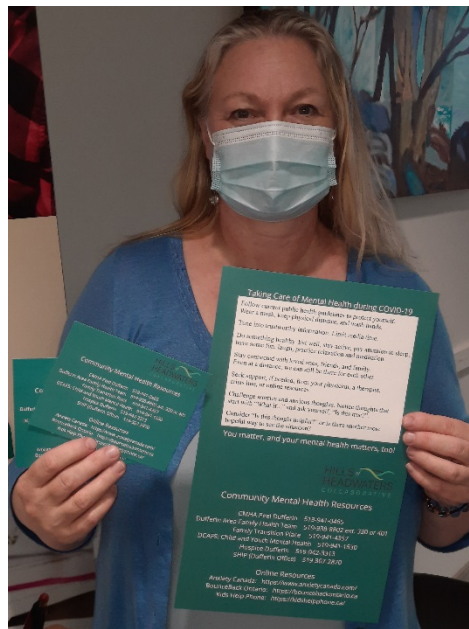
BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS

2021

HILLS OF HEADWATERS OHT MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS COMMUNITY RESPONSE WORKING GROUP

Award: Community Response to COVID-19

Achievement: Taking Care of Mental Health During Covid 19 in Dufferin-Caledon



Recognizing their community colleagues were facing significant stress and, in the case of one long term care residence, significant illness and loss as COVID-19 took hold in Ontario, a working group of the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative OHT responded to the need to support the community's mental health, especially that of frontline workers.

These efforts have involved significant collaborative engagement, creating a community response that has invited thinking creatively, responsively, and outside of the limits or mandate of any one program or agency. They have built upon an already existing spirit of collaboration among health and social services in Dufferin-Caledon.

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The initiatives they have supported include an on-line portal for front-line/essential workers to access timely counselling support; workshop webinars on managing empathic strain; a virtual remembrance/memorial event; sponsoring memberships to an online Psychological PPE resource; and developing a 'postcard'/posters (paper/virtual) with mental health tips and contact numbers.

Informal feedback indicates that workers who accessed counselling supports through the online booking portal valued the experience and felt supported in their mental health. Likewise, participant feedback comments reflected appreciation for various other initiatives.

The group's commitment to collaboratively caring for the mental health of the community during COVID-19 continues. Planning is underway for providing resource information and practical supports for health anxiety/mental health throughout the fall/winter months.

They will also respond to specific organizational needs for support and have the experience and a framework for doing so based on their shared efforts over the past 18+ months. Moreover, HOH OHT has forged new relationships and approaches to working together – and integrating care.

The group's efforts to work together to support the community allowed them to experience 'what is possible' when looking beyond program mandates, agency roles and limits – and mobilize existing resources with creativity to respond to a community need. They have also learned more about the possibilities of integrated care.

Key Facts:

- Focused on supporting the mental health of frontline colleagues, especially at long-term care homes
- Forged partnerships with other agencies to provide support
- Online portal for frontline workers to access counselling support and webinars on managing empathic strain
- Now have framework for responding to unexpected organizational needs, as well as experience