

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS

2024

4. Mental health and addictions

Dufferin Area Family Health Team and SHIP (Services and Housing in the Province)

“Teaming Up”: A Collaborative Initiative to Increase Access to Psychiatric Consultation for Dufferin-Caledon Patients



What ‘is possible’ – even in a small way - when mental health care needs are recognized and addressed with a collaborative spirit, innovation, and willingness to share resources within a community? The psychiatric consultation clinic initiative for Dufferin-Caledon patients – generously supported by Services and Housing in the Province (SHIP) and facilitated by the Dufferin Area Family Health Team (DAFHT) over this past year (2023-24) – is one example of such ‘possibility’. Indeed, this initiative demonstrates in a pragmatic way the impact of ‘teaming up’ to increase access, reduce barriers, and be responsive to patients, physicians, and a community. In particular, we commend SHIP for their commitment to community well-being and collaboration, as well as their willingness to ‘think beyond’ existing agency-specific programs/services in order to partner, participate, align, and invest resources in working

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together with primary care (DAFHT) to address a need for increased access to psychiatric consultation services in the Dufferin-Caledon. SHIP, a community-based mental health organization in the Peel-Dufferin region, has been a significant and genuine partner through committing resources to engage a SHIP-affiliated psychiatrist to also provide consultation services for DAFHT patients and their physicians. This initiative is a real example of interprofessional, inter-agency collaboration to creatively combine resources. As a result, there has been improved access and reduced barriers to care – and evidence of ‘what is possible’ when approaching challenges from a commitment to community. This has also resulted in 242 patients referred for psychiatric consultation by DAFHT affiliated physicians to this initiative – between April 2023 and March 2024. Although a need for additional psychiatry services in Dufferin-Caledon remains, increased access to psychiatric consults is helping some patients, particularly in reducing wait times and providing both direct and indirect consultation in the management of complex mental health issues.