

MEDIA RELEASE

New Year - New Services
Increased Support for Individuals Experiencing Mental Health Crises in
North Simcoe Muskoka Through Mobile Response Crisis Teams



The South Georgian Bay mobile response crisis team program was recognized with a provincial award in 2018 as an integrated and collaborative partnership that decriminalizes mental health and improves hospital and police efficiencies.

At the award ceremony in Toronto, left to right: Jill Tettmann, NSM LHIN CEO; Shannon Moore, Provincial Constable; Alice Afram, Mental Health Response Worker; Karen Viragh, Provincial Constable; Kirsten Parker, NSM LHIN Board Chair.

January 10, 2019 – Police service members across the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) are responding to an increased number of calls related to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. In many cases, those in crisis have no previous connection to the health care system, and the police officer is the first person the individual comes into contact with related to their mental health issue.

Although many police service members are trained in de-escalation, and mental health first aid, they are often unable to provide the level of care needed to support individuals in that moment, or on an ongoing basis. These interactions often result in hospitalization, violence, criminalization, and stigma.

In response to this challenge, the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN is announcing the launch of Mobile Response Crisis Teams in all five of the LHIN's sub-regions.

The Mobile Response Crisis Teams were created by community mental health agencies and police services throughout North Simcoe Muskoka. The teams take a unique approach to providing services in the community by physically partnering a community mental health crisis worker with a police officer.

The teams will meet individuals experiencing a mental health crisis in the community, provide a plan of care to support the individual in the moment, and connect them with mental health supports.

“Following the Mobile Response Crisis Team pilots in Couchiching, Barrie and area, South Georgian Bay, and North Simcoe, we observed a decrease in rates of police apprehension, hospital admission, and Emergency Department visits,” said Chris Brens, Mental Health and Addictions Lead at the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN. “By strengthening relationships between community mental health agencies and police services, we are able to improve quality and access to an appropriate level of care.”

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The North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) is one of 14 local organizations in Ontario that plan, coordinate and fund local health services and deliver high quality home and community care to patients and families. The North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN is committed to health improvement, innovation, and the establishment of collaborative partnerships to improve population health, patient experience and value for money across the health care system.