

CONNECTIONS

WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS



Alberta Regional Consortia



Calgary
Regional
Consortium

VOL. 2 • ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2018

NETWORKING FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS – WORKING TOGETHER ON WORKING TOGETHER

Working **together** is the goal! Take advantage of provincial networking days designed to provide you with opportunity to learn from one another, encounter new ideas and to connect in person with people you wouldn't have the chance to otherwise. Incredible work is happening around the province to support mentally healthy cultures in schools. Let's learn from one another, find ways to work together and build a strong web of support across the province for our students.



Keynote speaker for the event, Andrew Baxter MSW RSW has worked in school-based and community mental health for over 15 years. During his time with Alberta Health Services, he has provided direct treatment and consultation services for children and families in kindergarten through grade 12. Currently, Andrew chairs the School Based Mental Health Quality Improvement Committee and sits on the Child and Adolescent Addictions and Mental Health Standards Committee.

His main role with AHS is to serve as the Coordinator for the Mental Health Literacy Project which is currently rolling out in eight school boards across Alberta. His educational background is in psychology and social work.

Join us for one of three powerful days of collaboration about strategies you can use every day to support the mental health of all students. When you register, choose the stream that is right for you:

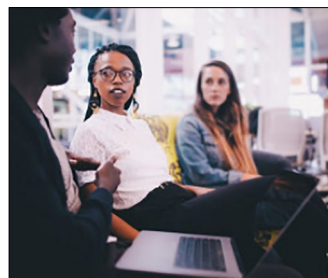
- Stream 1 – Leading a Mentally Healthy Culture
- Stream 2 – Every Student, Every Day: Strategies to Promote Mental Health

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Anyone who supports the mental health of children in schools
- Community based counselors and educational psychologists
- Educational assistants
- Family-school liaisons
- OT, PT, SLPs
- School counselors
- School administrators
- School nurses
- Student services team members
- Teachers

REGISTER TODAY

- March 9th in Calgary, AB <https://crcpd.ab.ca/program/2270>
- March 13th in Edmonton, AB <http://erlc.ca/programs/details.php?id=7139>
- April 11th in Lethbridge, AB <https://sapdc.ca/program/2295>



IDENTIFYING GAPS: PARTNER COLLABORATION IN AIRDRIE

WHERE TO START

Sometimes an organization can realize gaps exist but it takes collaboration between community partners to identify what the issues are and how they can be tackled together.

A few years ago, Rocky View Schools (RVS) and Alberta Health Services Cochrane Mental Health began a dialogue about the community supports available for youth with mental illnesses, as well as shortcomings in addictions supports for youth in Airdrie high schools.

Conversations like these began organically and outside any formal structure such as the RCSD (Regional Collaborative Service Delivery Model). The Bow River Primary Care Network was instrumental in facilitating the collaboration.

Through working with Alberta Health Services Cochrane Mental Health, RVS has been able to identify a gap in community supports for youth with mental illness, as well as a lack of addictions supports for youth in the high schools.

RECOGNIZING SOLUTIONS

Dealing with the lack of supports for youth experiencing mental illness and addiction required a two pronged solution.

RVS hired their own community support workers. Previously community support workers had been partially provided by AHS.

With the new bandwidth, AHS was able to redeploy their staff to provide addictions prevention and support in the three high schools in Airdrie.

CURRENT STATE

Youth are receiving more support in the community of Airdrie. Their ability to function socially, emotionally, and academically has been enhanced.

At-risk youth are now able to access addictions

support far more easily because the addictions workers are accessible on their regular visits to the schools. Transportation and fear of going to the mental health clinic have been removed as barriers.

Families who were unable to access services at the clinic are now able to have their child access services in the school. Because the students are also familiar with the addictions worker, they are now more willing to access services in the clinic.

RESULTS

Growing pains were definitely a part of the process. Initially, the high schools were unable to provide addictions supports until RVS was able to provide community supports. But real change comes through a difficult process.

Although coordinating funding and hiring was difficult, the obstacles were overcome through a willingness to modify budgets and staffing to address a shared concern.

Having RVS and Cochrane Mental Health change their staffing mixes in a coordinated way to meet the identified needs of the community is exciting for both organizations. The impact is already being recognized by both organizations.

MOVING FORWARD

RVS is looking to replicate the solution in two other urban centres within the district. They are also examining ways to remove identified barriers to service.

Utilizing the **Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools** Key Conditions Planning and Implementation Tool to find other opportunities for collaboration is one of RVS's goals moving forward. As part of the collaboration with AHS Cochrane Mental Health, and the Bow River Primary Care Network, RVS is also working on a collaborative approach to supporting students and families with complex situations.

*Interested in learning more?
Contact Chris Pawluk, Lead Psychologist
cpawluk@rockyview.ab.ca*



HOW TO GET STARTED:

- Look for groups that can facilitate conversations.
- Look for partners dealing with the same issues you are.
- Ask, "How can we tackle this together?"
- Accept that there will be growing pains.
- Utilize the **Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools** Key Conditions Planning and Implementation Tool.

WEBINAR: PRESENT FOR A PURPOSE: ENHANCING SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Attending school on a regular basis is critical to the development of children into contributing members of society. More than 100,000 students in Alberta are impacted by school absenteeism and are placed at significant risk of negative future outcomes, such as economic disadvantage and mental health challenges.

Recognizing the prevalence of absenteeism, Rocky View Schools launched the Attendance Innovation Campaign. The campaign is aimed at educating communities on the importance of attendance, empowering schools to utilize data to affect attendance and eliminating barriers to student attendance through a system of tiered interventions. During this webinar, the techniques, resources and preliminary results from the Attendance Innovation Campaign will be presented.

For Administrators: Feb 8th, 4:30 – 5:30 pm
For Teachers: April 10th, 4:30 – 5:30 pm
Cost: \$0

LINKS TO REGISTER

For Administrators:
<https://www.crcpd.ab.ca/register/2220>

For Teachers:
<https://www.crcpd.ab.ca/program/2221>

WEBINAR SERIES: THE EFFECTS OF EARLY EXPERIENCES ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT, LEARNING, AND HEALTH (REPEAT)

Converging lines of evidence from neuroscience, molecular biology, genetics and the social sciences tell us that early experiences are literally built into our brains and bodies to affect a lifetime of learning and health. The imprinting into our bodies can be positive or negative and can have profound implications for policies, programs and services supporting children and families. The two-part session will describe the principles of experience-based brain development and the implications for learning, social and health outcomes across our lifespan.

PART 1: HOW TO BUILD A BRAIN

In this session, you will learn how brains are built – what kind of experiences promote healthy brain

RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING WHEN STUDENTS NEED HELP: A SCHOOL'S ROLE IN KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE

Reporting suspected child abuse can be very stressful. Make the situation more manageable by:

- Knowing what signs to look for
- How to ask questions if needed
- What to expect when you report

Prolonged exposure to traumatic events such as abuse or neglect can negatively impact the developing brain. Recognizing and reporting a student's need for help are the first steps on their journey to safety, hope and healing. The video, conversation guide and suspect abuse card were collaboratively developed to build the confidence of all school staff to know what to do when child abuse is suspected.

For further information, please contact:
kcampbell@sheldonkennedycac.ca



<http://sheldonkennedycac.ca/suspectabuse/>

architecture, what kind of experiences derail it and how these experiences get “under our skins” to affect learning, health and social outcomes.

PART 2: LIFE AFTER CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Building on the previous session, the presentation will focus on the short- and long-term outcomes associated with toxic stress exposure and adverse childhood experiences, and provide perspective on building resilience in children and families.

When: April 18th and 25th, 4:30 – 5:30pm
Cost: \$0

LINK TO REGISTER

<https://www.crcpd.ab.ca/register/2219>

COLLABORATIVE CLINIC SUPPORT: BONNYVILLE

The Bonnyville Child & Adolescent Mental Health Clinic is a unique clinic that recognizes the gaps in access and continuity of care for youth with ADHD, anxiety and depression in the community.

The collaborative clinic was developed by local schools and healthcare providers to increase primary care capacity, improve collaboration amongst care providers and enhance community supports and services when developing treatment plans for the youth and their families.

The Alberta Health Services child therapists are an integral part of the team when offering therapy, mental health education, development of strategies and coordination of care. The school counsellors lead the school teams in ensuring the proper supports are in place to enhance their learning experience and lead them to academic success.

The Mental Health Navigator (MHN) works as the main contact for all team members. She coordinates the weekly clinic and navigates families and caregivers through the necessary services and resources. The MHN role also involves organizing learning opportunities for youth, families, school teams, the clinician team and community supports to increase knowledge and decrease stigma around mental illness and wellness. The MHN also works with local committees and groups to enhance and advocate for mental health supports, events and opportunities.

The Bonnyville Child & Adolescent Mental Health Clinic has been very effective in increasing communication and collaboration between caregivers. The teamwork has led to decreased wait times, increased continuity of care as well as youth and families who feel supported and empowered.

Increased collaboration and communication not only amongst the healthcare team, but between the school team and parents has been noticeable. In turn, a clearer understanding of the child's needs develops which improves each team member's ability



to execute their part in the treatment plan to support the clients and families.

Within the multidisciplinary clinic, the client's needs can be identified together, allowing for a decrease in the amount of time to assess and address those needs. Academic advancement is noticeable after six weeks in the clinic.

Without this structured approach, results from each individual discipline wouldn't be compiled for weeks or months.

When out-of-town specialized services are required for a child, the clinic has allowed local supports and services to be implemented to aid in the child's health and wellness in the interim. The parents can still be educated and supported, as well as offer interventions for the child.

The clinic is offered one day a week. How to include the school team in the collaborative approach without taking them out of their schools for long periods of time was difficult to determine. Phone communication and shared clinical rating scales to show the clients' progress are key tools.

School counsellors will attend appointments when necessary. Open communication between the MHN and school counsellors allows for inclusion of the school's interventions and assessments in the



Collaborative Clinic Support: Bonnyville (continued)

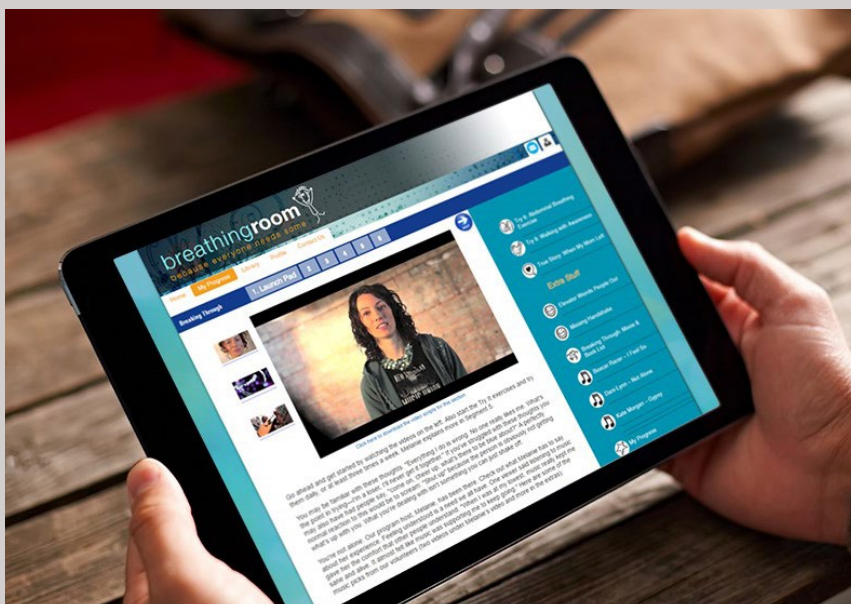
treatment planning and client follow-ups. The Child & Adolescent Mental Health clinic continues to work on the gaps in care identified by the clinic. Parent education and support is the main gap being addressed. Ideally there will be future parent education sessions within the school environment.

Community-wide sessions have had low attendance in the past. However, sessions in the school environment where parents may feel more comfortable and supported will be explored.

Bonnyville is also looking to expand this service model to schools in neighboring communities.

The main goal of this clinic was to help the families feel supported as they navigate the healthcare and school systems to get their children the help they need to be happy and successful. Even after only a few weeks of operation, the goal was met. Parents are relieved to hear that we are working together and many feel empowered to move forward though the uncertainty of what do next and where to go for help.

Interested in learning more? Contact Alena Thompson RN BScN, Mental Health Navigator
alena@bonnyvillepcn.ca



MENTAL HEALTH ONLINE: BREATHINGROOM™

CINIM, a Calgary based charity, has designed BreathingRoom™, an award-winning, e-mental health program for youth. BreathingRoom was clinically tested on adolescents and young adults (aged 13 to 24) and is proven to help reduce symptoms of anxiety, stress, and mild to moderate depression.

An innovative program that promotes self-care, BreathingRoom™ builds resilience and can be helpful for everyone, whether youth are

struggling or want to learn coping strategies to make their lives easier. Youth care professionals and educators value the program as a safe, effective, and accessible tool.

Available 24/7 (online or app), BreathingRoom™ reduces the barriers to youth getting the mental health support they need. Educational organizations are implementing the program in a variety of areas such as directly into their curricula, at orientation for new students and as a resource for wellness.

The Mental Health Commission recognizes BreathingRoom™ as the first e-health tool of its kind in Canada and stated that its impact is “transformational; it changed how youth see themselves and the world, what they do and how they feel, often achieving what medication or counseling alone did not.” Evidence of the effectiveness of the principles and strategies used in BreathingRoom™ is supported by a vast body of literature and three rigorous clinical trials conducted by CINIM. [Click here](#) for the publication. BreathingRoom™ is endorsed by Alberta Health Services.

The mobile app is available on Google Play or the App Store for only \$4.99.

www.cinim.org/breathingroom

For bulk purchases options, contact the BreathingRoom team at 403.220.0022 or

breathingroom@cinim.org