

AIRDRIE & AREA Mental Health Task Force

NEWS

For Immediate Release April 11, 2018

MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE LAUNCHED FOR AIRDRIE AND AREA CITIZENS

Airdrie, AB -- A multi-agency, citizen focused, Mental Health Task Force has begun work in the greater Airdrie and Area to determine the mental health needs of citizens in the community and to seek any potential opportunities for improvement within the local systems currently providing support and services.

The Airdrie and Area Mental Health Task Force is a joint, co-sponsored initiative of the Thumbs Up Foundation and the Airdrie & Area Health Co-op. The Task Force is comprised of representatives of 10 agencies with mandates related to mental health services for Airdrie and Area citizens. Through analysis of the work of existing mental health services, community input, and area-specific research, the Task Force will map the current state of support and services available and to find opportunities for improvement.

One in five Albertans experience an addiction or a mental illness, sometimes both. This can take a toll not only on the individual, but also on the broader community – family, friends, and colleagues at work and at school. *Alberta Mental Health Review; 2015*

Mental health issues will be among the leading causes of disability in Canada by 2030. *Canadian Institute for Health Information; 2011*

“Unfortunately we don’t know the exact state of the problems, challenges, and opportunities in our current system and mental health services for our families, friends, and neighbours who are affected by mental health,” said Pat Cashion, Chair, Airdrie and Area Mental Health Task Force. “We do know that all of us are somehow affected, and for those who are directly impacted, the path to support is not always clear. We hope to find much clearer paths for hope, help, and support for those in our community.”

The Task Force also intends to further the 2012 conclusions of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The report *Changing directions, changing lives: The mental health strategy for Canada said: We can defeat the stigma that has blighted people’s attitudes for far too long and has fed the discrimination that so many have endured. We must ensure that everyone who confronts a mental health problem or illness is able to count on the same support, treatment and services as anyone who is facing a physical health challenge.*

- More -

“We know mental health affects everyone in our community,” said Cashion. “To this end, we will be seeking input from everyone in the greater Airdrie area. Let’s open up the dialogue and, together, figure out a better way.”

David Swann, whose provincial task force produced the *Valuing Mental Health Report* in 2015, said: “I applaud this very creative and professional community-led approach from caregivers and volunteers working to integrate services and better focus on individuals and their families. Much to learn from this!”

Current local agencies represented at the Airdrie and Area Mental Health Task Force include:

Highland Primary Care Network
Rocky View School Division
Alberta Health Services
Thumbs Up Foundation
Airdrie RCMP
Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society
Airdrie Citizen at Large
Airdrie Citizen with Lived Experience
North Rocky View Community Links
Family Physician
Airdrie Psychiatrist
Dr. David Swann – Public Health Physician and Legislator
Airdrie Business Representative
City of Airdrie
Airdrie & Area Health Co-op
Children’s Services

Contact:
Mark Seland
403-660-5941
mark.a.seland@gmail.com