

## News release

# Champlain District Launches New Mental Health Crisis Line

*Trained Bilingual Volunteers Stand By to Help Residents in Need*

**Ottawa, Canada – July 29, 2003:** The Champlain District Mental Health Crisis Line Management Committee today announced the launch of its much anticipated Mental Health Crisis Line for their jurisdiction which includes the City of Ottawa, and the Counties of Renfrew, Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry, and Prescott-Russell.

The new service is two-tiered, with the crisis line acting as the first point of access to a broader range of mental health services if needed. This is supported in Ottawa and in each county by a team of mental health professionals which acts as the second tier of support. The crisis line provides toll-free phone access to professionally trained bilingual volunteers. Initially, the phone service is available 12 hours a day, seven days a week, from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Service will be extended to 24/7 in the fall of 2003.

Upon receiving a call, a volunteer assesses caller needs while providing information and emotional support. The volunteer works with the caller to lower risk levels and stabilize them. When necessary, volunteers can access mental health crisis professionals in each district community. Relying on information provided by tier one volunteers, these highly skilled mental health professionals can continue phone intervention and – in emergency situations – can even go directly to a caller's location. In situations where callers might be a danger to themselves or others, the local team can assist with the dispatch of emergency services.

Today's press conference also serves to launch a district-wide promotional campaign for the crisis line which includes public service announcements by local newspapers and radio stations as well as a postcard from the Champlain District Mental Health Crisis Line Management Committee. Each element of the campaign leverages the key message: "Before you do something you'll regret, try something you won't."

Funding for this new initiative is part of a strategic reinvestment from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and helps to support mental health reform and the restructuring of the provincial psychiatric hospital system. The approach taken by the Champlain District Mental Health Crisis Line Management Committee is seen as an excellent example of systems design and of providing locally-based support services.

"The Eves government is committed to a mental health system that ensures Ontarians have access to a broad range of services closer to home," says Health and Long-Term Care Minister Tony Clement. "This new crisis line provides crucial support for people living in the area who are experiencing a mental health crisis."

In Eastern Ontario, this service is seen as critical to helping keep people who are experiencing a mental health crisis out of hospital and to enable them to remain in their own community. The service is designed for people at least 16 years of age with a significant mental health problem. Quick intervention can help resolve many crisis situations with minimal disruption to an individual's daily life.

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"The crisis line is a collaborative effort amongst mental health service providers across the district. The challenge of providing this service cost-effectively is overcome through the agency partnership", says Kevin Barclay, Executive Director of the Champlain District Health Council. "The net result is a service that responds more often to more people which maximizes access for clients in need. The partnership also provides a foundation for future collaboration to address challenges none of us can address alone."

The crisis line is the result of much discussion among district members and two years of intensive work by a dedicated management committee. In addition to the obvious benefits of helping those in need and reducing crisis response times, the service hopes to ease the call load on 911 emergency call centers and diminish inappropriate usage of emergency medical services.

### **About the Champlain District Mental Health Crisis Line Management Committee**

This committee is composed of representatives from the organizations that received funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for crisis services:

- Pembroke General Hospital for Renfrew County,
- Montfort Hospital for the United Counties of Prescott-Russell,
- Cornwall General Hospital for the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry, and
- Sandy Hill Community Health Centre through The Ottawa Hospital for the City of Ottawa.

The committee has established a collaborative purchase of service arrangement with the Distress Centre of Ottawa & Region for the provision of the crisis telephone line service.

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