

## NEWS RELEASE

### **Mental Health and Police Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Partnership Expanding to Niagara Falls**

(St. Catharines, January 11, 2021) – The Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (MCRRT) program, will expand to the City of Niagara Falls and Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake following increased funding from Ontario Health West (formerly the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network).

This valuable crisis program is a partnership between Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Niagara Branch and the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS).

The NRPS and CMHA Niagara have worked closely to determine how and where the program will expand to have the greatest positive impact for Niagara residents based upon a statistical review and analysis of police calls for service in relation to people in crisis and mental health related incidents throughout the Region.

MCRRT has proven to be an effective approach to de-escalating crisis situations, immediately assessing individuals' mental health care needs, and connecting people with appropriate support services in the community. This co-response program with CMHA Niagara pairs a mental health professional with a specially-trained, uniformed officer to respond to 911 mental health calls.

The new annualized funding will allow for the expansion of MCRRT in Niagara by one team. Each MCRRT team includes three full time mental health workers to work 12 hour shifts with police responding to 911 calls.

Since 2015, MCRRT has responded to the growing number of mental health and addictions-related calls received by NRPS. MCRRT currently operates seven days a week, 12 hours per day in St. Catharines / Thorold district. The latest data shows that MCRRT made 868 face-to-face responses with 612 people last year alone.

Of all face-to-face interactions, 623 of these calls (72 per cent) were diverted from hospitals into appropriate community supports.

In fact, MCRRT diversions led to 688 connections to various mental health or addictions services. Additionally, 717 of these interactions (83 per cent) were de-escalated without the need for police apprehension.

The mental health worker and police officer work as a team to:

- Assess, triage, de-escalate and provide resources to individuals in a mental health or addictions-related crisis

- Divert individuals from unnecessary hospital emergency department visits and involvement with the justice system
- Mitigate strain on police resources
- Determine appropriate links to community services
- Improve individual and caregiver experiences
- Decrease stigma of individuals living with mental health and/or addictions issues
- Build and maintain effective partnerships between police services and health care agencies

Between 2015 and 2019, the MCRRT:

- Made 3,803 face-to-face interactions, serving 2,783 people
- Facilitated 2,986 connections to service
- Diverted 2,790 calls from hospital stays (73 per cent)
- De-escalated 3,194 calls without apprehension (84 per cent)

“Taking an evidence-informed approach, an expansion into our 2 District (Niagara Falls/Niagara on the Lake) was determined to be the most effective way to assist more members in our community to receive the support they need in a time of crisis,” said NRPS Chief of Police Bryan MacCulloch. “Following the successes that we have seen through this partnership with CMHA in St. Catharines / Thorold, we are enthusiastic to mirror the program to provide an informed, empathetic response at a time when people are most vulnerable.”

CMHA Niagara Executive Director Tara McKendrick said the organization is “thankful for the additional annualized funding provided by Ontario Health West, which will allow us to expand this proven program into more Niagara communities. With a mission to strengthen mental wellness in the Niagara community, this funding will help to ensure that residents are getting the response and care they need at difficult moments of their lives, and maximize the potential for positive outcomes through the combined skills of our mental health professionals and specially trained officers who comprise the MCCRT team.”

### **Resources Available:**

The following resources are available in Niagara region to support people with mental health concerns or are in crisis.

**Urgent Support Services:** Mental health counsellors provide same day service to individuals by exploring their immediate concerns and offering assistance with crisis management and problem solving. These services are available from 11:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Please call (905) 641-5222.

**COAST (Crisis Outreach and Support Team):** COAST is a 24/7 crisis outreach and intervention service offering immediate telephone counselling and on-site crisis outreach intervention as needed. Call 1-866-550-5205 ext.1 for 24/7 confidential support.

Mental Health and Addictions Access Line: Provides support, information, and referrals to over 100 services available in Niagara. Call 1-866-550-5205 ext. 2 for 24/7 confidential support.

211: The 2-1-1 information and referral helpline connects people to needed community, social, government and health services. Dial 2-1-1

Contact Niagara: Information and services in Niagara for local children and youth who have emotional, behavioural or developmental concerns. Call 905-684-3407 or 1-800-933-3617.

### **About Niagara Regional Police Service**

*Established Jan. 1, 1971, the Niagara Regional Police Service is the oldest regional police service in Ontario. In an area of 1,863 square kilometers, the Niagara Regional Police Service patrols one of Ontario's largest geographic regions. The Niagara Regional Police is comprised of highly-trained and motivated individuals dedicated to serving and protecting residents and visitors within the Regional Municipality of Niagara. In partnership with the community, it provides quality policing services, with integrity, diligence and sensitivity.*

### **About Canadian Mental Health Association, Niagara Branch**

*Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Niagara Branch is one of a network of over 135 branches that offer mental health services in communities across Canada. It was formed in 2001, as an amalgamation of CMHA St. Catharines and District Branch and CMHA Niagara South Branch. CMHA Niagara is recognized as a solid service provider and an effective contributor to the community mental health system. It has skilled staff and a good partnership of board, consumers, family members and professional service providers that ensures programs are current and as efficient and effective as possible.*

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Tara McKendrick, CMHA Niagara Executive Director is available for interview appointments on Tuesday, January 12: 9:00 a.m. -10:30 a.m.

To arrange an interview appointment contact:

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