

# **Mental Health Services Of Renfrew County To Launch New Program Supporting Women, Youth And LGBTQIA2S+ Individuals Who Have Experienced Gender-Based And Intimate Partner Violence**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Pembroke Regional Hospital is excited to share that its Mental Health Services team will be launching a new program aimed at supporting individuals who have experienced gender-based violence or intimate partner violence, with a focus on employment and financial empowerment.

Made possible through the investment of over one million dollars in special funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, this program will be delivered in partnership with the Phoenix Centre for Children and Families, Bernadette McCann House, the Youth Wellness Hub of Renfrew County, and the Robbie Dean Centre.

"We are deeply grateful for the Ontario government's support in the amount of \$1,116,655, which enables us to expand our services and provide critical resources to those affected by gender-based and intimate partner violence," said PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann. "This program is well aligned with our commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for all Renfrew County residents and our belief that, with the right support, people can heal and rebuild their lives."

The province's investment is part of Ontario's \$162 million agreement with the federal government to end gender-based violence and support victims through initiatives that educate and promote awareness, build safer, healthier communities and enhance well-being and economic opportunities for people and families.

The new program will be grounded in the recognition that addressing gender-based violence and intimate partner violence requires a multi-faceted approach that considers both the immediate need for safety and long-term solutions for empowerment. The project aims to break the cycle of violence by empowering individuals through financial autonomy, therapeutic support, and the development of skills necessary for achieving meaningful, healthy, and independent lives.

Key features of the program will include, but are not limited to:

- Supported training and work placements: Participants will have access to specialized training and supported work placement opportunities aimed at building skills and promoting long-term financial independence.
- Support/psycho-educational groups: Targeted group programming will address the specific needs of individuals impacted by gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.
- Capacity and knowledge building for Service Providers: Frontline workers will receive targeted education, including trauma-informed training, to enhance their ability to effectively support this population.

- Educational Workshops: Community workshops will focus on increasing awareness and understanding of gender-based and intimate partner violence, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

Mrs. Mersmann explained that, often in rural settings like Renfrew County, geographical isolation, limited access to services, and a potential lack of anonymity can further complicate the situation for those experiencing these situations, leaving them feeling trapped and without recourse.

Through its use of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, peer support, and targeted work placements, the program will equip individuals with the tools they need to build resilience, gainful employment, and independence. Dialectical Behavior Therapy is a specialized form of talk therapy that teaches skills like mindfulness, emotional regulation, and effective communication, all of which help to empower individuals to build a more balanced and fulfilling life.

By collaborating with community partners, this initiative will help create a pathway to healing and self-sufficiency for women, youth, and those in the LGBTQIA2S+ community in Renfrew County.

“This initiative is a testament to the power of collaboration,” said Mrs. Mersmann. “By working closely with our community partners, we are able to offer a more comprehensive and coordinated response - one that addresses not only the immediate safety needs of individuals, but also supports their long-term healing and independence.”

Partner involvement will ensure that participants receive wraparound care that is trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and tailored to their unique experiences. This collaborative model both strengthens the local support network and enhances the program’s ability to create lasting, positive change in the lives of those it serves.

“I’m grateful to those on our Mental Health team who had the vision and foresight to apply for this funding which will bring great benefit to some of our community’s more vulnerable residents,” Mrs. Mersmann said, adding that more details about program eligibility and access will be shared publicly as they become available.

**Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (MHSRC)** is a program administered by the Pembroke Regional Hospital offering a full range of public health services supporting mental wellness and recovery for individuals ages 16 years and older, living in Renfrew County, who are in distress or living with mental illness and/or addiction. To access these services and others, log on to [AccessMHA.ca](https://AccessMHA.ca) or call 1-833-527-8207.

For those in crisis, contact the 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line at 1-866-996-0991

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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