



Mental Health Commission of Canada Launches National Research Project to Find Sustainable Solutions for People With Mental Health Issues Who Are Homeless

Moncton demonstration site will investigate 'Housing First' approach with urban and rural citizens

MONCTON, November 23, 2009 – Moncton is one of five cities selected by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) for implementation of its ground-breaking national research project to find the best way to provide housing and services to people who are living with mental illness and homelessness. Using a 'Housing First' approach, the research project focuses on first providing people who are homeless with a place to live, and then the other assistance and services they require. The goal is to see if this approach is better than traditional 'care as usual'.

Up to 225 people who are homeless and living with a mental illness in Moncton and in two rural communities will be among the 2,285 participants in the national study. Of these, 125 local participants in the research group will be given a place to live and offered a range of health, housing and social support services over the course of the research study. These supports include help with maintaining a home, undertaking routine tasks like shopping or getting to a doctor's appointment, and securing opportunities for education, volunteering and employment. The rest of the participants will receive the services that are normally available in the study sites. Both groups will be compared to see which approach works best.

"This initiative is about respect and choices for people who cope on a daily basis with the twin devastations of mental illness and homelessness. Working in partnership with all our service providers and researchers, our goal is to contribute to solutions that will make it easier for people who are homeless to get adequate housing and services," said Claudette Bradshaw, Moncton Site Coordinator.

The At Home/Chez Soi project is the largest of its kind in Canada. The research will help make Canada a world leader in providing better services to people living with homelessness and mental illness. Each test site is focusing on a specific target population within the overall study group.

Moncton is one of Canada's fastest growing cities with a large migration of individuals from rural communities to the city; its project will examine the limitations of services for Anglophones and Francophones; Montreal will focus on outcomes related to social housing and helping people return to the workplace; Toronto will provide services for people from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds; in Winnipeg the needs of urban Aboriginal people will be highlighted, while Vancouver's project is aimed at people with addictions and substance abuse problems.

The MHCC is working closely with many partners on this project, including provincial and municipal levels of government, researchers, many local service providers and individuals who have experienced homelessness and mental illness. "This research initiative is meant to represent a significant step forward in understanding and reducing the incidence of homelessness in Canada," said the Honourable Michael Kirby, Chair of the MHCC.

Participants in Moncton will be housed at a number of different locations across the city, including apartments and shared accommodation, where they can stay for the duration of the project. Participants in the *Housing First* approach will have to pay a portion of their rent, will meet with program staff once a week, and will be encouraged to make use of the support services. Participants in the non-*Housing First* group will meet with an interviewer every three months.

Key partners in the Moncton demonstration project include: the Government of Canada, YMCA Moncton, the Greater Moncton Homeless Steering Committee, the Elizabeth Fry Society of New Brunswick, AIDS Moncton, Clinique Salvus, the John Howard Society, Karing Kitchen, the Salvation Army, Harvest House, Community Chaplaincy, Ray of Hope Needy Kitchen, Youth Quest, the Central United Church, Mobile 1 Community Services Inc., Centre du benevolat du Nouveau-Brunswick Inc., the United Way, Cara Helpline Inc., New Life Mission, Front commun pour la justice sociale, the Greater Moncton Association for Community Living, BUILT Network Moncton Inc., and Maison Nazareth.

“The study will produce evidence on whether providing a place, plus services, will better support reintegration into functional, meaningful living,” said Dr. Jayne Barker, Director, At Home/Chez Soi Project. “Another research question is cost. Will it cost less to house and provide services than it would if these marginalized individuals were in hospitals, prisons and shelters?” said Dr. Paula Goering, Research Lead, At Home/Chez Soi Project.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a non-profit organization created to focus national attention on mental health issues and to work to improve the health and social outcomes of people living with mental illness. In February 2008, the federal government allocated \$110 million to the MHCC to find ways to help the growing number of people who are homeless and have a mental illness. Updates on the study will be posted on the MHCC website at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca.