

April 5, 2023, Welland, ON

We could not be prouder to announce that we have received funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) for the *Social Prescribing for Better Mental Health Project*.

This is part of the recently announced funding of 28 Ontario-based, Community Health Centres, Indigenous Primary Healthcare Organizations, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics and Community-governed Family Health Teams to support the implementation of social prescribing initiatives and enhance community-based health and wellness promotion programs.

Social prescribing is about listening deeply, providing necessary supports, and empowering people to be co-creators in improving their own mental health and wellbeing, all while becoming more connected to their communities, said Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health at the announcement. As we work with provinces and territories to enhance our universal health care system and improve access to mental health and substance use supports, this funding will help enhance our capacity to improve mental health outcomes in communities across Ontario, particularly for populations that face barriers.

Referring to non-clinical programs and services to promote health and wellness, Social Prescribing is intended to complement clinical care, and aims to promote access to the arts, culture, nature, healthy food, housing, and social connections. It also seeks to address individuals' social needs through community partnerships that align with clients' interests and goals.

We know from our research that by supporting people to create social connections through social prescribing, we can help people improve their mental health and reduce the workload on primary care providers so they can see more patients, said Sarah Hobbs, CEO of the Alliance for Healthier Communities about the project. The positive impacts of social prescribing go well beyond each person's individual health and wellbeing, for entire communities and the healthcare system at a wider level.

This funding support is significant for our providers, our clients and the Francophone minority population who calls Niagara home. The *Social Prescribing for Better Mental Health Project* will allow us to expand our portfolio of activities and work more collaboratively with our community partners to provide people with the support they need to break free from the isolation exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with what they need to thrive.

For media inquiries or to learn more about the Social Prescription Program, contact Bianca Gagnon at 905-734-1141 ext. 2355.

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

The Alliance for Healthier Communities is the voice of a vibrant network of community-governed primary health care organizations that serve diverse communities across the province. These organizations share a commitment to advancing health equity through the delivery of comprehensive primary health care. <https://www.allianceon.org>