



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | December 12, 2016

New program to teach all North Shore youth mental health literacy

NORTH/WEST VANCOUVER — A new mental health education program will be introduced in North Shore schools this spring to educate and empower teens, promote positive mental health, and give them the confidence to seek help for themselves and/or others, if needed. This is the first time mental health literacy will be provided to all students as part of a coordinated public school program in North and West Vancouver.

“Schools play an important role in promoting mental health and supporting students to foster a positive self-image, and this program helps them do just that,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “We want to see these children become successful young adults and this happens when we start educating students and treating their mental health concerns as early as possible.”

The initiative is the culmination of a year of work by the North Shore Local Action Team of the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative (a partnership of Doctors of BC and the BC government). The team has been working to address the complex mental health needs for young people in the region. The result is a concrete plan to increase knowledge and understanding of mental health issues for local youth and educators – termed mental health literacy – by embedding mental health education in the Grade 9 program.

“Our children are growing up in a time where one in five are likely to develop some form of mental illness, and it is incredibly important to de-stigmatize the conversation with them about mental health, provide them with tools to keep themselves well, and equip them with knowledge of where to seek help if they or their friends begin to show first signs of mental illness,” said Jeremy Church, parent and District Principal with the North Vancouver School District, and Chair of the North Shore Local Action Team.

This past week more than 100 teachers and community partners came together to receive training from renowned mental health expert Dr. Stan Kutcher, who along with other experts, created the *Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide* being adopted by the two school districts. The guide and training offer strategies to support positive mental health, understand the teenage brain and its development, manage stress and anxiety, recognize signs and symptoms, and provide advice on how to seek help.

Also, for the first time, Dr. Kutcher will provide unique ‘Train-the-Trainer’ instruction. Members of other Local Action Teams and parents from the Institute of Families/FORCE will receive the training to facilitate spread through ongoing mental health workshops. This is one of many strategies of the 64 Local Action Teams of the Collaborative to enhance mental health literacy in partnership with students, staff and parents of their school districts.

"We are pleased to be working with our partners across the North Shore to address and support child and youth mental health," said Maureen Lee, District Principal of Student Support Services, West Vancouver Schools. "The Local Action Team's strategy of approaching mental health issues from a North Shore-wide perspective has brought many opportunities to coordinate service to school staff, parents, students and caregivers."

Jane Thornthwaite, Parliamentary Secretary for Child Mental Health and Anti-Bullying, and MLA for North Vancouver adds, “We know that youth often feel unable to speak about their mental health. If we can give kids the support they need now, they will gain the confidence they need to deal with similar issues in the future.”

In support of the training, the Local Action Team and School Districts also hosted an education session presented by Dr. Kutcher regarding teen mental health and illness for more than 200 parents and caregivers on December 6th, and an additional 75 professionals and community partners on December 7th.

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Interviews can be arranged with physician, parent, youth, and a Co-Chair from the North Shore Local Action Team, as well as School District personnel. Please contact:

Lisa Despins, Communications, Officer

Doctors of BC

778-828-9164

ldespins@doctorsofbc.ca

BACKGROUND

Mental Health & High School Curriculum Training and Events North/West Vancouver December 5-9, 2016

About the Training:

The Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide

The curriculum guide provides a complete set of educational tools to increase understanding of mental health and mental disorders among both students and teachers. The guide, developed in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, empowers teachers to share their knowledge with their students through curriculum delivered in a multiple module format. The program uses a variety of interactive sessions that help to promote dialogue among students, as well as with their teachers. Discussing mental health and mental illness in a supportive, familiar environment enables youth to feel safe, ask questions, gain knowledge, combat stigma and develop their own opinions of the world around them. (www.teenMentalHealth.org)

Event details:

Teacher and community partner training, Dec 5 – 9 (Mon-Fri)

(including four-day 'Train-the-Trainer' program) on the Mental Health & High School [Curriculum](#), developed by Dr. Stan Kutcher's team

Number of attendees: 100 (mainly high school teachers, counsellors, and administrators, and 15-20 from Squamish Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Vancouver Coastal Health, The FORCE, Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), North Shore Multicultural Society, members of other LATs, and others)

Evening for Families and Caregivers Tues, Dec 6th

Discussion and sharing about the new mental health literacy curriculum.

Number of attendees: 200 (family members from across the North Shore communities, parents from the Local Action Team, parent members of the FORCE, from local schools etc.)

Evening for Professionals/Service Providers Weds, Dec 7th

Discussion and sharing about the new mental health literacy curriculum

Number of attendees: 75 (physicians (North Shore Division of Family Practice), SD staff, LAT members including RCMP, VCH, MCFD, CMHA, NS Multicultural Society, First Nations, youth workers, etc.)

Who we are:**North Shore Local Action Team**

The North Shore Local Action Team is one of **64** working in communities across the province as part of the [Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use \(CYMHSU\) Collaborative](#). The LAT brings together more than 20 members representing youth and family, physicians, First Nations, police, Ministry of Child and Family Development, Vancouver Coastal Health, the FORCE, and others, with the goal of increasing timely access to services and supports in the community. Increasing mental health literacy in schools is a key objective of many of the Local Action Teams. The Collaborative is funded in partnership by Doctors of BC and the BC government. The North Shore Division of Family Practice holds the contract for the Local Action Team.

Across BC, 64 Local Action Teams of the CYMHSU Collaborative are working with their schools and school districts on issues that the students and staff have identified as high priority. The schools and school districts ensure all health literacy events and programs are aligned with BC's 'Building Student Success' new curriculum.

North Shore Division of Family Practice

Divisions of Family Practice are an innovation in health care in BC, designed to support and advocate for family physicians, increase primary health care capacity and improve patient health outcomes. The North Shore Division is a non-profit society whose members are family physicians on the North Shore.

North Vancouver School District

The North Vancouver School District provides world-class instruction and a rich diversity of engaging programs to more than 15,700 students across 25 elementary schools and seven secondary schools. Roughly 2,000 professional and dedicated staff members inspire success for every student and bring communities together to learn, share and grow. Learn more at: www.sd44.ca

West Vancouver Schools

West Vancouver Schools (WVS) is a community of 7,300 learners from West Vancouver, Bowen Island, Lions Bay and beyond. WVS is a top performing public school district with a strong tradition of academic excellence, comprised of 14 elementary and 3 secondary institutions. In each school, we celebrate the potential of every student, and work to equip them with the conscience and character to persevere in our complex and fast-changing world. Learn more at www.westvancouver.schools.ca

Institute of Families/FORCE

The F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Health is a provincial organization that supports and empowers families and works collaboratively with professionals and systems in understanding and meeting the mental health needs of children, youth and families. Children, youth and families are actively involved in all aspects of the Collaborative, primarily through The FORCE Society.