



Mental health disorders are the leading health issue for children and youth, yet have the least treatment services available compared to other health challenges like cancer or diabetes.

1 in 5 children and youth will be affected by mental illness – that's 4,000 young people living in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows that could need the Youth Wellness Centre to turn to.

### Youth Wellness Centre Description

The Youth Wellness Centre helps children and youth aged 8 – 24 years and their supporting families' access mental health, addiction programs and services.

The Youth Wellness Centre was developed by members of the community, family physicians, specialists, youth, parents, and representatives from the City of Maple Ridge, Ridge Meadows RCMP, School District 42, Ministry of Children and Family Development and social service agencies.

The need was to find a way to help children, youth with mild to moderate mental health and addiction challenges find appropriate programs and services and either create or recruit services that were missing in the community.

The entire community shared great concern for the rise in the number of children, youth and families needing services and struggling to access them.

The community was feeling helpless seeing youth slip through the cracks. And seeing more and more youth turn to drugs or alcohol to numb their pain, calm their anxiety and fears -- with sliding into addiction. Prevention – became a strong community motivator.

Youth, families, guardians, caring friends didn't know where to go or who to talk to about their challenges. Even professionals were at a loss where to direct their patients without long waitlists or sending them to other communities for support.

Through the passion and determination of the community, the Youth Wellness Centre vision came alive as a "one-stop-shop" for children, youth and their families requiring mental health and addiction support.

The Centre encourages health and wellness in many ways from education, group therapy, peer-to-peer support, child and youth psychiatry, clinical counselling, sexual health, a medical clinic with access to a family physician, plus other youth services such as social activities and recreation.

The Centre's vision is to be a leader in breaking down the stigma of mental health and addiction – creating service and support and reaching out to children, youth and families who are embarrassed, overwhelmed and ashamed to receive help before it is too late.

### How Does the Centre Work?

Through in-kind support from the City of Maple Ridge, space within the Greg Moore Youth Centre has given a roof and provided a youth-friendly space for the Youth Wellness Centre.





At the Centre resides a youth advocate, a child and youth psychiatrist, counsellors, a sexual health clinic, and a primary care medical clinic with education and therapy session space.

The glue of the Centre starts with the youth advocate who is often the first point of contact and who has a vast knowledge of the mental health and substance use programs and services in and out of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows as well as who is eligible for various services and how to access them.

A youth can walk into the Centre through a private door, or out of curiosity through the Greg Moore Youth Centre – this youth may or may not have even told their parents or peers about their mental health or addiction concerns.

The youth advocate is a dedicated point person for children and youth and connects them with resources and services for support. It may be an appointment with a family physician who may then connect the youth to a psychiatrist for an assessment or recommend clinical counselling. It may be sharing some useful apps or websites that the youth can access for information 24 hours a day/7 days a week. It may be a referral to the sexual health clinic for information on birth control. It may be joining them in an education program on anxiety. It may be connecting them with a peer mentor with lived experience – someone they can relate to. It may be offering help to their parents or guardians through support groups. It may be directing them to other specialty services in the community such as addiction clinical counselling.

The advocate starts to build a trusting relationship, books follow-up visits and utilizes technology to stay connected with the youth during their journey. The advocate also maintains relations with the agencies youth are recommended to. The advocate plays a critical role in ongoing communications.

A family physician or pediatrician working in the community may see a child, youth or family who they feel could benefit from a psychiatric assessment and will refer the child or youth to the Youth Wellness Centre's child and youth psychiatrist. After the assessment, the psychiatrist may refer the youth and/or supporting family to the advocate. School counsellors, the RCMP and other service agencies may also make child or youth referrals to the Youth Wellness Centre.

The child and youth psychiatrist works closely with the youth advocate, physicians and services to provide the best care team possible for the children, youth and their families.

### Key Program Objectives

There are a number of important program objectives for the Youth Wellness Centre:

- Eliminate the barriers and confusion around mental health and addiction services for children, youth and their supporting families
- Prevent life-long mental illness, addiction and self-harm
- Prevent suicide and death
- Work in partnership with the entire community to provide the best mental health and addiction support





- Provide a youth advocate to help and guide children, youth and their supporting family from beginning to end
- To provide a welcoming, youth-friendly and private environment that encourages sharing
- Bring help under “one roof” at the Centre for the child, youth and supporting family, versus the child and supporting family attempting to locate their own help
- Train and equip professionals so children, youth and their families can receive the best support through the creation of a “Centre of Excellence”

### Why is this Centre Needed?

Children and teenagers are constantly changing. For many kids, these sudden changes aren't just a part of growing up – they're symptoms of a mental illness.

Mental illness is the term used to refer to a variety of mental disorders that can be diagnosed. Mental disorders are health conditions that alter thinking, mood, or behaviour and/or impaired functioning.

Some common mental illnesses that affect children and teens include anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, depression, psychosis, bipolar, eating disorders and schizophrenia.

***Unfortunately, only 1 in 5 kids who need mental health treatment, get treatment.***

There are many reasons for this. Young people are afraid to tell their peers or the trusted adults in their lives. Parents and caregivers can have mixed feelings about getting their children help for their mental illness. Mental illnesses can be frightening, and many people worry what others will think if they talk about their experiences.

***And if they wanted to get help, they have no idea where to go for help.***

Studies have found that 50–75% of all individuals with a mental disorder were first diagnosed in childhood or adolescence, which suggests that the early years are the best time to address mental health problems and stop poor life course outcomes.

The good news is that mental illnesses can be treated successfully, and early treatment can help reduce the impact of a mental illness on a young person's life.

Medical treatment, psychiatric assessment, counseling, therapy, peer support, medication, group support, connection to service and education services can all help -- but only if they are available and accessible.

***Many children, youth and their families faced ongoing roadblocks to finding help.***

Before the Youth Wellness Centre existed, young people and their families had no idea where to start seeking help.

If they were brave enough to approach their family physician, pediatrician or school counsellor – their health care professionals also felt the same challenges.





If local services were known and available, it was common to have long waitlists, or help was only available for the “most severe” mental illnesses.

If they were resourceful enough, leaving the community to find a service could be an option, but often not practical due to transportation or taking time off work or school.

And even if a young person who felt they had a caring person to turn to, often didn't because they are scared or felt ashamed.

On top of all these road blocks to finding mental health services, a young person in crisis or their caring family – simply cannot wait.

Waiting could mean diving deeper into depression or your mental illness, choosing to use drugs to numb your pain, self-harm, contemplating suicide, not being able to function at school, your job or life – these are all realities.

***The chances of you being able to accept help after a long period of time if it becomes available – becomes unlikely. And potentially too late.***

The Youth Wellness Centre's vision of a “one-stop-shop” and easy access to help for children, youth and their families understands that waiting is not an option.

When a young person is hurting, confused and in pain – they need help and care now.

Children, youth and their families need somewhere to go quickly, they need to count on having someone listen to and understand their fears and link them to help, and stay in contact with them.

They need a “Centre of Excellence” that promotes youth wellness, brings child and youth psychiatry to our community, attracts family physicians, focuses on prevention, offers counselling specialties combined with education and support with other youth caring organizations to give young people the best chance in their lives towards mental wellness.

The Youth Wellness Centre model has proven the following success to date:

- 10 month begin and monitor pilot learnings with community fundraised dollars
- This team based care model proves child and youth psychiatry 400% more efficient than in a traditional setting which results in seeing more patients providing better quality care
- Only 1 in 4 patients (25%) are being recommended medication versus 75% who reach hospital or facility care
- 65% of the youth are being referred to the Advocate
- Average wait time for child and youth psychiatric assessment is 6 weeks versus 6 months in more traditional settings
- Less than 5% of the youth seen have needed to be referred to the hospital.

### Who are the Children and Youth in Need?





The Youth Wellness Centre helps all children and youth in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows from 8 – 24 years of age who are experiencing mild to moderate forms of mental health and substance use.

With 22,000 children and youth living in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows and growing, approximately 1 out of 5 of these kids will experience mental illness and addiction challenges. That is over 4,000 young people. And sadly, suicide often goes alongside a mental illness.

In BC, suicide accounts for 24% of all deaths and continues to be the second leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year-olds, after motor vehicle accidents.

A BC survey found that in one year, 5% of youth had made a suicide attempt and 12% seriously thought about suicide. Suicide and attempted suicide has increased 300% in the last 30 years. For every completed suicide there are an estimated 30 to 50 attempts. Only 33 to 50 % were identified by their doctors as having a mental illness at the time of their death and only 15 percent of suicide victims were in treatment at the time of their death.

Mental illness can affect kids and teens from all family types and cultural backgrounds. Many remain hiding their illness due to fear, embarrassment and humiliation.

Some kids can be at higher risk for mental illness and may also face additional barriers to getting help. This could be youth with a family history of mental illness, new immigrants, aboriginal youth, youth who've gone through a major life change, trauma, abuse, or gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender youth.

Research indicates that approximately 5% of male youth and 12% of female youth aged 12 to 19 have experienced a major depressive episode. Once depression is recognized, help can make a difference for 80% of the people who are affected, allowing them to get back to functioning in their lives.

Between 50% - 70% of mental illness shows up before the age of 18 and have a huge impact on a child's development. If not treated early, it can have life-long effects.

Mental illness affects how well kids do in school, how they form relationships with others, as well as healthy life choice options such as drug or alcohol abuse.

It has been estimated that the rate of substance abuse among BC's children and youth is 0.8% - or at any given time approximately 7,500 individuals. For the youth population of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, this equates to close to 200.

People with a mental illness are twice as likely to have a substance use problem.

### Program Evaluation

Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community Services is a COA accredited agency that applies the highest performance standards while operationally managing service and practice at the Youth Wellness Centre.





Evaluation will be completed by service providers, committee members and clients in the quality of the experience and service at the Centre. Qualitative data will be collected from self-reports and satisfaction surveys regarding: increased sense of well-being and elimination/reduction of barriers to access service. Ongoing evaluation of the Centre service will cover two areas: quality of service and expansion of future project objectives.

**Program Costs**

**YOUTH WELLNESS CENTRE – FULL PILOT PROGRAM 12-MONTH BUDGET**

Specialized Child & Youth Advocate, Travel & Training	\$65,000
Program Activity Costs & Supplies	\$2,000
Technology	\$2,000
Child and Youth Psychiatry Costs	\$32,400
Oversight/Audit/Administration 10%	\$19,000
Business & Partner Development & Awareness	\$14,600
Program Coordination & Evaluation	\$42,000
Education, Support Groups, Peer to Peer Support Program	\$8,000
Reduce Mental Health Stigma Promotion	\$5,000

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Annual Cost	\$190,000
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Community Collaboration in-kind contribution	\$16,950
City of Maple Ridge   Greg Moore Youth Centre Space (2 year commitment)	
City of Maple Ridge _ Greg Moore Youth Centre Youth Worker Staff	
FMS Creative in-kind communication and design services	

**Full Pilot Program Costs include:** 3 days Child and Youth Psychiatry and a portion Clinic Director service, 1 full time Advocate, Youth Wellness Centre drop in model with Sexual Health Clinic and Family Physician Medical Clinic, Partnership Development, Evaluation, 4 days medical office assistant support with project coordination, operation oversight, partnership development, technology usage/tele health, education, group therapy sessions, peer to peer support for both youth and parents/guardians, support groups and Youth Wellness Centre marketing awareness campaigns along with mental health stigma reduction messaging.

**Program Sustainability**

The Wellness Centre is one of our core programs and we are committed to ensuring that this program will continue to operate in future years and meet the community growth demand. Community partnerships will continue to be developed to strengthen the program and results.

A fundraising team and committee has been engaged to produce and implement a long-term financial sustainability plan. Funding strategies will be put in place to ensure sustainability for our programs and it is our intent to continue to diversify our funding base by continually increasing the number of individual donors, foundations and corporate supporters.



Youth Wellness Centre

Program revenue generating models will be developed, tested and analyzed to bring reliable income into the Centre on a monthly basis through partnership revenue fees, specialty billing, education and session income.

*\*Any stories are completely fictitious. Names, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner and do not represent actual fact. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is purely coincidental and not an intent to identify Youth Wellness Centre clients.*



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Changing Lives Together

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