

# BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS

2019

## **Community and social accountability**

Couchiching Family Health Team

### **North Simcoe Muskoka Works Together to Integrate Trans Health Care into Primary Health Care**



Couchiching Family Health Team has partnered with the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital (OSMH) to establish a Trans Health Service because trans individuals often do not seek health care for fear of discrimination.

A Transgender Experience Study was conducted in the region and found that:

- Only 50 per cent of participants made their Primary Care Provider (PCP) aware of their trans status; and
- Only 21 per cent were offered hormone therapy by the PCP.

In preparation for treating a transgender patient population, the team struck the Trans Health Steering Committee, bringing together service providers and community members with lived experience to help guide the development of this program in the most meaningful way.

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The clinic was staffed with a full-time Nurse Practitioner with expertise in hormone replacement therapy and surgical referrals and a full-time Peer Support Navigator to best meet needs. A partnership with the local Integrated Access to Structured Psychotherapy team ensured that trans individuals with mental health needs were prioritized for treatment. The hospital donated a speech language pathologist's time to provide voice feminization to trans women free of charge; this service usually costs \$1,600 and is otherwise available only in Toronto or privately.

Transgender patients may self-refer. The team provides inclusive medical care and support to help patients identify and achieve their transition goals, including hormone treatment, surgical referral and community resource navigation.

The FHT also established a positive space committee to determine how the team's processes, space, and forms could be inclusive to all. All staff have undergone Safer Spaces training and it is mandatory for new employees.

The Trans Health Service is now offering Safer Spaces training for healthcare professionals across all five subregions of the LHIN to help create more inclusive healthcare environments for the LGBTQ population. The NP consults daily with primary care providers, working to build capacity that would see trans health care becoming a routine part of primary health care.

Couchiching FHT has learned that partnerships are crucial when looking to provide comprehensive care with minimal funding, such as with local paediatricians and endocrinologists to ensure the needs of all populations are met.

## Key Facts:

- Trans Health Steering Committee established to oversee program's development
- Transgender patients may self-refer
- Services include hormonal treatment, surgical referral and voice feminization training
- All staff attended Safer Spaces training
- Training also made available to providers in all five local LHIN sub-regions
- Positive space committee established
- Have hosted Rainbow Health Ontario in Orillia to provide primary care providers with essential training around trans health needs