

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2022

NORTH SHORE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

Award: Mental Health and Addictions

Achievement: Care coordination for patients who experience mental health struggles

North Shore Family Health Team, a small team in rural Northwestern Ontario, realized that its patients were having difficulty accessing mental health services. There were long wait times at the local mental health facility and the team's social worker was overwhelmed by the number of referrals she was receiving.

When the team received a 0.5 per cent FTE staffing increase for navigation, they dedicated a portion of this position for intake, assessment and care coordination services for patients that experience mental health/socio-economic struggles. The program has improved inter-agency flow with patients being continuously supported as they are referred to the best service for their needs.



People with mental health struggles complete intake with the care coordinator. Their needs are assessed, and the patients are referred to the best possible solution. If it can't be implemented immediately, the care coordinator will try to find a short-term solution in the interim. The care coordinator works with the patient to coordinate other beneficial interventions, such as volunteer opportunities, and continues to do wellness checks until another organization can take over. The follow-up on referrals ensures continuity of care and makes sure that the patient does not fall through cracks of the health and social care systems.

At the intake interview, a distress gauge and a PHQ-9 assessment are completed. The FHT plans to implement a post-care assessment in the future.

In Q1 of 2022-23, 34 people received care coordination for mental health struggles. Not everyone required a mental health referral. The care coordinator liaised with and made

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referrals to a variety of organizations such as respite services, mental health providers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), personal support services and financial assistance.

Given its success, the care coordinator role is expanding to patients beyond those with mental health struggles. The next area of concern is home care. The care coordinator has helped several families obtain alternative options for support while they are waiting on services for home care.

Key Facts:

- North Shore FHT introduced solution to reduce mental health wait times and referral issues
- New care coordinator does intake for patients with mental health struggles
- Referrals made to best source of assistance; interim solutions provided
- Coordinator continues wellness checks and follows up on referrals
- 34 people received care coordination in Q1 of 2022-23