

Pillars for Life – Two Year Update

May 2022

The tragic loss of a person by suicide is felt by family and friends, and the entire community. *Pillars for Life: The Saskatchewan Suicide Prevention Plan* is the Government of Saskatchewan's plan to address and prevent suicide.

This plan guides Saskatchewan's activities in this area. Government and its partners are building on it to improve delivery of suicide prevention programs in the province.

Key Updates:

Record Investment: In 2021-22, the Government of Saskatchewan invested record funding for mental health and addiction services and supports, including over \$1 million to support suicide prevention. These funds have supported work that was initiated previously and is continuing, including:

- Community-led Roots of Hope Suicide Prevention initiatives in northern Saskatchewan.
- Work to address the Provincial Auditor's recommendations regarding treating patients at high risk of suicide in the northwest.
- Public awareness campaign, post-secondary suicide prevention framework, and training for members of the media.

Supporting Initiatives: The Ministry of Health funds the following work connected to suicide prevention:

- The Mental Health Commission of Canada's **Roots of Hope** project is a community-led suicide prevention initiative grounded in the knowledge and experience of local community leaders to develop, build on, and implement sustainable, culturally appropriate components.
 - Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada to fund the initiative in three communities: La Ronge, Meadow Lake, and Buffalo Narrows.
 - Annually, \$750,000 is allocated to the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA); \$250,000 for each site.
 - Opportunities to further expand Roots of Hope, or similar community-led initiatives, will be explored this year.

- Support was provided to the University of Saskatchewan to build a post-secondary suicide prevention framework that can be shared and replicated in other Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions.

Supporting First Nations: Pillars for Life calls for engagement with First Nations leadership as work progresses, and includes the learnings and perspectives from the FSIN suicide prevention strategy.

- A triparty Letter of Commitment (LoC) to Address First Nations Suicide Prevention was signed by the Government of Saskatchewan, Indigenous Services Canada, and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations on September 24, 2020. Work continues to support new and innovative approaches to suicide prevention among First Nations people.

Responding to the Provincial Auditor: In 2019, the Provincial Auditor released a report including a review on the use of suicide prevention protocols in Northwest Saskatchewan. The report contained recommendations for the SHA. In 2021-22, the Ministry provided \$200,000 to the SHA to support their work on implementing these recommendations.

The provincial suicide prevention protocols provide a standard for mental health professionals in outpatient and inpatient mental health and addictions services in the SHA. This is to ensure that people with suicidal risk are effectively screened, assessed, have a safety plan, management plan, follow-up plan including reassessment, and a communication plan, with file documentation to keep them safe and to maximize their functioning.

In Addition to Pillars for Life: Continued provincial investments and program implementations have supported access to mental health and addictions services and suicide prevention. Some of these initiatives include:

- **Community Recovery Teams.** Multidisciplinary teams to support people with chronic and persistent mental health challenges in the community.
- **Police and Crisis Teams (PACT)** pair a police officer with a mental health worker to attend calls that include people who may be experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis. PACT teams are now located in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, Yorkton and Estevan.
- **Mental Health Capacity Building** initiative in five Saskatchewan schools. In 2022-23, this initiative will be expanded to additional schools in line with recommendations from Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth.
- **Mental Health Pilot with RCMP in Rural Areas.** Mental health assessment and support to RCMP officers to more effectively and appropriately manage mental health or addiction related crisis calls. After the success of this pilot, the program has been annualized as of 2022-23.

- **Expansion of Family Services Saskatchewan** will support an additional eight communities across the province, including Moose Jaw, Assiniboia, Gravelbourg, Kindersley, Biggar, Leader, Rosetown and Unity. Additional funding will result in services being available in a total of 31 communities.
- Crisis services are available for people thinking about or affected by suicide, including HealthLine 811, Kids Help Phone, Mobile Crisis, the federally funded Hope for Wellness chat line and PACT.

Looking Forward:

The Ministry of Health is continuing to expand mental health and addictions supports and services in 2022-23, with the largest budget in our province's history. This includes \$1 million in targeted funding for suicide prevention initiatives. The Government of Saskatchewan has now invested over \$92 million in targeted mental health and addictions initiatives since 2018, including over \$3 million for initiatives related to *Pillars for Life*.

These significant investments will assist individuals struggling with mental wellness and addictions issues with key investments in mobile harm reduction services, integrated youth services, and further support for *Pillars for Life: The Saskatchewan Suicide Prevention Plan*.

Work will continue in 2022-23 to further address the Provincial Auditor's recommendations regarding treating patients at high-risk of suicide in the northwest. Progress towards delivering a provincial safe medication disposal initiative will also be continued.

The Government of Saskatchewan will continue to engage with Indigenous partners, including the FSIN, to identify opportunities to advance suicide prevention in Indigenous communities. Further consultations will continue with our partners and key stakeholders as we move forward with implementing *Pillars for Life* and improving suicide prevention supports throughout the province.