

The Community Partnership Enhancement Forum has been an incredible asset to the work I have been involved with in the community, both within Edmonton, and across the province. In my experience with CPEF I have supervised mobile community treatment counseling services for youth and now oversee the development of school-based mental health capacity building projects throughout the province.

CPEF has provided an opportunity for truly integrated service delivery with addictions and mental health service providers, a goal that has been integral to the transition from AADAC and the Alberta Mental Health Board into Alberta Health Services. While CPEF initiatives have been beneficial to that restructuring process, the most important contribution has been in increasing access and reducing barriers to services for diverse and often isolated children, youth and families. The benefits and prognosis of integrated collaborative treatment are greatly increased which, simply stated, means that resources are better utilized for a greatly improved result.

Programs that I have had the good fortune to work with that have been initiated from the work of CPEF Committees and Mapping efforts have included Caring Community Collaborations (C.C.C.), "Bridging the Gaps", Millwoods Mapping and Beyond and WEMAP.

Caring Community Collaborations provided an opportunity for multi-disciplinary representatives of essential services to build relationships and create trusted service relationships with families from Afghanistan who had suffered indescribable trauma in their homeland and faced isolation, adjustment issues and multiple barriers to accessing mental health, addiction, healthy leisure, and social services in their new communities in Canada. Through this collaborative committee, where the values of respect, trust and commitment to follow through were paramount, services were able to be provided by my counseling staff throughout the multiple transitions these families experienced and with tremendous success. Without C.C.C. these youth and their families would not have been brought together with a supportive treatment process that provided their opportunity to increase their health, quality of life and potential. The relationships that formed through this process were sincere and strong and mentorship with these youth and their mothers has continued nearly two years later in many forms. The success of this model has inspired other projects that I now work with in the Alberta Mental Health Capacity Building Projects (MHCB) in places such as Brooks, the Islamic Schools in Calgary and the isolated community of Fort Chipewyan, to all adapt the concepts of this initiative to meet varied needs of complex and isolated families within their communities.

WEMAP provided our Prevention and Treatment teams an opportunity to begin important work regarding serious issues of drug use and community gathering spots and events for youth. The community mapping group enabled crucial partnerships to develop that have allowed the initiation of prevention and capacity building training and activities to increase the protective factors for youth at these venues. WEMAP also enabled specific project work with my Safe Communities counselor for high risk youth and the downtown library to develop to the point where the focus has shifted to the provision of support services and integrated community partnerships for youth who had once been difficult to engage and provide services for.

"Bridging the Gaps" has been an incredible opportunity to increase access and reduce barriers for services for high risk youth whose transient circumstances and homelessness made them extremely difficult to connect to service providers and thus

placed them at even higher risk for negative outcomes of all kinds. The one-stop intake process, capacity building cross-training between varied service providers, and the professional colleague networking that has evolved from that CPEF committee has enabled youth who are attended to by one service provider to be put in contact immediately with other providers to meet all urgent needs without delay or possible disconnection from systems of service. This process has enabled previously homeless youth to have relationships facilitated between essential service providers and resources to the point where they have been able to continue into successful treatment, housing opportunities and increased quality of life with reduced costs to the various systems involved.

The diversity of the CPEF Committees and projects is testament to their value in responding to and addressing the specific issues, strengths and challenges of each community and the populations within. The mapping information garnered from Millwoods Mapping and Beyond was critical in the development of the MHCB Project "The Way In" which provides extensive mental health prevention, promotion and intervention services to three junior high schools in Millwoods. The mapping results had shown that it was an enormous geographic area roughly the same size as Red Deer, with the highest percentage of youth in the city, where the least number of services were located. This was the very basis of all the good work that has followed in building a strong multi-disciplinary school-based community collaborative program which provides services to over 1500 children a year now. Another example of the positive partnerships that developed between agencies as a result of CPEF work is that Alberta Health Services Family Support Workshops for addiction issues are now provided in the community at the Millwood's Family Resource Centre to great benefit and increased access for local families and youth.

These are just some of the enormous benefits that come to mind from my work with CPEF, its facilitators and community partners. The contribution as a result of that good work and those strong relationships will have tremendous ongoing value for the children, youth and families in our communities.

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