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Health region taps into Community Mobilization

Ushered out of their separate silos, Prince Albert's Community Mobilization network of community leaders and agencies is serving the local health region well.



Herald photo by Tyler Clarke

Prince Albert Parkland Health Region's Community Mobilization members Glenis Clarke (addiction services), and Rosalie Meyer (mental health), from left.

For Prince Albert Parkland Health Region (PAPHR) mental health representative Rosalie Meyer, one success story sticks out as uniquely dear to her heart.

"This is an individual that no one knew about because he wasn't in trouble with the police," she said. "It ended up being a housing issue and, through housing, we found out that he has mental health issues."

"He wouldn't have made it to mental health services. It gave him that bridge to mental health," PAPHR addiction services representative Glenis Clarke added. "He was an individual that was falling through the gaps of many agencies' mandates."

"It was brought up by the Hub and we were there that afternoon, and a treatment plan was executed right away," Meyer said.

The Hub is one component of Community Mobilization that produces immediate results. It consists of a group of various agency representatives that meet twice per week to address issues in a holistic manner.

Cases brought up at the Hub table from an addictions perspective range from voluntary admissions to chronic drug users who are living on the streets — a similar range for those with mental

health issues.

"One of the things that's been nice is being able to have more solutions for clients in a more timely manner," Clarke said. "To be able to help someone negotiate what you need to go back to school and to have that available and to have immediate results when someone says 'I want to get into basketball' ... It's very rewarding."

In addition to helping in individual cases, the twice-weekly meetings have helped form a stronger understanding between agencies. "One of the best things I think we've done is educate the other agencies about mental health, and what it is, and how it affects that person's decision-making," Meyer said.

"If you have someone who has fetal alcohol syndrome, or is schizophrenic and not on medication, a lot of times people don't understand in those other agencies, so we've definitely learned a lot from one another."

"When I sit at the Hub table, I learn about programs I wasn't aware of, or new things that are happening that I wasn't aware of," Clarke said.

As for individual cases, getting in touch with other agencies in the past proved itself a difficult undertaking, as everyone was too busy.

"If you talk to any of the front-line workers from any of the agencies in our community, they're really busy," Clarke said.

With many of the Hub representatives working off the corners of their desks in addition to doing the same work they've always done, Clarke notes that the initial time commitment has added to their workloads.

"But, over time I think we're starting to see our numbers improve in a variety of ways, and that's the goal — to have better health and safety in our community," she said.

"Having police with us during these interventions is amazing. Taking a preventative approach and a therapeutic approach at the table with us," Meyer said.

In addition to their roles at the Hub table, both Clarke and Meyer have been seconded from the PAPHR to work full time at Community Mobilization, with the two also serving under the Centre of Responsibility (COR).

The COR deals with broader underlying issues in the city and area — perhaps the most prevalent and well-known issue being the area's high intoxication rates.

"We have significant concern over our intoxication rates," Clarke said, noting that there seems to be an altered tolerance when it comes to alcohol abuse in the area.

"It's the way it's always been for so long, and it's not OK for a community to be hurting like that, and overwhelming services."

"It's almost like we've become complacent about some of our issues and people that are hurting, and high intoxication rates need to be looked at, because there must be a way we can collectively address that."

This concludes the second part in the Daily Herald's five-part series on the Community Mobilization model. During the series, various agencies will speak to the benefits and some success stories that have come about as a result of their involvement in the Hub and COR.

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