



Program to support nurses experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorders launches today

Toronto, January 29, 2019 — Ontario's 175, 000 nurses have a new voluntary program that focuses on early identification and referral for treatment for mental health and/or substance use disorders.

The Nurses' Health Program (NHP) embraces the philosophy that nurses experiencing these disorders should have an opportunity for education, treatment, and recovery. It also recognizes their unique needs as health care professionals and the importance of protecting the public.

NHP offers a proven approach to the assessment and treatment of mental health and/or substance use disorders. It recognizes these disorders as illnesses and takes a non-punitive approach that reduces stigma and focuses on recovery. NHP is modelled on similar programs used by regulated health professions.

The new bilingual program offers nurses access to resources, a dedicated case manager, comprehensive assessment, an individualized support and treatment plan, and monitoring.

NHP was developed by the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA), Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), and Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO). It is an incorporated not-for-profit organization overseen by a board of directors with equal representation from the four nursing organizations and administered by Lifemark Health Group.

Quotes

"There is significant research showing that voluntary and confidential professional health programs are highly effective both in supporting recovery and protecting the public."

—Anne Coghlan, RN
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)

"ONA is proud to be a partner in the Nurses' Health Program. As health-care professionals, we're familiar with helping patients who suffer from mental health disorders and struggle with substance abuse. Nurses are just as vulnerable to these illnesses as everyone else. As nurses, we must treat each other with the same professionalism and compassion that we show to our patients. This program is a huge step forward. It will help nurses to get the specialized treatment and support they need, so they can work towards healthy recovery to be able to continue in their dedication to high-quality patient care. That's why ONA has been so committed to ensuring that this program comes to fruition."

—Vicki McKenna, RN
President, Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA)

"RNAO is delighted to partner with CNO, ONA and RPNAO in developing this program. Nurses who are dealing with issues of mental health and addiction need support to overcome their challenges. NHP offers them a new avenue. We take great pride in being able to offer a program of this type for nurses."

—Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), FAAN, O.ONT.
Chief Executive Officer, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)



“Every day, in all practice settings, nurses across Ontario provide excellent care for patients and families experiencing mental illness and addictions. With increasing stressors in the work environment and in their daily lives, it’s essential that nurses also have access to support and treatment. As caring professionals, nurses prioritize caring for others and run the risk of not taking care of ourselves. I’m proud that this evidence-based program will help tackle the stigma and support nurses to come forward and get the help they need.”

– Dianne Martin, RPN

Chief Executive Officer, Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO)

Fast facts

- Ontario’s 175,000 nurses have a new voluntary bilingual program available to them for the treatment of mental health and/or substance use disorders.
- Like the general public, nurses are not immune to substance use and/or mental health disorders.
- In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experiences a mental illness or addiction problem.*
- People with substance use disorders are up to 3 times more likely to have a mental illness.*

*Mental illness and addictions: Facts and Statistics, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Background information

- [Nurses’ Health Program](#)

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