



Creating Connections

Final Report - Section III

Highland Region



Highland Region Working Group

Participants: Not recorded

Question #1: What are the possibilities?

Lifespan approach to planning/programming needed

- Age categories cause fragmentation instead of including everyone, and isolation.
- There needs to be coordination of services across the life course.
- The family unit needs to be considered instead of making distinct age groups.
- Partnerships can then be formed.
- Leisure involvement should be provided to the person with the least ability first.

Focus on collaborations and partnerships

- Agencies with the same mandate are not collaborating, still a challenge to figure out with whom to collaborate.
- Who do we meet with? How? How do we merge together?
- Not knowing the roles we play or others play contributes to this.
- Awareness of each other's challenges is important - to avoid overlap.

Address barriers to community participation

- People with mental health issues do not feel welcome in municipal programs, so then how do we target these clients?
- Fear of entering a program due to fear: we need to start thinking outside of the box and come up with new programs so everyone has the same starting place.
- Address the fear factor for first time users.

Build capacity in community recreation service providers

- Debriefing fear is for everyone's responsibility, but staff are not always trained.
- i.e. Mental Health first aid, HIGH FIVE online.
- Online training + discussion (like a book club idea) might work.
- Hearing from professionals that are experts or even retired is also a suggestion.



Expand services/supports

- Maybe offer one-on-one integration through leisure education.
- What about hiring TR students for summer staff?
- Personalized invites will be very important and help with collaboration.
- Maybe create a Highland Connect prescription pad?
- TR model in Manitoba where a TR person goes to home of isolated people to provide leisure?
- Why aren't the TR people being hired as the navigator in these roles?
- Add new folks to our team – OT, RT, PT, Medical doctors and nurses.

Education about municipal recreation can contribute to mental health/recreation collaborations

- Education of community partners in each sector is so important.
- Giving a list to different organizations of what is available to them.
- Referrals – who can be guests?
- Municipal Recreation is visible to recurring users, not necessarily everyone else.
- How do we educate people about programs like Meals on Wheels to give their staff some support? What programs exist already that we can utilize?

Community wellness needs to start at the top down, in government

Question 2: What are the priorities for next steps in the Highland region?

- Discussions about a strategy to get the TR specialists to the regions.

- TRAAC and RNS coming together:
 - Through pilot projects and out of metro.
 - Filter clients to the program that meets their needs.
- School System – education.
 - De-stigmatize the perspective.
 - Resiliency and anxiety management need to continue.
- Reducing Stigma.
 - Needs to be done first before anything else can be accomplished.
 - Mass media – RNS, Government, as well as TRAAC needs to be addressed.
 - Cross promotion needs to continue with Facebook, websites.

- Identify and engage/educate other networks not present today.
- “Nothing about us without us” is also an important concept to remember.

- Build “case” for need for services:
 - Use data you have.
 - Use consumer reports.

Question 3: What are the possible collaboration/partnerships and action steps for moving forward?

“Take ownership!”

Once mental health is defined as an illness it becomes someone else’s responsibility!

- Promote mental health in the school system.
- Partnerships with school health centers (Guysborough model).
- Youth health center perceptions are often misleading and why can’t a Recreation Therapist be in this role?

We're all citizens and have the same rights. Mission statements of municipalities need to include this concept.

- Reaching out to other organizations.
- Collaboration and cooperation without duplication.
- This is a big step that needs to happen.

Public Health

- Reaching out to others in the community.
- Emails, facebook, special guests.
- Getting them all together and just knowing who they are.

Summer internship job?

- To capture the purpose of the programs in Pictou County, identify and describe.
- This will avoid duplication.
- Engagement with compensation.

Physical literacy right from primary

- Passport for Life.
- Transitions.

Training for staff to be sensitive to clients coming from institutions to the community recreation programs

- John Howard Society? Corrections as a link to recreation departments for community service.
- Leisure education programs (TR specialists) are the link during these transitions.

Mental Health Strategy

- Didn't address recreation, but there are opportunities there.
- Funding is necessary for support to help influence who they hire and how the resources can be allocated.

Identify actions that you can control

- Stakeholder groups need to be identified.
- Broader education about the outside environment instead of the built environment.

Identify actions...

- You need sustainable conversations - have meetings on the agenda every few months and review their actions.
- Advocate with the community health boards, influence the questions that they are asking, ask to sit at the table? Ask what role recreation services will play.
- Consumers will expect actions so be ready to follow through - otherwise the stigma will be further enforced.

Most important next Steps:

- Larger regional conversation with Pictou County and GAALN in October.
- Representation/mental health positions and ensuring there is a focus on mental health in schools (jr. high especially).
- Engage with TR specialists, create a TR position, also - County should send jobs to Dalhousie with job descriptions to get the TR specialists out of the city.
- Internship - asset collection and purpose of programs recognized and published.

Also mentioned:

- We Day at the YMCA.
- Health Fair Days.
- Finding potential corporate sponsors.
- Better support for individuals during mental crisis leave from work.
- How are Canadians Really Doing Report.

Actions at Regional Events:

- Get the consumers engaged, how do we give them a voice??
- Listening rather than telling.
- Have a consumer be a facilitator.
- Focus groups like New Hope.