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# Reclaiming Hope

MANITOBA'S YOUTH  
SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY



## Preamble

Manitoba Health and Healthy Living led the development of *Reclaiming Hope: Manitoba's Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy* in collaboration with several key partners. The goal of the strategy is to prevent the tragedy of youth suicide and suicide-related thoughts and behaviours. Activities were identified for the strategy that both enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors known to contribute to suicidal thinking and behaviour. The strategy will help youth develop healthy individual coping strategies encouraging them to embrace and succeed in life; will enhance family, social and community supports; and will improve access to mental health treatment.

The main components and basic structure of the strategy were influenced by the Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention Blueprint and the "Framework for Suicide Prevention in Manitoba" and are consistent with the federal government's National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The recommendations of the external reviews of child welfare were also considered in the development of this strategy, recognizing that many children involved with Child and Family Services are at significant vulnerability for suicide and suicide-related thoughts and behaviors. The Changes for Children Initiative was designed to address the recommendations of the external reviews, and this strategy will address recommendations related to suicide prevention. In addition to the items identified in this strategy, funding to expand the Winnipeg youth mobile crisis team and the youth crisis stabilization unit in Winnipeg will be provided.

## Background

Suicide is known to be associated with a complex interaction of biological, psychological and social risk factors including mental illness and/or addictions, a history of trauma, multiple personal problems and loss. Protective factors include healthy individual coping strategies, family, social and community supports.

The most significant predictor of suicide is a history of mental health problems. In order to focus limited resources and target efforts that will cause the most immediate gain, suicide prevention efforts should be first directed at ensuring adequate and timely treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, as well as addressing the factors that lead to these disorders.

Inter-jurisdictional barriers to service provision, including health and social services, have been highlighted as posing special problems for Aboriginal communities, especially for First Nations communities. The difficulties involved in supporting communities and providing specialized services in the northern and geographically remote communities are also understood to present significant challenges. A key goal of this strategy is to find new ways of working together with provincial and federal partners to resolve inter-jurisdictional barriers to providing service to Aboriginal communities.

## Moving Forward

Government departments will work in partnership with child welfare authorities and agencies, community members and other involved stakeholders to develop strong plans for implementation of the strategy. Implementation planning will be inclusive and will consider the unique needs and characteristics of Manitoba's varied communities and cultures.

## Guiding Principles

### **Community-based**

Community assets and strengths will be recognized. Initiatives will provide service to communities by addressing the community's need while building and maintaining respecting, trusting relationships within and across the community.

### **Culturally relevant**

The strategy will incorporate Aboriginal culture and traditions. An aim of the strategy is to strengthen the cultural identity of adolescents in order to provide a feeling of security, a sense of belonging and hope for the future.

### **Focuses on youth considered at risk**

The strategy will focus on youth who experience risk factors that deter positive mental and social growth.

### **Evidence-based and evidence-informed**

The strategy is comprised of activities based on current literature, research studies and expert opinions that are known to have beneficial and effective outcomes.

### **Sustainable**

The strategy will be implemented in ways that will be sustainable by communities.

### **Promotes mental health and well-being**

Initiatives in this strategy will contribute to helping individuals achieve a sense of control over their lives, feel capable of making decisions, cope with life's challenges and participate in their community in meaningful ways.

### **Consumer involvement**

Implementing this strategy will involve those individuals it affects, including youth and Aboriginal communities.

### **Flexible**

The strategy will be adaptable in order to meet the needs of each unique community.

### **Recognizes traditional and cultural knowledge**

The strategy will acknowledge the importance of beliefs and practices that form an integral part of the lives of individuals and communities.

### **Focuses on activities that have maximum impact**

The strategy will focus on activities believed to have the most effectiveness, value and positive outcomes for Manitoba youth.

## The Manitoba Suicide Prevention Framework

The existing Manitoba Suicide Prevention Framework guided the development of this strategy. The framework is based on the following five components that provide a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.

- A. Assessment and Planning** is the first step in developing a comprehensive, forward-thinking strategy. Developing an appropriately resourced structure to implement youth suicide prevention activities is the initial stage in the strategy.
- B. Mental Health Promotion** builds healthy and resilient individuals, families and communities. Strengthening people's ability to bounce back from adversity and manage the inevitable obstacles that life throws in one's path is a fundamental way of promoting mental health.
- C. Awareness and Understanding** will be built through activities that develop the public's understanding that suicide is an important community health issue, that it can often be prevented and that everyone can play a part in providing support to youth at risk.
- D. Prevention, Intervention and Postvention** are key elements to help every community develop a full range of suicide prevention services for youth at risk. Postvention services are provided to support family and friends after a suicide has taken place. The emphasis for enhanced prevention services in this strategy is youth in Northern Manitoba.

- E. Data, Surveillance, Research and Evaluation**
- There will be a focus on increasing our knowledge and understanding of suicide risk factors, protective factors and effective prevention and intervention services.

*Reclaiming Hope: Manitoba's Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy* was developed using these five components of the Manitoba framework. In addition, work was done to identify the special needs of youth and their families in Manitoba with a focus on developing a sustainable system embedded in the community.

It is recognized that many existing initiatives will contribute to the comprehensive youth strategy. An inventory of current initiatives was developed and analysed within the context of the five components above and gaps were identified. New initiatives were prioritized according to the following criteria:

- evidence-based or evidence-informed;
- reaches youth considered to be "at risk";
- emphasizes traditional wellness;
- transferable across communities but recognizes community uniqueness;
- builds community capacity; and
- reduces the disparity between northern and southern communities.

The following describes the current, enhanced and new initiatives that together comprise the comprehensive and co-ordinated strategy.

# Reclaiming Hope: Manitoba's Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy

## A. Assessment and Planning

### EXISTING:

*Currently, Manitoba has a Provincial Suicide Prevention Committee as well as regional committees in most regional health authorities. A provincial suicide prevention co-ordinator position has been approved to provide planning support to the committees and their work.*

### ENHANCED AND NEW:

#### **Provincial Youth Suicide Prevention Subcommittee**

A Provincial Youth Suicide Prevention Subcommittee of the Provincial Suicide Prevention Committee will be developed. The subcommittee will have a broad range of participants, including youth, and will meet on a quarterly basis to exchange knowledge and to provide advice on future work plans related to youth suicide prevention.

#### **Youth Subcommittees of Regional Suicide Prevention Committees**

Regional health authorities will be supported to develop inter-sectoral youth subcommittees of their regional suicide prevention committees to plan suicide prevention activities for youth.

#### **A Best Practices Forum and Traditional Gathering**

A provincial best practices forum on youth suicide will bring together youth, service providers and other community members and provide them with a venue to learn about best practices in youth suicide prevention. The forum will include a traditional gathering event. Components of the forum will also include mental health literacy, substance use awareness and the opportunity to share ideas for suicide prevention.

### **Communities That Care**

Communities that Care is an evidence-based / evidence-informed program that guides communities to use advances in prevention science to plan their own prevention efforts. The program helps communities to recruit leaders, identify and address readiness issues and plan next steps relevant to their own unique needs.

## B. Mental Health Promotion

### EXISTING:

*Manitoba currently is involved in several leading-edge, evidence-based mental health promotion activities to give children and youth a healthy head start. The early years are an important time for children's brain development, and their healthy development affects their health, wellbeing and success later in life. Providing children with an environment that promotes healthy physical, cognitive and emotional development will contribute to the resilience necessary over the life course.*

#### **Universal Screen at Birth**

Public health nurses complete Families First Screening with all new off-reserve births. Families identified as vulnerable through the screening process are offered an in-home parent survey focusing on parent child challenges. Families may then be offered the option of participating in the Families First home visiting program. Entry to Families First programming is available for children from birth through five years of age.

#### **Healthy Baby**

A two-part program consisting of a prenatal financial benefit and community-based supports, the Healthy Baby program offers the family support and informal learning opportunities via group sessions and outreach.

#### **Triple P – Positive Parenting Program**

Triple P is a world-renowned parenting program that promotes positive, caring relationships between parents and their children. It also helps parents learn effective management strategies for dealing with a variety of childhood developmental and behavioural issues. The Triple P approach strengthens parents' knowledge, skills and confidence to better meet the

needs of their children, increases the parent's sense of competence in their parenting ability and reduces stress. Currently in Manitoba, Triple P is available to parents of children under 12; Healthy Child Manitoba is in discussions about the future implementation of Teen Triple P.

### ***In Motion* Bilateral Agreement**

Manitoba *in motion* is a provincial strategy to help all Manitobans make physical activity part of their daily lives for health and enjoyment. There is a link between increased physical activity and improved mental health. Manitoba is undertaking a number of initiatives to increase physical activity levels of adults, youth and children.

### **Northern Youth Empowerment Initiative**

The Northern Youth Empowerment Initiative (NYEI) is a new initiative of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs which began implementation in 2007/2008. The NYEI provides annual funding for community-based youth projects.

### **Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Recreation Funding**

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs provides funding to Northern Affairs communities for recreation. Funding is provided for either a full-time recreation director or part-time recreation programming, depending on the size and unique needs of the community. Funding is allocated based on the discretion of community councils, all of whom submit plans at the start of each fiscal year.

### **Roots of Empathy**

Roots of Empathy (ROE) is a province-wide, evidence-based and classroom-based program for students from kindergarten to grade 8 which focuses on building capacity for caring and compassionate citizenship and parenting. The heart of the program is the monthly family visit with a neighbourhood baby (two to four months old in October) and parent(s). The emotional bond that develops with the "classroom" baby, over the school year, increases students' emotional literacy, resulting in increased prosocial behaviour and decreased aggression and bullying.

### **Mental Health Promotion Champions Network**

Led by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority with representatives from Manitoba Health and Healthy Living, Healthy Child Manitoba and community stakeholders, this network meets monthly to bring together mental health promotion stakeholders to partner, collaborate and plan for embedding mental health promotion strategies across sectors and programs.

Other RHAs participate to varying degrees in mental health promotion activities across the province.

## **ENHANCED OR NEW:**

### **Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre – Express Initiative**

The Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre (WASAC) developed a proposal and delivered a youth leadership training and summer camp program in Shamattawa in the summer of 2008 called the WASAC Express Initiative. It is a comprehensive approach to developing opportunities for children and youth to become more physically active while enhancing skills and providing leadership training to promote community development. This pilot project in Shamattawa will be evaluated and expanded to more northern communities.

### **Life Skills Training**

The Life Skills Training (LST) program is an evidence-based, universal and school-based drug abuse prevention program targeted at children in middle schools or junior high schools. Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth and Healthy Child Manitoba as well as other departments are discussing the options for implementation.

In the first year of the program, teachers conduct 15 sessions focusing on general life skills and strategies for social resistance (ex: regarding substance use). Booster sessions are provided in years two and three of the program (10 sessions and five sessions respectively). Teachers use a variety of techniques including instruction, demonstration, feedback and reinforcement, and practice to train students in the three core areas of self-management skills, social skills, and information skills related to drug use.



### **Roots of Empathy**

Roots of Empathy, designed to build the capacity of students for caring and compassionate citizenship, healthy self esteem, and parenting, will continue to be expanded across the province with a focus on increasing the involvement of First Nations communities.

### **Mental Health Promotion Champions Network**

Regional health authorities across the province will be encouraged to strengthen collaboration with other sectors, including education, youth justice committees and recreation committees, to identify mental health promotion opportunities and invest in projects that meet community needs.

## **C. Awareness and Understanding**

### **EXISTING:**

#### **Intervention Skills Training (Evidence-informed gatekeeper training programs)**

Gatekeeper training programs (ex: ASIST programs) are suicide intervention training programs that provide skills to caregivers to understand the signs of emotional distress, and to help prevent the immediate risk of suicide. These training programs currently take place throughout Manitoba.

#### **Teen Talk**

Teen Talk is a provincial program led by Klinik Community Health Centre which provides workshops to youth in high schools, custody, care or treatment facilities and alternative schools on topic areas such as reproductive and sexual health, mental health, dating violence, body image, communication skills and diversity. Teen Talk also provides the successful Peer Support Program that educates youth about birth control, sexuality, diversity and mental health (including suicide awareness).

#### **Self-Help**

Self-help organizations provide peer support to consumers and public education and awareness activities in the community. For example, the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba has embarked recently on a campaign to make the topic of suicide more visible, and the options for seeking help more evident.

### **ENHANCED OR NEW:**

#### **Signs of Suicide**

Signs of Suicide (SOS) is an evidence-based, school-based prevention program incorporating curricula to raise awareness of suicide and its related issues; and a brief screening questionnaire for depression and other risk factors associated with suicidal behaviour. Youth are taught to recognize the signs of suicide and depression and they are taught the specific action steps necessary for responding to those signs. A pilot project for the implementation of the program is being developed.

In the first year, SOS will be implemented in up to 30 schools, including First Nations schools. This prevention program will be evaluated through a randomized controlled trial. If the outcomes are positive, expansion may occur in additional schools.

#### **Mental Health First Aid**

Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-informed program to help people recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, to provide initial help and to guide a person towards appropriate professional help. Each regional health authority will prepare between two to four trainers whose responsibility will be to deliver the program to staff within their region.

Training is currently occurring in the regions and will be enhanced to include Aboriginal trainers.

#### **Teen Talk in the North**

Teen Talk's workshops and peer support program will be expanded to schools in Northern Manitoba. Funding for this initiative is currently committed by Manitoba Health and Healthy Living with a target start date of spring 2009.

## **D. Prevention, Intervention and Postvention**

### **EXISTING:**

#### **Manitoba Suicide Line**

Funded by Manitoba Health and Healthy Living and operated by Klinik Community Health Centre, the Manitoba Suicide Line provides a 24-hour, seven days a week response to individuals at risk of suicide or friends or family members who are worried about someone with thoughts of suicide.

### **Teen Touch**

Teen Touch operates a 24-hour telephone helpline, an Internet self-help and online virtual help program, and delivers a classroom-based outreach and information program to youth across the province with a focus specifically on suicide education, awareness and prevention.

### **Middle Childhood and Adolescent Strategy**

Healthy Child Manitoba supports the healthy development of school-age children and youth through programs and services that target children between the ages of six to 18.

The Manitoba Implementation Team for the Provincial Sexually Exploited Youth Strategy has financially supported the development of a multi-media campaign - stopsexwithkids.ca - and northern training for front-line service providers working with vulnerable and exploited children and youth.

### **Families First**

Long-term home visiting support for families with children from birth to five years of age is provided by paraprofessional home visitors who establish trusting relationships with families, promote problem-solving skills and help strengthen the families' support system. Weekly supervision is provided by public health nurses who work with home visitors to support families.

### **Teen Clinics**

Healthy Child Manitoba funds six teen-centred primary health services: two in Winnipeg, one each in The Pas, Flin Flon and Cranberry Portage (northern) and one in Selkirk (rural).

Teen clinics are a first source of contact for youth with mental health issues. The goals of teen-centred health care services are to:

- ensure young people in Manitoba have access to health services that are accessible and appropriate to their needs;
- provide young people with opportunities to learn about the health issues that concern them, identify strategies for maintaining good health and access health promotion tools and resources; and
- provide young people with accurate non-judgmental information, respectful care that acknowledges the diversity of cultures and values of all young people, and recognizes gender specific needs.

### **Regional Health Authority (RHA) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**

RHAs provide a continuum of child and adolescent mental health intervention services across the province.

### **ENHANCED OR NEW:**

#### **The Northern and Rural Youth Mental Health Treatment Enhancement Plan**

The Northern and Rural Youth Mental Health Treatment Enhancement Plan is a four-part plan to improve access to mental health treatment for youth in underserved areas of the province. This component will be introduced in northern Manitoba with intent to learn from it and consider expansion to other regions as appropriate.

##### **A) Discharge Protocols and Resources**

Protocols will be developed for follow-up care after discharge or other transition of care for individuals deemed at high risk when leaving the emergency department or hospital.

##### **B) Crisis and Treatment Services for Youth in the North**

A youth crisis stabilization unit will be developed in Thompson with on-site treatment, a mobile crisis component and Telehealth capacity to provide better treatment for youth from remote communities and decrease the need for youth to fly south for treatment.

##### **C) Enhanced Telehealth Capacity for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Consultation to the North**

This initiative will provide resources for mental health consultation, including psychiatry, through Telehealth to clinicians providing services for youth and their families in rural and northern Manitoba.

##### **D) Enhanced Training for Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Clinicians in the North**

Current community mental health worker training will be enhanced and delivered in the north to better address the specific issues of northern clinical service delivery.

### **Trauma Training for Service Providers**

Trauma training for service providers is designed to increase the capacity of service providers to provide care for individuals who have experienced trauma earlier in their life and those who are traumatised by a recent crisis.

### **Bereavement Support**

The loss of a young person by suicide is devastating and can leave those affected at greater risk themselves. Bereavement services will be enhanced to provide individual and group support for parents, siblings and peers who have experienced the loss of a loved one due to suicide.

## **E. Data, Surveillance, Research and Evaluation**

### **EXISTING:**

*Healthy Child Manitoba is engaged in research and evaluation of several programs that support suicide prevention, including Families First, the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Strategy, Roots of Empathy and the Early Development Instrument.*

### **Principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession**

It is recognized that research and evaluation must be respectful of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and their communities. As such, the ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) principles are considered prior to engaging in research or evaluation that directly involves these communities.

### **ENHANCED OR NEW:**

### **Suicidality, Para-suicidality and Prevention in the Youth Justice Population**

This new research will identify the baseline suicidality and para-suicidality profile for youth in the justice population and study outcome data for differential prevention and intervention strategies in the study population.



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