

100 Men Who Care – LMSPC Presentation

I'm here to present the London Middlesex Suicide Prevention Council. The LMSPC has been in existence since 1990. It's a non-profit, voluntary council comprised of volunteers representing organizations that deliver suicide prevention, support and/or treatment programs, as well as survivors of suicide – those who have lost a loved one to suicide. My wife lost her mother to suicide when she was a teenager, and subsequently three other family members also died by suicide. More than 35 years later, as a suicide survivor, she understands the devastating effect suicide has on those left behind – the mental illness that can arise as a result of living with someone who is chronically depressed and suicidal, traumatic loss, survivor guilt, and the stigma that often causes fractures in family relationships. She has been involved with the council for over four years, and she is currently serving as Co-Chair.

LMSPC's Mission Statement is to reduce suicide and suicidal behaviour, and its impact on individuals, families and communities.

The Council's new Strategic Directions for 2014 -17 are to achieve its mission through four objectives:

1. To increase public awareness, community education and advocacy in regards to suicide risk and prevention
2. To increase opportunities for skill development that addresses suicide awareness, intervention, support and treatment
3. To support the appropriate allocation of resources to support a full range of consumer-centred services to individuals and families.
4. To eliminate stigma and discrimination experienced by individuals who have attempted suicide or the family members of those who have died by suicide.

Here are some highlights of recent work of the council.

In April of 2010, the London-Middlesex Suicide Prevention Council hosted a community consultation with 56 participants representing 30 different services in the sectors of mental health, addictions, education, justice, elder care, violence against women, community development, community support and treatment, hospital, faith communities, academic, public health, business, and families (suicide survivors). The result of that consultation was the development in January 2011 of a framework for a local Suicide Prevention Strategy. Three goals from the document were selected to submit a Trillium project grant in 2011. The three key goals were

1. Improved identification and treatment for those at risk of suicide
2. Improved intervention and support for those affected by suicide
3. Improved coordination of educational and suicide prevention activities

In 2012, Trillium granted LMSPC \$75 000 over two years. This increased the council's budget dramatically, moving from a few thousand dollars per year, to its current annual budget of roughly \$35 000 per year. The Trillium grant enabled them to hire a part-time project manager and to build a comprehensive website that was launched last year.

To meet the goal of improved coordination of educational and suicide prevention activities, in 2011 the council started offering safeTALK. safeTALK is a 3 hour training that prepares anyone over the age of 15 to identify persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources.

To date, the council has trained over a thousand people in safeTALK, including Ontario Works employees, Residence Assistants at Western and Fanshawe, Victorian Order of Nurses, firefighters, student teachers at Althouse, and Fanshawe students in social service worker programs. The council's goal is to have the staffing capacity to market safeTALK to the corporate sector, by having it become part of their health and safety training.

Trillium funds for their part-time staff member run out in August 2014. With a new three year strategic plan in place, and a new fundraising committee recently formed, the council aims to raise funds by engaging Western & Fanshawe students, and by presenting a professional development day in February 2015. With a small profit margin per course, safeTALK training has also become a social enterprise that can raise new operating funds for the council. In April 2014, the Fanshawe Student Union researched local mental health organizations and selected LMSPC to receive a \$1000 donation. This was an unsolicited donation. The executive is also looking at new granting opportunities.

The council existed without staff for the first 18 years. The difference in the growth, public awareness and work of the council as a result of having a Trillium funded part-time staff member is phenomenal. Funds from 100 Men Who Care will enable the council to retain their part-time employee for a year while they develop a sustainable fundraising plan to cover a staff position and annual operations. Having a dedicated professional staff member to do the work outlined in their strategic plan, moves a non-profit forward in a way that is difficult to match and sustain by a small group of volunteers.

Thank you for considering the London Middlesex Suicide Prevention Council.