

Mental Health Services of Renfrew County And Other Regional Service Providers Team Up With Pleo To Offer Mobile Support Group

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A group that supports parents and caregivers of youth who struggle with addictions and mental health is reaching out to Renfrew County families in a new way.

As part of a pilot project which launched in April, Parents Lifeline of Eastern Ontario (Pleo) has teamed up with health care providers in Renfrew County to offer a Mobile Support Group which meets the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30-8 p.m.

To date, sessions have been held in Eganville, Petawawa, and Cobden in partnership with the Pembroke Regional Hospital, the Petawawa Centennial Health Centre, and ConnectWell respectively.

On July 18th, Pleo will partner with North Renfrew Family Services for a session at the Deep River Public Library and then additional dates are scheduled for the remainder of the year in Barry's Bay, Renfrew, Golden Lake, Pembroke and Arnprior. Additional information and locations for each month can be found by visiting pleo.on.ca.

Pleo Peer Parent Supporter Bonnie Schryer said the support group offers a safe, confidential place for parents and caregivers to talk and connect with others who are facing similar struggles while sharing what has worked for them that could offer an unexplored avenue for others.

"This is really a place for families to find support when they feel that they have exhausted all options and, by partnering with local health care services, we are also providing them with a liaison to other resources in their own community," Ms. Schryer said.

She noted that the struggles families are facing today take many forms, adding that mental health doesn't just mean mental illness and that addictions aren't only drug related and instead could include additions to alcohol, school refusal, gaming, or pornography just to name a few.

"The bottom line is that when a child is not well there is a common feeling of fear that overwhelms a family as they try to figure out next steps and navigate what this means. Having a place to go for help where there is no stigma and where families can speak with others who have lived experience helps to take the weight off," Ms. Schryer said.

In addition to the Mobile Support Groups being trialled, Ms. Schyer said Pleo offers a range of other services, all free of charge to parents and caregivers in need.

This includes the *Parents' Helpline* (613-321-3211 or 1-855-775-7005), the Pleo website (pleo.on.ca), Family Peer Support and One-On-One Mobile Services.

Last year, Pleo and the Pembroke Regional Hospital also partnered to offer one-on-one services with parents and caregivers of youth admitted on the Acute Mental Health unit which, among other things, has helped connect families with a peer supporter who can assist in setting realistic goals for care and recovery.

“Caring for patients also means supporting their families,” said Mireille Delorme, Director for Mental Health Services of Renfrew County. “By collaborating with Pleo, we are supporting families with self-help and self-care, boundary setting, service navigation and education. Connecting with families who are also supporting loved ones living with mental illness reduces the feeling of isolation and validates one’s experience in unique ways.”

She added that the introduction of Pleo on the unit significantly improved families’ access to care.

Assuming there is enough uptake of the support group opportunities in Renfrew County, Pleo plans to continue scheduling these with community partners beyond 2023.

“What has really re-emerged is the importance of having the parents and caregivers directly involved and engaged in the recovery plan which is why it’s important that we involve them every step of the way,” Ms. Schryer said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Pleo...Did You Know

More than 90% of parents and caregivers who have used Pleo’s services report feeling better able to cope, better able to support their child, and better able to access the services they need. They also report feeling less anxious, stressed, and isolated.

The parents Pleo supports have children, youth, or young adults up to age 25 who are struggling with their mental health. The range of challenges is broad – ADHD, addiction, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, autism as there is often overlap or dual diagnosis, eating disorders, and many others. Their child may or may not have a diagnosis, and can be at any stage of their journey.

Pleo helps parents find and access the right services for their child and family. They work together as peers to figure out how to manage confidentiality, co-parenting, setting boundaries, school truancy, medication, safety, housing, lack of motivation or insight, and all the other issues and stressors that the whole family faces when a child is struggling.