



First mental health nursing residency program launched

By Margaret Goulding

While many people returned to school in September, a group of newly graduated nurses began a new chapter of professional development in the Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Residency program on September 5th across five tertiary care mental health centres in Ontario.

This inaugural residency program, the first of its kind in Ontario, is a collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Mental Health Centre Penetanguishene, Providence Care Mental Health Services site, Royal Ottawa Health Care Group, and Whitby Mental Health Centre, in partnership with the nursing programs at Algonquin College, University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT), and University of Ottawa.

This specialized three-month post-graduate residency program allows nurses to develop and enhance mental health and addiction nursing competencies through an innovative curriculum that includes protected clinical time, collaborative learning, and mentored clinical practice. Mentoring support will be provided by nurse educators, advanced practice nurses and senior nursing staff across the sites.

The program promises not just to influence the practice of participating residents. It should have a ripple effect across the participating organizations and the speciality as a whole. Just as significantly, it will help reduce the stigma associated with psychiatric nursing amongst new grads. "We want to help new nurses with their transition to this challenging and important role," says David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "By helping to recruit and retain nurses in this field, this program will ultimately lead to better access to care for patients with mental illness and addiction."

The launch at all five mental health sites was linked via the Ontario Telemedicine Network.

The Chief Provincial Nursing Officer, Vanessa Burkoski says: "The mental health nursing residency program is one of 17 innovative demonstration projects across Ontario aimed at providing nursing employers with additional skills and support for health human resources planning on a sustained basis." As she welcomed the nurses participating in the program at CAMH, Judith Tompkins, CAMH Chief of Nursing Practice and Professional Services, Executive Vice President Clinical Programs said, "I'm confident that the program will not only augment the competencies of our new graduates but serve as a catalyst to transform care and nursing practice to meet the changing needs of our clients and communities."

For more information about the program please go to: www.beamentalhealthnurse.ca.

Margaret Goulding is the External Communications Coordinator at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).