



231B MAIN STREET PO BOX 2741 HUMBOLDT SK S0K2A0
P: 306-682-4135 F: 306-682-4154 WWW.PARTNERSFAMILYSERVICES.CA

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

January 26, 2022

Since 2001, PARTNERS Family Services Inc has been committed to serving individuals and families in Humboldt and the surrounding communities within a 100km radius. Formed in response to a need for local domestic violence supports, PARTNERS has evolved over the past 21 years as we continue to work to meet the needs of those in our communities. Beginning with a \$3,000 grant, we have grown to have the privilege to deliver over \$1.2 million in supports and services each year in rural central Saskatchewan supported by the Government of Saskatchewan, Government of Canada, as well as corporations and private donors. We provide counselling, sexual and domestic violence services, in home family supports, parenting programs, education, and crisis response at NO FEE to anyone seeking help.

The past 2 years of the COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in increased demands for mental health and addictions services locally, across the province and across the country. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's latest survey data, over 25% of Canadian adults report struggling with their mental health in some way, and more than one quarter reported engaging in substance use¹. The Mental Health Commission of Canada's report on COVID 19 and homelessness highlights that those who are insecurely housed or rely on shelters and transitional housing are facing additional challenges².

Individuals, families and communities are struggling everywhere, and we remain committed to doing our best to meet the needs of those who are seeking our help. Our abilities have been challenged by soaring caseloads, complexity of issues and the additional stressors of the COVID 19 pandemic. While we are fortunate to receive significant funding for our services, we still struggle to meet the needs of crisis clients with only a single, half-time position dedicated to crisis response. That includes those experiencing domestic violence, insecure housing and acute mental health crisis. We do our best to work in collaboration with our partners, and we recognize there is still more to be done.

The needs of those experiencing crisis due to mental health or addictions are complex and there is no single way to serve them. Poverty, colonization and intergenerational trauma are just a few of the factors that impact each individual and family and must be addressed holistically to account for an individual's unique history. There is no single solution that will work for every person experiencing crisis, nor is every individual ready to engage the services that may be available to them. We believe that every individual has a right to choose their services and level of engagement and must be the driving force in their unique journey towards wellness.

In the past number of weeks, there has been increasing dialogue in the community and media regarding mental health and addictions and homelessness within the region. These are issues our office sees daily, and we are grateful to those that recognize these are areas of concern for all of our community members and especially our most vulnerable people. These conversations are difficult and necessary, and not as simple as they may appear. There is no single "fix" for the issues vulnerable people face in our communities, or across the province. With every additional support or program that may be funded,

there is additional infrastructure that must also be in place to support those services. For example, while addiction treatment beds are important, they must come with access to primary health care, mental health care, education and employment opportunities. Mental health group home beds are vital to the successful transition of those with pervasive mental illness into community – and they must be well supported with appropriate specialized health care teams and community vocational programs. Without these additional pieces in place, treatment or residential services are not able to fully meet the needs of those who access them.

PARTNERS Family Services relies on strong relationships with other services providers within the region in order to best meet the needs of those in our communities who require help. We are proud of our relationships with emergency responders, the health care system, school divisions, housing providers, other non-profit organizations and the cities, towns and villages in which we work. Without them, we would not be able to do the work we do each day to support the health and well being of those we come in contact with.

As an organization, PARTNERS Family Services remains committed to utilizing the resources available to us in the most effective way possible. We will continue to collect and analyze data in order to advocate for additional programs and supports that will meet the identified needs in our community. We will continue to work with our partners locally and with the Government of Saskatchewan and Government of Canada to provide innovative programs based on established and emerging best practices. And we will continue to walk alongside all of those who choose to include us as a part of their journey.

Humboldt and area has proven time and time again to be a resilient community willing to come together to support the health and wellness of everyone who calls this region home. Over the past 21 years, we have been humbled to be a small part of thousands of people's stories, and welcome the opportunity to become a small part of yours.

For more information on PARTNERS Family Services, including how to access our programs and services, please visit www.partnersfamilyservices.ca

Hayley Kennedy
Executive Director
PARTNERS Family Services

1. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health *COVID 19 National Survey* <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/covid-19-national-survey>. Accessed January 26, 2022
2. Mental Health Commission of Canada *COVID 19, Mental Health and the Homelessness Workforce* https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/covid_mental_wellness_homelessness_workforce_eng.pdf
Accessed January 26, 2022