

New funding brings clinical counselling to AMHS



By [Tim Miller](#), The Intelligencer

Friday, July 22, 2016 5:48:13 EDT PM



Garry Laws, chief executive officer for Addictions and Mental Health Services — Hastings Prince Edward (AMHS-HPE), sits in his office in Belleville. AMHS-HPE has received funding that will allow the organization to offer clinical counselling to its clients.

Addictions and Mental Health Services – Hastings Prince Edward (AMHS-HPE) will soon be adding another layer to its services.

The South East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) has approved funding for the addition of clinical counselling for clients in need of therapeutic counselling and psychotherapy.

Garry Laws, chief executive officer for AMHS-HPE, said the funding will allow the organization to help many of its clients explore what the underlying symptoms to their addiction or mental health issues may be.

“Our counsellors are great at providing strategies and situational strategies on how to manage their symptoms,” said Laws. “Psychotherapy dives deeper.

"It actually provides the client the opportunity to go much further down the road in recovery because they're able to sit down with somebody who's clinical, who can A) listen and B) provide in-depth strategies on 'Ok now we're really going to work on this.'

Dealing with the source of an individual's addiction or mental health issues is just as important as dealing with the immediate symptoms, said Laws.

"You wouldn't just manage your diabetes or manage your cancer, but you would also manage the source of it.

"There are a lot of folks who end up in emergency because it's never been resolved."

Laws expects to have four clinical counsellors in place by early fall — one between Bancroft and Madoc, two in Belleville, and one between Trenton and Picton.

Depending on circumstances clients will be able to attend anywhere from one up to 16 sessions. Sessions could include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).

These counsellors will be trained and registered for this type of counselling, said Laws.

"When you start doing that stuff you have to have the training and background."

Up until now people in need of this type of counselling either had to pay out of pocket for a private counsellor unless they were lucky enough for sessions to be covered under workplace benefits.

"There's not a lot out there."

The funding is the result of a massive re-design of addictions and mental health services in south east Ontario which reduced roughly 22 agencies down to five being funded by the LHIN. Part of that integration is a necessity of a common basket of services being offered by each organization.

Both AMHS-KFLA (Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington) and LLGAMH (Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Addictions and Mental Health) already offer clinical counselling and supported AMHS-HPE in receiving it as well, said Laws.

"Funding doesn't come down very often so it's unique that other organizations are supporting an organization to have that equity. Those two other organizations could've said 'We'd like a little bit of that cash'."

AMHS-HPE currently has 240 clients who could benefit from clinical counselling, said Laws.

Laws is hoping this new addition to its toolkit will also help with HPE's waitlist. A waitlist that's grown from 140 to north of 200 within the last year, with the number growing every month.

"We have routinely discharged 20 to 50 people per month and brought in 20 to 50 people per month. That's how many people in the last year continue to seek support.

"Folks have some very significant issues that need to be supported properly."