MHARC
MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS RESOURCE CENTRE
WATERLOO REGION

One welcoming entry point. Many pathways to support.

Bringing trusted community partners together to make accessing care easier, coordinate services around individual needs, and help people navigate pathways to the supports they need.

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For immediate release

New resource centre opens for mental health and addictions

Kitchener, Ontario – Local community organizations are coming together to make accessing mental health, brain injury, substance use, and related supports easier for adults in Waterloo Region. The following partners are pooling their resources to open what they say is a much-needed Mental Health and Addictions Resource Centre (MHARC):

- Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington
- Community Healthcaring Kitchener-Waterloo
- HART Hub Waterloo Region
- House of Friendship
- KW4 Ontario Health Team
- Region of Waterloo
- Sanguen Health Centre
- Thresholds Homes and Supports
- Traverse Independence
- Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN)

The centre aims to serve as a single stop to access a variety of services, including mental health nurses, acquired brain injury services, harm reduction and primary care, peer support, and addictions services.

Visitors will be assessed at intake to prioritize their needs and determine their service pathway on-site. They would be able to connect with the various on-site care providers to meet immediate needs and coordinate follow-up services.

Media are invited to an open house at 298 Lawrence Avenue in Kitchener on Friday, November 27, from noon to 2 pm.

The MHARC will have a soft opening to the public on Monday, December 7, running Mondays to Fridays from noon until 6 pm. The multi-partner project will start with reduced services, growing the hours from each service provider over the coming months.

For more information, please contact:

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“One statistic that often surprises people is that approximately 65% of individuals experiencing homelessness have a brain injury. Being unhoused can expose people to violence, substance use, accidents, and other risks that increase the likelihood of acquired brain injury. Through the MHARC, we will provide specialized brain injury services that help individuals better understand the symptoms and impacts of their injury, while equipping them with strategies and supports to improve their health, stability, and quality of life." - **Toby Harris, CEO, Traverse Independence.**

“No one should have to navigate the mental health and addictions system alone. The MHARC brings trusted community partners and much-needed services together in one location, making it easier for people to access timely supports and connect with the care they need. We know that meeting people where they are, building trust, and working together to make the right connections can make a meaningful difference. We are proud to be part of this collaborative initiative and its commitment to building a more connected, accessible system of care for our community.” - **Kylah Blair, Director, Integrated Services, Community Healthcaring Kitchener-Waterloo**

“When someone reaches out for help, feeling safe, welcomed, and understood can make all the difference. CMHA Waterloo Wellington is proud to bring peer support to the MHARC, connecting people with someone who brings lived experience and understands how difficult that first step can be. Peer support helps reduce stigma, builds trust and creates a more human and welcoming pathway into care. It reminds people they don’t have to navigate the system alone, and sometimes that connection is what helps someone feel safe enough to take the next step and access the care and support they need.” - **Helen Fishburn, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington**

"We're excited to witness the impact of having another community resource for people who are navigating addiction and mental health needs. The MHARC will make it easier for people to get the support they need, when they need it, minimizing the barriers they face and helping them connect to longer-term care." - **Michele Kennedy, Clinical Director, House of Friendship**

"People concerned with their mental health or drug use may be reluctant to go to the Emergency Department for a variety of reasons. Medical solutions in an urgent setting may not be what they are seeking. At the MHARC, someone can walk in and see a Mental Health Counselor, an addictions counselor, or a Primary Care Nurse and get connected to a variety of services including Harm Reduction supports in the same visit, without having to navigate the system alone or in pieces. That ease of accessibility in an environment tailored to their needs is what builds trust, and trust is what makes it possible for people to move toward the stability and care they deserve." - **Anne Phillips, Senior Director, Sanguen Health Centre**

"We are pleased to support the creation of the Mental Health and Addictions Resource Centre (MHARC), providing a community-based access point for coordinated mental health and addiction support outside of hospitals. As an initiative within the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan's priority area of Advancing Mental Health and Addictions Together, MHARC advances a community-identified need and represents an important step toward improving timely access to care. We will continue to advocate for an alternate destination clinic to help meet the community's growing and increasingly complex needs." - **Rhonda Nicholls, Director, Strategy, Performance and Partnerships, Community Health, Region of Waterloo**

"People currently have to research, phone, email, or visit multiple agencies to determine what services are available and what may be a good fit for them. This barrier to accessing the supports they need can result in people not reaching out for help when they need it, resulting in more significant challenges for their loved ones, and the systems meant to serve them." - **Melissa Boshart, Director of Programming, Thresholds Homes and Supports**

“Mental health is an essential part of overall health and well-being, and access to the right support can make a meaningful difference at every stage of life. At Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN), we are committed to meeting people where they are and ensuring patients of all ages have access to compassionate, specialized mental health and substance use care when they need it. Partnerships like this are so important because they strengthen our ability to support individuals, families and our broader communities to build our network for better health.” - **Christine McLellan, Director, Mental Health & Addictions, Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN)**

"When someone reaches out for mental health or addictions support, connecting them quickly with the right help can change the course of their recovery. The MHARC brings community and hospital partners together in one place, offering a welcoming and accessible point of connection for people and families seeking support. We are proud to support this collaboration and the lasting difference it will make in our community." - **Dr. Heather Bullock, Executive Director, KW4 Ontario Health Team**