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## MEDIA ADVISORY

For immediate release:

### **Mental Health Week 2020 Mental Health Supports in Lethbridge**

(LETHBRIDGE, AB – May 4, 2020) – With so much uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it can take a toll on us not only physically but mentally. With the closure of services, schools and workplaces; the rising number of cases of the virus in our province; and even the lack of interaction with others while we self-isolate it can be hard to not become overwhelmed with anxiety, stress and our overall mental health.

Every May, people in Canadian communities, schools, workplaces and legislatures rally around CMHA Mental Health Week. This year marks the 69<sup>th</sup> annual event, aimed to shift societal beliefs and perceptions about mental health to promote behaviors and attitudes that foster wellbeing, support good mental health and create a culture of understanding and acceptance. Right now, more than ever it is important to take care of our mental health.

This year, CMHA across Canada is asking people to not just “Get Loud” and speak up for mental health, but also to “Get Real”. Reach out to friends and families to see how they are doing. Check in.

“We know that social isolation and loneliness are bad for everyone’s mental health. Connecting with other people and our communities doesn’t just feel good, it’s good for our mental health.” Says David Gabert, Communications Lead for CMHA Alberta South Region. “In these days of social distancing, we are finding that we don’t have to be close to feel close. While we navigate our way through the pandemic and what follows, it is precisely the time to lean on each other. Even if we can’t be close physically with one another, we need to stay close emotionally. Phone calls, video calls and other digital technologies offer excellent opportunities for connecting, even when we can’t be in the same room.”

Here in Lethbridge, many services to support mental health are being made available remotely to ensure that everyone in our community has someone to turn to, or can find the support that they need in this time. Agencies such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region, Family Centre of Lethbridge and Volunteer Lethbridge have been working tirelessly alongside a network of other agencies to ensure that you have a place to turn.

Operated through the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region, Recovery College Lethbridge will be offering a series of online courses, starting in May, to help you work through the day to day challenges and reach out to others who are experiencing similar challenges. Everyone is welcome to attend our free courses focusing on recovery and wellbeing. No previous experience or education level is required, anyone can register for the courses.

Using an educational-based approach, Recovery College offers courses to help individuals recognize and develop their own resourcefulness and awareness in order to support their own or a loved one's recovery journey. All of our courses are developed in partnership with our peer supporters who are experts by experience.

Online Courses include:

- *Confront the Discomfort*
- *Rethinking Our Thoughts*
- *Building Better Boundaries*
- *Circle of Friends*

Individuals can register for course of their choosing at [www.recoverycollegelethbridge.ca](http://www.recoverycollegelethbridge.ca) or receive more information by e-mailing [admin@cmhaletbridge.ca](mailto:admin@cmhaletbridge.ca)



We recognize that some individuals in our community may not have a support circle to talk to, may feel disconnected from their current circles of support, or are unable or afraid to reach out. If this is you, a new program with Volunteer Lethbridge is designed to help you feel connected.

Whether you want just a quick weekly check-in or you prefer a longer chat to air out your thoughts, verified volunteers are on standby to call and help you feel connected and less alone during this uncertain time in the world. Have questions about what support services are available at this time? Volunteers can help you explore those options as well.

To register yourself for friendly wellness calls, or to refer someone, connect with Helping Hands at Volunteer Lethbridge at (403) 332-4320, press 1 or email [helpinghands@volunteerlethbridge.com](mailto:helpinghands@volunteerlethbridge.com).



A long-standing local resource to families and parents, Family Centre remains committed to ensuring the mental wellbeing of families in our community. Many groups and activities for families remain active and available at this time as they too shift to a digital delivery model.

Individual Parent Support is an opportunity for caregivers to talk with a professional parent educator about any concerns or questions. This could be a one-hour consultation filled with parenting strategies and tips or can become an ongoing support to work on goals and more complex challenges. After all children don't come with instructions. Reach out to the Family Connector at (403) 320-4232 Ext 240 to learn more.

In order to keep families connected, free online programs, groups, and workshop sessions are available online, such as:

Moms First Wellness Group – Connect with other Moms while learning ways to improve self-care strategies.

Kids Have Stress Too – Learn about the reasons children can develop stress, what the signs are, and how to respond with activities to work through it.

Putting Children First During COVID-19 – An hour of discussion, tips and strategies for parents who are supporting their children through separation and divorce during COVID-19.

For more information on any and all of these programs, visit [www.famcentre.ca](http://www.famcentre.ca), follow them on Facebook, or call 403.320.4232



Lethbridge Family Services is a highly accredited organization with over 110 years of community presence. We strive to improve the well-being and quality of life for individuals and families in Southwestern Alberta.

Our **Counselling, Outreach and Education** services are continuing to provide services to support individuals and families through these challenging times. As an organization whose vision is to provide connection and inclusivity for people to thrive, we have navigated these challenges to meet the needs of our community by:

Counselling:

Our counsellors offer phone support and online counselling to children, parents/caregivers, teens, adults and seniors regarding mental health issues, trauma, transitional issues, to name a few, in order to enhance people's emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Outreach and Education:

Our facilitators are supporting families as well as employers and employees through online trainings, presentations, and discussions.

For more information about our services, visit [www.lfsfamily.ca](http://www.lfsfamily.ca), follow on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, or call 403-327-5724.

• Advocacy • Referrals • Crisis Support

*"That's what we do!"*



**Crisis Services**

We also recognize that there are times when regardless of the supports an individual may or may not have, they may find themselves in a crisis situation and not know where to turn.

In these times, the Distress Line of Southwestern Alberta remains available 24/7 at (403) 327-7905 for anyone in crisis. No matter the cause of the crisis, trained staff are available to talk with you and help you find resources that you might need.

**About the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**

*Founded in 1918, CMHA is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians. As a nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA helps people access the community-based resources they need to build resilience and support recovery from mental illness in their own communities.*

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To arrange an interview, contact:

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