

Feb 3, 2025

MD of Bonnyville Council
4905 – 50 avenue
Bag 1010
Bonnyville, AB T9N 2J7

Subject: Urgent Request for Funding Support – Mental Health Collaborative Program

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to inform you of a significant funding challenge that will impact the Mental Health Collaborative Program which operates under the Bonnyville Primary Care Network, a long-standing initiative in our community that has provided essential mental health support for youth aged 6-17 dealing with ADHD, anxiety, and depression.

Recovery Alberta, one of our key funding partners, has recently informed us that they will not be renewing their contract with our program. Their annual contribution of \$67,700.00 will cease as of March 31, 2025. While they acknowledge the program's success, they have determined that it no longer aligns with their mandate, as our focus is on prevention and early intervention rather than addiction and recovery services.

The loss of this funding presents a significant challenge to our program, which has been supported by both the Town and the Municipal District of Bonnyville since 2016. Currently, we serve over 70 young people and their families, with new referrals continuing to come in from schools, local physicians, and providers who see unattached patients. Recovery Alberta has indicated that there is no contingency plan to replace our program, nor are they increasing resources to absorb our caseload. Without funding, we will be left with just 60 days to discharge vulnerable youth with no clear alternative for care.

This situation has far-reaching consequences:

- Primary care providers, many of whom lack specialized training in youth mental health and medication management, will face an increased burden without adequate capacity to absorb these patients.
- Youth and families without primary care providers will be left with no option but to seek help through walk-in clinics or emergency departments, straining an already overburdened healthcare system.
- A well-utilized, effective community program that has provided critical early intervention for nearly a decade will be lost due to a funding gap of \$67,700.00.

To address this urgent issue, we have applied for the Federal Grant: Mental Health Initiatives, which could provide \$500,000 over four years, allowing us to expand our services. However, given the

competitive nature of federal grants, we are cautiously optimistic about this opportunity. In the meantime, we are actively seeking additional funding sources to bridge this gap.

We are reaching out to the Town and the MD of Bonnyville to explore potential support options. Specifically, we are requesting consideration for funding the full \$67,700.00 annual commitment or a portion thereof. This would provide us with critical time to develop an interim plan, secure additional funding, or implement appropriate discharge planning for the youth currently in our care.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet and discuss potential solutions that ensure this vital program remains available to our community's youth. Please let us know a convenient time for further discussion. Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent matter. Your support would make a tremendous difference in preserving access to essential mental health services for our young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse Stein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jesse" being more prominent than the last name "Stein".

Jesse Stein
Executive Director
Bonnyville Primary Care Network