



RBC FOUNDATION DONATES \$200,000 TO SICKKIDS IN SUPPORT OF THE TELELINK MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Initiative will deliver mental health services to remote regions of Northern Canada

TORONTO, April 2, 2014 — Mental health services in the Canadian North are both desperately needed, and largely unavailable. The region of Nunavut has a youth suicide rate that is 28 times higher than the national average. Almost two-thirds of those who committed suicide had been diagnosed with severe depression. This staggering fact, coupled with the endemic trauma and addiction issues that are present in many communities, has created an urgent need for mental health specialists in a region that has no resident psychiatrists.

In order to provide mental health services to children, youth and their families in remote regions, The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) developed the TeleLink Mental Health Program (TeleLink). "Timely access to mental health specialists and treatment is critical. Most mental disorders begin in childhood or adolescence - when the signs of mental illness are recognized and treated early, those affected can go on to lead healthy, productive lives," notes Shari Austin, vice-president, RBC Corporate Citizenship and executive director, RBC Foundation. "Today, access to mental health services in the Canadian North is largely unavailable. Through our \$200,000 donation to SickKids and by partnering with Cisco, we will help deliver access to health experts in a region where these services might not be available otherwise. This support is part of our RBC Believe in Kids Pledge, a five-year, \$100 million commitment to improving the well-being of at least one million children and youth in Canada."

This interactive service enables professionals from SickKids and other major hospitals to provide clinical consultations using state-of-the-art communications technology such as videoconferencing. In addition, TeleLink increases paediatric mental health knowledge and training to service providers in these areas.

"We believe this partnership will help build local capacity, supporting local health systems to respond, care and plan for the mental health needs of their communities," says David Willis, clinical manager, TeleLink Mental Health Program, SickKids. "Our goal is to help improve the mental health and well-being of children and youth living in Northern Canada by providing them with barrier-free access to child and adolescent psychiatry, regardless of their location."

The program has met with positive results in Ontario since its launch in 2009. Now, with funding provided by RBC Foundation and technology donated by Cisco, it is hoped that this success will be matched across Nunavut over the course of the next three years.

The expected positive impacts of the program include:

- Helping to remove barriers to mental healthcare access due to geographical isolation;
- Access to a variety of children's mental health specialists;
- Reduced travel costs for training and clinical services;
- Formalized education to increase the local knowledge base.

Data will be collected to inform a long-term proposal directed towards local, territorial and federal ministries of health at the end of the three year project.

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