

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 16, 2011

### **FRASER HEALTH AND ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT JOIN FORCES TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE**

**ABBOTSFORD** – Fraser Health Mental Health and Addictions Services (MHA) and the Abbotsford Police Department have entered into a formal partnership to work together to respond more effectively to individuals in mental health and addiction crisis situations.

Building on an already strong working relationship in responding to emergency mental health and addiction situations in Abbotsford, the partners have developed a formalized Abbotsford Community Health Intervention Partnership (ACHIP) to improve support through a dedicated police officer (mental health liaison officer) and designated mental health professionals.

“The new partnership will help us provide critical, timely response to vulnerable individuals who need our support,” said Lois Dixon, Executive Director, Fraser Health Mental Health and Addictions Services. “By working more closely together, we can do a better job of connecting people in mental health crisis situations with the community supports and services that they need and reduce our reliance on hospital emergency departments as the first point of contact.”

Patrol police officers will continue to be the first responders in crisis situations. The focus of the ACHIP will be to better prepare these officers to provide urgent response. As well, ACHIP will provide follow-up to the first response, including meeting with the individual to see how their needs for mental health and addictions support can best be met.

“The Abbotsford Police Department’s mission is to make Abbotsford the safest city in British Columbia. Community safety is achieved through strong community partnerships and by fostering positive relationships with citizens,” said Abbotsford Police Chief Bob Rich. “The Abbotsford Community Health Intervention Partnership embodies those principles and will advance public safety.”

The partnership, which came into effect Feb. 1, 2011, includes:

- Professional telephone consultation when officers are concerned about community members who may be experiencing mental health or addictions-related crisis
- Outreach (with or without police) to clients, to provide consultation (brief assessment/triage)
- Referrals to mental health teams and/or other agencies appropriate to the individual’s needs
- Opportunities for sharing of expertise, including information/education for police to increase knowledge about mental health and addiction issues and improve crisis intervention skills

“The City of Abbotsford strongly supports this formalized partnership between Fraser Health and the Abbotsford Police Department,” said Abbotsford Mayor George W. Peary. “By combining our resources, we will be able to provide even greater support to people in our community that are facing mental health crisis situations.”

The services included in the new partnership will be available Tuesday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside of these hours, individuals in crisis will continue to have access to other crisis support services, including:

- 911 if the individual is in crisis and needs immediate assistance
- The After Hours Mental Health Service: 1-877-384-8062 (Monday to Friday 4:30 p.m. to 11 p.m., Weekends and Holidays 1 p.m. to 11 p.m.)
- The Centralized Crisis Line: 1-877-820-7444 (24 hours a day, every day)
- The Psychiatric Liaison Service in the Abbotsford Regional Hospital Emergency Department



## NEWS RELEASE

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