

MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release: Wednesday, August 24th, 2022

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Emily Grills: How a time of uncertainty strengthened community mental health services

August 24, 2022 – Emily Grills decided to work in mental health because of her passion to help people find joy in their lives. This is what still drives her current work as Program Coordinator for the Campbellford and District Community Mental Health Centre.

As with every aspect of life (especially health care), the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic redefined how Emily and her team provided clients with mental health services. But what didn't change is their commitment to do everything possible to best support their clients and their overall well-being.

Finding new ways to continue supporting clients

When the pandemic struck, Emily and her colleagues were directed to move from the office to home and virtual care became the new way of delivering care and services.

"There was a worry among the team about our clients and what technology they had in the home," shared Emily. "Some of our clients use pre-paid cell phones so when you're talking about having an hour-long counselling or psychiatry appointment, the cell phones with the pre-paid time would be eaten up quickly. We made arrangements for those clients to have extra time put on their phones so they could participate in their appointments."

The team adapted well and gained new skills to incorporate technology into their clinical work that continues today like the use of mental health apps and digital work sheets. The team is back in the office; however, clients still have the option for virtual appointments if they would prefer.

"Virtual care has become a standard practice and about half our clients still choose to do virtual appointments," said Emily. "It has allowed us to meet the needs of some of our clients by making it more accessible for those who face transportation barriers, which we often see in a rural community."

Proudest contribution

Looking back at the past two years, Emily recollects how concerned she and her team were for their clients' well-being.

"With so many places shutting down and not offering services due to COVID, the worry was that some of our clients may be without access to groceries or things to protect themselves from COVID-19."

The team pulled together and contacted clients to get a sense of what the needs were. They made care packages for each person and delivered it to their doorstep to ensure they had the necessary supplies such as fresh produce, perishable and non-perishable foods, toiletries, hand sanitizer, crossword puzzles and snacks and games if there were kids in the home.

"It made us feel really proud as a team and I felt good knowing we had helped relieve the stress of some of those individuals during a real time of uncertainty."