



BRIDGEPOINT
CENTER FOR EATING DISORDERS



MEDIA RELEASE

Eating Disorders Can't Afford to Wait: Eating Disorder Awareness Week (February 1-7, 2021)

January 25, 2021 (Milden) – Eating Disorders affect people of all genders, sexual orientations, ages, socioeconomic class, abilities, races, and ethnic backgrounds. That is why, from February 1st to 7th every year, Eating Disorder groups across Canada unite to commemorate Eating Disorder Awareness Week (EDAW) with a national week of action focused on educating the public about Eating Disorders.

Again this year, the province of Saskatchewan has proclaimed from February 1-7, 2021 as Eating Disorder Awareness Week. We simply can't afford to wait in advancing awareness and the treatment of eating disorders and the staggering statistics surrounding this mental illness reflect such need and urgency.

- Based on available data, at least one million people in Canada have a diagnosable eating disorder. However, based on global data of individuals affected, it is estimated that 1 in 13 people or 2.7 million people in Canada have an eating disorder making them the 3rd most prevalent mental illness in Canada.
- Eating Disorders carry the highest mortality rate of all psychiatric illnesses, including a high risk of suicide.
- These illnesses disrupt developmental trajectories, contributing to sufferers' delayed or non-entry into the workforce and dependence on social assistance.
- With early intervention and rapid access to quality treatment, approximately 75% of people with eating disorders recover. Despite this, it is estimated that only one in ten people with eating disorders receive appropriate treatment, and even fewer receive early intervention.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a spike in the number of those experiencing disordered eating. With increased isolation, heightened anxiety, and loss of support systems, COVID-19 creates a 'perfect storm' for people with eating disorders. The pandemic has negatively impacted those who have never struggled with disordered eating previously, including a high prevalence in youth, and also causing many individuals in recovery to relapse.

Historically, with access to holistic and residential eating disorder recovery programming at BridgePoint Center for Eating Disorder Recovery, those in Saskatchewan have had more access to low barrier and free treatment options than most provinces. At this point in the pandemic, all residential BridgePoint programming has been paused as we have pivoted and moved online. Following a stepped-care and patient-centered approach, BridgePoint has worked collaboratively with partners across Canada and established new funding partnerships to develop and launch virtual eating disorder recovery programming. The current complement of virtual programs includes intensive 2-day retreats, weekly online support groups, recovery support phone line, daily mental health and recovery texting service programs, and online e-learning self-guided courses. There will also be new content rolled out every month combining daily texts and adjunct self-paced psychoeducational online content and workbooks.

"We have embraced the silver linings of the pandemic to launch our program forward. Our virtual programs have created a lifeline for new, current, and past program participants as they have created a sense of community, connection, and an important resource on their recovery journey," says Carla Chabot, Executive Director at BridgePoint Center for Eating Disorder Recovery. "We hope that we will be successful in securing funding to allow for ongoing virtual programs in a post-pandemic environment. There is a need for both residential programming and virtual program options. We have been able to successfully meet the needs of more individuals virtually than we have historically—especially those who have experienced barriers to accessing our program due to location, logistics of being away from home, disabilities, and medical stability."

To meet the needs and negative impacts of the pandemic, new programs will be offered for youth, families, and their clinicians. We are excited to partner with Cameco Mental Health Foundations to expand our youth and caregiver program options. Funding from the Saskatchewan Research Foundation supported the development and rollout of a new texting program that delivers daily supportive text messages to subscribers' mobile phones. Through a set of daily messages, people receive advice and encouragement that helps develop healthy personal coping skills and resiliency. New clinician programming is scheduled to roll out this spring to create capacity with primary care teams who lack the education needed to support their clients with eating disorder recovery.

Honourable Everett Hindley, Minister of Mental Health & Addictions says, "The last ten months have been challenging for Saskatchewan youth and adults, but our government is committed to making it easier for everyone to access the mental health supports they need, including eating disorder services. By proclaiming Eating Disorder Awareness Week, we are ensuring our communities truly understand the magnitude of eating disorders, and helping to remove the stigma surrounding the illness."

Eating Disorders Awareness Week Events (Feb 1-7, 2021):

The College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, "Be Well" Strategy, and the Student Wellness Centre (all within the University of Saskatchewan) are hosting a number of events for Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Amy Pickering, a dietitian leading these events says, "It's been a privilege to work with two wonderful groups of nutrition students at the U of S who have planned, developed, and will be facilitating the roll-out of these events. Eating disorders still have significant stigma in society. What's more, our culture normalizes and promotes harmful dieting and disordered eating. We hope these events help de-stigmatize eating concerns and encourage university students and all members of our community to heal their relationship with food and body, whether someone has a diagnosed eating disorder or not."

BridgePoint has collaborated again this year with this group. Join us virtually on February 4 to discuss eating disorders, weight stigma, body positivity and resources available to those struggling with eating disorders in Saskatchewan— Featuring Rhea Lewandoski, RD, MB-EAT & Lauralyn Blackburn, MSW, Clinical RSW, CEDS-S, CDWF from BridgePoint Center for Eating Disorders. <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/free-eating-disorder-awareness-week-webinar-tickets-135928430595>

They are also hosting a podcast series titled 'Food and Body Acceptance'. Each episode in the 4-part series will feature guest speakers sharing their experience, either personally or professionally, with eating disorders. Topics will include intuitive eating, body acceptance and common misconceptions. Each episode brings a unique perspective and experience to the discussion of Food and Body Acceptance. You can access these free podcast episodes via their Instagram (@usask_edaw_2021) and Facebook page (U of S Eating Disorder Awareness Week 2021) on Feb 1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th. More information to all their events can be found on their facebook pages at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/508780622658870>.

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About BridgePoint Center for Eating Disorder Recovery

BridgePoint Center for Eating Disorders (BridgePoint) has provided holistic and recovery-focused residential based eating disorder programming to Saskatchewan residents for free of charge since 1997. BridgePoint is a provincially approved programming that works in partnership with the Saskatchewan Health Authority as part of the continuum of healthcare in Saskatchewan. All program information can be accessed here: <http://www.bridgepointcenter.ca/programs>.

For More Information about BridgePoint:

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