

Envision Counselling & Support Shares Stats, Requests Support from City Council

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Envision Counselling & Support's Resource Development Coordinator Tania Hlohovsky with Executive Director Christa Daku at Monday's meeting of Weyburn City Council (photo by Marna McManus).

Increased demand for mental health support was brought before Weyburn City Council on Monday. Representatives of [Envision Counselling and Support Centre](#), a regional organization supporting healthy choices in individuals, families, and communities by offering innovative programming and diverse counseling and support services.

"Although we're very pleased and grateful with the community support that we've received throughout the community with the stakeholders and partners that we have, what is happening in the city and in our region, as you know, with the downturn in the economy, we're seeing a real influx of mental health issues, and that's province-wide, to be honest," shared Executive Director of Envision, Christa Daku.

"With that, we've been successful in a collaboration, with a provincial network that I belong to, Envision belongs, Family Services Saskatchewan, to bring Walk-In Counselling to our area," she continued. "So what we're here to really inform you of is we are advocating at a higher level for the individuals that live in our community and we would really like the City's support in doing that."

She said Weyburn's statistics are the highest of any of the southeast.

"We really would like to plea that the City step forward and support us in our cause for individuals living in a healthier community," Daku requested. "Because that's what our goal is and that's what our mission is and, be it sexual assault is on the rise, domestic violence is on the rise, and obviously mental health issues is on the rise, and we see those individuals coming in through our programs, not in acute mental health circumstances they seek through mental health services, but we see before it gets to that acute level and it's on the rise with all the stressors that we're dealing with."

She shared some of those statistics.

"Intake numbers, in our interpersonal violence and abuse is 76 and that's an all-time high, and that encompasses individuals who have been sexually assaulted, living in domestic violence situations, and overall unhealthy

relationships, and the family counseling program that we're running out of the Envision office here is at 35, and that's fairly encompassing as well, if you look at a family, there are three, or four, or five involved in a family," Daku shared. "Then we have the family support program, which is contracted, and we have the voluntary parenting support program through our services. We are having all-time high numbers for that as well, and that, we truly believe, is a prevention to kids becoming involved in the child protection system."

Councillor Van Betuw inquired as to any government funding the organization is currently receiving.

"Our government funding is stable," replied Daku. "We were frozen for three years, but they gave us the one per cent increase. Although, a lot of our government funding goes towards the salaries and operational support as we continue to grow. There are shortfalls in mileage, shortfalls in IT support. We're a growing agency and there are a lot of additional costs that come along with that growth, and that's where our sponsors come in."

Tania Hlohovsky shared how the local Walk-In Counselling is available two days a week at the Salvation Army in Weyburn and Estevan, which is entry-level, accessible the same day, and designed to deal with immediate crisis and referrals to long-term counseling or mental health care.

"We're trying to respond to the needs of the community and this is something that we have even learned about in our needs assessment, and we've learned that this is just such an emerging issue, whether it's teenagers, parents, whether it's people with any kind of mental health issue. It doesn't have to do with our mandate of violence, it

can just be a mental health issue and then we'll refer them to the appropriate help that they may need, something more specific," she said.

Hlohovsky said she spends a lot of time visiting, RM councils and town councils, not just to ask for support but to inform the community leaders of what services are available in their own communities.

"Part of us visiting, and part of us coming to these council meetings, is to really share our services and share what's happening with our organization with the leaders of the community so that you can then spread the word, pass it on, and share that message to others," she added.

She noted she has been two about half of the RMs in the Envision service region, and that Estevan has recently committed to \$1,500 per year toward the support of the non-profit organization. She said they hope Weyburn joins in on the support.

Councillor Dick Michel thanked them for the integrity of their organization and for what they do. He noted Council is currently in the budget process, so they will certainly have a look at it and get back to them.

[Walk-in Counseling services](#) in Weyburn are Tuesdays and Fridays at the Weyburn Salvation Army (located at the corner of Railway Avenue and Fourth Street), with registration beginning at 10:00 a.m. and sessions beginning at 11:00.