MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Secretary Treasurers of School Authorities
Director of Provincial Schools Branch

FROM: Barry Finlay
Director
Special Education Policy and Programs Branch

DATE: December 4, 2012

SUBJECT: Ontario’s Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy: Update on Initiatives and Funding

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a further update on initiatives and funding that are part of Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario’s Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy (Strategy).

The Ministries of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), Education (EDU), Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU), along with the Attorney General and Aboriginal Affairs, continue to work collaboratively to create a more integrated and responsive child and youth mental health and addictions system. It is recognized that implementation of the Strategy would be impossible without the commitment of school boards, as well as child and youth mental health agencies and health sector partners, and we are very grateful for your hard work over the past year.

Mental Health Leaders
A total of 30 school boards have been allocated funding to retain or hire a Mental Health Leader for 2012-13. Mental Health Leaders hired in 2011-12 will continue to work on implementing their coordinated, comprehensive board-level student mental health and addictions strategies, while those to be hired in 2012-13 will commence developing their strategies. All Mental Health Leaders will work closely with School Mental Health ASSIST.

Educator Professional Learning Opportunities
To continue the effective work being done to support students with mental health and addictions issues, resources to support professional learning opportunities will again be made available to school boards. In 2012-13, all 72 school boards, school authorities (excluding hospital school authorities) and provincial/demonstration schools will be provided with funding for release time of educators. Professional learning is to focus on capacity building related to the recognition of early signs of mental health and addiction issues, as well as classroom strategies that can be used to support students in need.
**Working Together for Kids’s Mental Health (Working Together)**
The purpose of *Working Together* is to help key professionals in schools, child and youth mental health agencies and the health sector identify child and youth mental health and addictions needs earlier, and work collaboratively to respond effectively. *Working Together* was introduced in four communities representing seven census divisions in 2010-11, (Haliburton, Niagara, Sudbury, Greater Sudbury, Manitoulin, Hastings and Prince Edward) and expanded to seven more during 2011-12 (Simcoe, Hamilton, Lambton, Lennox-Addington, Frontenac, Ottawa and Peel). Working Together is playing an important role in preparing communities for changes associated with transformation of the child and youth mental health system over the next few years.

**Child and Youth Mental Health Workers to Support Students in Schools**
Funding was allocated by MCYS in 2011-12 to community-based child and youth mental health agencies to hire child and youth mental health workers to address the mental health needs of students, through a focus on supporting successful transitions between settings, including schools. This resulted in 139 workers being hired provincially to provide direct services to students in 2011-12. Funding has been allocated in 2012-13 for agencies to hire an additional 36 workers to support students in schools, beginning in fall 2012.

**Child and Youth Mental Health Professionals**
Over the course of 2011-12, resources were provided to select community-based child and youth mental health workers to hire 260 new child and youth mental health workers to provide direct mental health services to children, youth and their families. Funding was provided to those agencies best able to increase services quickly to reduce wait times and respond more rapidly to the needs of more children and youth.

**Child and Youth Mental Health Directory**
Development is currently under way for a Child and Youth Mental Health Directory, to improve public access to service information across the province of Ontario.

**Mental Health and Addictions Nurses in District School Boards**
Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses (144) with mental health and addictions expertise are currently being hired to work in schools to provide early identification and intervention supports and services for students. The nurses will be hired and employed by Ontario’s 14 Community Care Access Centres (CCACs). Thirteen of the 144 nurses will be Nurse Leaders and will provide supervision to the clinical nurses within each CCAC. Nurse Leaders have begun engaging school boards across the province to determine how best to use the nurses given local resources, needs and geography. Depending on local hiring, it is expected that the nurses will start working in schools over fall and winter 2012-13.

**Service Collaboratives**
Service collaboratives are groups of service providers from diverse human service organizations working together to plan and deliver a seamless continuum of mental health and addiction services to people with mental health needs and/or addiction issues in a region or community. Facilitated by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, this initiative will establish 18 service collaboratives to support coordinated services for children, youth and adults, including a focus on children and youth in transitions from hospital to community settings, between health and justice systems, and from child- and youth-focused to adult services. Some service collaboratives may include schools or school boards in their work, depending on their identified priorities. Four service collaboratives were established in Thunder Bay, London, Ottawa and Simcoe Muskoka in 2011-12, and eight more will be established by March 31, 2013.
Aboriginal Mental Health and Addictions Workers
In recognition of the unique needs of Aboriginal children and youth, new supports for mental health services are being provided by MCYS. Over the coming months, new Aboriginal mental health and addictions workers will be hired in high-needs Aboriginal communities to provide children and youth with culturally-appropriate services. MCYS will also be meeting with stakeholders and partners to discuss training for Aboriginal mental health and addictions workers.

Expansion and Enhancement of Telepsychiatry Services
In the coming months, child and youth telepsychiatry services will be enhanced and expanded to more rural and remote areas, and under-served communities through expansion of technology, linkages with telemedicine, and increasing the number of service access sites.

Moving on Mental Health – A system that makes sense for children and youth
MCYS will be phasing in changes to the child and youth mental health system over the next three years that will transform the experience of children, youth, families and caregivers. These changes, when fully implemented, will support clear and streamlined pathways to care, and will result in defined core services to be available in communities across Ontario. More information on Moving on Mental Health is available at www.ontario.ca/youthmentalhealth.

Thank you for your on-going commitment to helping all Ontario students reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Barry Finlay
Director
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c. Marian Mlakar, Director, Children and Youth at Risk Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Sheree Davis, Director, Community and Population Health Branch, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care