

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Thursday April 9, 2009



Partnership, Collaboration and Communication Buzz words for upcoming symposium . . .

Sault Ste. Marie, ON - On Thursday, April 16, 2009 the result of a unique partnership of the Algoma District School Board, Algoma Family Services and the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will be unveiled at a special symposium for educators and leaders of child and youth service providers across the Algoma District.

"The purpose of this 'Strengthening Partnerships, Supporting Our Youth Symposium' is to build awareness and understanding around agency/organization/school programs, counselling services and supports available to school-age children and youth throughout the Algoma District," said Mario Turco, Director of Education with the Algoma District School Board.

During the 2007-2008 school year, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Education launched the Student Support Leadership Initiative. Funding was provided to develop a framework that would enhance local partnerships and build collaborative working relationships between school boards, schools, and community-service providers to better meet the needs of children and youth in our communities.

Through this initiative, over twenty-five community agencies and organizations have been working in collaboration with the Algoma District School Board and the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board.

"This ground-breaking initiative is proof that the welfare of the children in the communities served by the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board is a top priority. It was an honour to be part of a collaborative effort with our coterminous Board, and all of our partners, that will allow us to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for all of the students in our care," said HSCDSB Director of Education John Stadnyk.

"Our Board is very excited to be a part of this initiative. We believe it truly takes a village to raise a child," said Mr. Turco. *"When everyone in the community comes together with a common focus our students benefit and our community benefits. We know this is a positive direction for the youth and children in Algoma and we look forward to continuing our work."*

The result of their efforts over the past year is *The Algoma Model*, a blueprint designed to promote and support the positive behaviour and mental health of all students in order to maximize their learning potential.

"Our publicly-funded schools represent the single largest investment our society makes in the development of our children and youth. These schools are staffed with skilled, dedicated professionals who are second only to parents in terms of the number of hours they spend interacting with our children and youth. It is only logical for Algoma Family Services, as the local mental health provider, to partner with the school system in order to leverage our collective

resources and maximize the supports and services available to the children and youth of our community.” states Lynn Ryan MacKenzie, Executive Director of Algoma Family Services.

“The Algoma Model envisions a broad-based, integrated approach to enhancing mental health, addressing the needs of at-risk populations, and providing treatment to children and youth struggling with mental illness. The breadth of partnerships which have been developed in the early stages of this effort is truly exciting. And, Algoma Family Services looks forward to the continued evolution and community capacity building that will come from this new paradigm of collaboration and integrated service delivery,” explains Dr. MacKenzie.

The tool being unveiled at this symposium is the *Algoma Model* website that is the first of its kind in Ontario. This website is a portal developed to assist in searching key services, supports and resources in the area of community mental health and well-being for school-aged children and youth in the Algoma District.

“This use of technology will allow our entire education team to interact with the agencies that have expertise in mental health issues. It will give principals, teachers, and eventually parents, an easily navigable guide to the programs available to support the physical, mental and spiritual needs of our students.” added Mr. Stadnyk.

The website portal will initially be available to agency partners and child/youth service providers within the community who are part of *The Algoma Model* initiative. The intent is to have the website available to the public in the next few months once counsellors, intake workers and front line individuals have test-driven the site to ensure it will provide the information parents, teachers, even students may be looking for.

One of the highlights of the symposium will be a message from Dr. Simon Davidson, Chair of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee for the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Dr. Davidson is a child, adolescent and family psychiatrist and a passionate advocate both for youth and youth mental health services and has been involved in liaison work at the federal, provincial and regional government levels. Dr. Davidson will speak from both a national and provincial level on School-Based Children’s Mental Health and the research behind successful community partnership models.

Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne and Minister of Child and Youth Services Deb Matthews are sending a joint videotaped message to open the symposium.

A full agenda is planned for the 16th at the Marconi Hall that will see more than 250 local children’s services leaders.

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For more information about the symposium, please contact:

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