

The CISSS des Laurentides confirms mental health services continue to be provided for vulnerable patients in the Laurentians

Saint-Jérôme, April 30, 2020 – The CISSS des Laurentides refutes a story broadcast by TVA and published in the Journal de Montréal alleging that an internal memo circulated instructing personnel to call patients awaiting care to inform them that their case could not be accommodated. The establishment's priority remains to provide all necessary care and services to all vulnerable patients in the region, especially during a pandemic.

The CISSS des Laurentides follows and implements all ministerial guidelines and ensures that the information is conveyed to its teams in real time. In fact, on April 7 a memorandum was sent to all employees working in the mental health sector, clarifying work requirements during the pandemic in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Services. More than 7000 individuals have in fact been contacted by Mental Health Services since the beginning of the crisis.

Our services have been adjusting to the situation as the pandemic evolves. Although no program or service is presently closed, the crisis has brought about changes in operating procedures to adapt to the current situation and to respond to priority needs, for example:

- Consultations by telephone instead of in-person (with rare exceptions);
- Individual telephone follow-up instead of group after-care;
- Medium and long-term after-care replaced by short-term follow-up.

Our teams make every effort to respond to the needs of vulnerable patients, notably individuals who are suicidal, homicidal, or grieving the death of a loved one whether or not COVID-19-related, individuals with chronic mental illness or at risk for psychological distress, psychoactive substance users or individuals experiencing a substance-use-related mental disorder, and patients who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Furthermore, additional measures have been put into place in the region since the beginning of the crisis:

- Opening of 10 beds for homeless individuals;
- Opening of 10 beds for patients from substance-abuse rehabilitation facilities;
- Opening of 14 rooms for women who are victims of domestic violence;
- Opening of 8 beds for patients of non-institutional mental health residential resources (RI-RTF en santé mentale);
- Clinical support by nurses for administering home injections to patients experiencing mental health issues;
- Opening of 18 emergency homeless shelter places in collaboration with the city of Saint-Jérôme and community organisations.

We also remind anyone experiencing anxiety or distress that the following services are available at all times:

- The crisis intervention team is fully functioning and available;
- The Info-social team has been consolidated to respond more rapidly to requests for help;
- The mental health access team and psychosocial support teams are fully functioning and ready to receive patients.

Lastly, the CISSS des Laurentides is grateful to all mental health personnel and support organisations who, in spite of the pandemic, make a difference by being there for our patients each and every day.

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