

## NEW PROGRAM FOCUSES ON FAMILIES OF FIRST RESPONDERS IMPACTED BY PTSD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Moncton, NB** – Family members of first responders impacted by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) will now have access to new supports in increasing resiliency and improving mental health outcomes. Medavie Health Foundation is partnering with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) to develop *Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) for Families and other Supportive Relationships*. The Foundation is providing \$74,600, with Brain Canada Foundation providing matching funding, for further adaption and knowledge exchange, making this a near \$150,000 initiative.

This new national program – to be available in both French and English – will be adapted for family members and others in supportive relationships of paramedics and other first responders. Relevant stakeholders will be involved in the development of the program, which will be evaluated by those it is aimed at supporting.

*Road to Mental Readiness for Families and other Supportive Relationships* was launched this morning at the Ambulance New Brunswick Fleet Centre in Moncton, with partner, stakeholder and community representatives in attendance.

### Quick Facts

- Originally developed by the Department of National Defence, R2MR was adapted by MHCC to meet the mental health needs of first responders. Evaluation results show that participating in R2MR training reduces the stigma that often surrounds mental health problems and mental illness, and increases resiliency.<sup>1</sup>
- This new program will be developed by MHCC and Dr. Heather Stuart of Queen's University, with support from the University of Calgary's Dr. Andrew Szeto, who helped develop the R2MR program for first responders.
- First responders, whose jobs expose them to persistent, repeated exposure to potentially triggering incidents, are at ongoing risk of developing mental health problems, including PTSD.

- Research on U.S. veterans has shown the harmful impact of PTSD on families, including marital problems, family violence, partner distress, and behaviour problems in children. <sup>2</sup>

### Quotes

“Paramedics are the lifeblood of our organization, which makes post-traumatic stress disorder a cause that is near and dear to us. We recognize the impact PTSD can have on a family. This program will support their mental health needs while providing them with the tools to help their loved one.”

– Erik Sande, *President, Medavie Health Services*

“This new program embodies our commitment of investing in the health and well-being of Canadians through our support of innovative, evidence-based solutions that address the health care needs of our communities. It’s also an example of a different kind of health care, one that doesn’t start in a doctor’s office, but in our kitchens and living rooms in keeping Canadians healthy and living their best lives.”

– Bernard Lord, *CEO, Medavie*

“It is clear that improving mental health is a priority in paramedicine and other first responders. But we often forget about the family members and the important role they can play in supporting their loved ones. By supporting first responders and their families through R2MR, we aim to increase literacy and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, helping to create a healthy work and home life environment. It says a lot about Medavie and Brain Canada that they have recognized this and have decided to contribute to the development of this important project.”

– Ed Mantler, *Vice President Programs and Priorities, Mental Health Commission of Canada*

“Brain Canada believes that by better connecting research findings and practice, every discovery along the pathway carries the potential to improve lives. Brain Canada is proud to partner with Medavie Health Foundation and the Mental Health Commission of Canada on this initiative that aims to improve the mental health outcomes of first responders.”

– Inez Jabalpurwala, *President and CEO, Brain Canada Foundation*

**Associated Links**

[1. The Road to Mental Readiness](#)

[2. Effects of PTSD on Family - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

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**About Medavie Health Foundation**

Medavie Health Foundation is funded by [Medavie Blue Cross](#) and [Medavie Health Services](#) as part of a long-term commitment to make a lasting impact in the communities where our employees and customers live and work. The Foundation supports and promotes innovative and evidence-based solutions to address some of our country's most pressing physical and mental health care challenges, with a focus on child and youth mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, and type 2 diabetes. It aims to bring organizations and communities together through collaborative multi-year partnerships and to support grassroots, community-based initiatives through an annual grants program. For more information and to sign up for our e-newsletter, visit us at [medaviehealthfoundation.ca](http://medaviehealthfoundation.ca).

**Medavie Health Services**, a primary health care solutions organization, manages a number of subsidiary companies in the fields of pre-hospital emergency medical services (EMS), mobile integrated health, telehealth medical communications, public safety delivery and clinical training. These services are provided by members of the Medavie Health Services Group of Companies through long-term and performance-based contracts. Medavie Health Services is currently contracted to provide EMS services in six Canadian provinces, and in Massachusetts, making it the largest private provider of EMS management services in Canada.

As a not-for-profit company, Medavie is proud to commit an annual social dividend to the Medavie Health Foundation.

**About the Mental Health Commission of Canada**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a catalyst for change. We are collaborating with hundreds of partners to change the attitudes of Canadians toward mental health problems and to improve services and support. Our goal is to help people who live with mental health problems and illnesses lead meaningful and productive lives. Together we create change. The Mental Health Commission of Canada is funded by Health Canada.

[www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca) | [strategy.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://strategy.mentalhealthcommission.ca)

**About Brain Canada**

Brain Canada is a national non-profit organization headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, that enables and supports excellent, innovative, paradigm-changing brain research in Canada. For almost twenty years, Brain Canada has made the case for the brain as a single, complex system with commonalities across the range of neurological disorders, mental illnesses and addictions, brain and spinal cord injuries. Looking at the brain as one system has underscored the need for increased collaboration across disciplines and institutions, and a smarter way to invest in brain research that is focused on outcomes that will benefit patients and families. Brain Canada's vision is to understand the brain, in health and illness, to improve lives and achieve societal impact.

The Canada Brain Research Fund is a partnership between the Government of Canada and Brain Canada, designed to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. Brain Canada and its partners have committed to raising \$120M, which is being matched by Health Canada on a 1:1 basis for a total of \$240M. For more information: [www.braincanada.ca](http://www.braincanada.ca).

**For more information:**

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