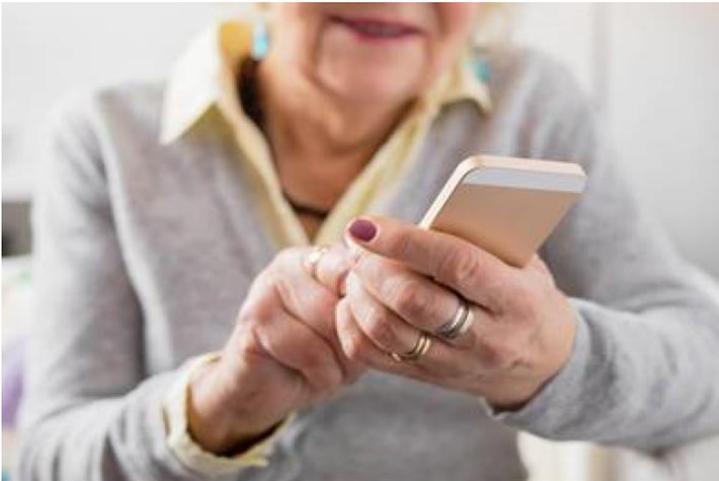


## Envision's 'Bridging the Distance' program helps those who feel isolated

Weyburn Review -- JANUARY 25, 2021 02:41 PM



Envision Counselling and Support Centre has been able to help out seniors and shut-ins who have been feeling the stress of being isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Sometimes you can't talk to your family about these feelings," said a woman we're calling Sarah, a 71-year-old who phoned into Envision Counselling.

"It was confidential. It was somebody I could talk to. Just a voice on the other end of the line. You don't have to worry how they're looking at you, how you're acting."

Weyburn resident Sarah, who chose to remain anonymous, received counselling through the Bridging the Distance program, a new telephone support service helping individuals during the pandemic. The program is a confidential toll-free support program for those who are 55 years and over, are living with disabilities, or are housebound individuals. Sarah says talking to a local counsellor made the sharing easier.

"It's a hard call to make, but I thought, if it's going to help, it's well worth it," she said. Sarah shared that since the lockdown began, her mild anxiety has increased, so much that the last time she saw a health worker, she felt like she was having a panic attack. She told her counsellor about what was happening and was given some tools to help cope with her feelings and some materials to read on her own.

Sarah said it has made a big difference. She can go back and read her email and it helps her settle down. "Right off the bat, talking about it seemed to help. I just felt like ... I can live again."

Bridging the Distance has no cost attached, and the program has expanded in 2021 to be available to people in more communities in the Southeast: Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle, Oxbow and all rural areas in this corner of the province, right to the Manitoba border.

"We're trying to make adjustments to our services to help with the mental health crisis in our communities," said Christa Daku, Envision Counselling and Support Centre Executive Director. "When people cannot leave their homes and connect with people as they normally have, they are at risk of greater issues, such as suicide or addiction."

"I would say that there are so many in the same boat, and we want to get the word out that help is available to them, just on the other end of the phone," Daku said.

Individuals who are housebound, or those living with disabilities can now access Bridging the Distance counselling. "Starting in 2021, we are able to offer the program to those younger than 55 years who are shut-in or unable to leave their homes, due to health issues," Daku said.

The first phone call from Envision Counselling will be with an intake counsellor, who finds the best program fit for each issue by asking a few questions. From there the Bridging the Distance counsellor will begin telephone support.

Sarah said her life has changed for the better since she reached out to Envision Counselling. "It's a big decision telling people what you're going through. If they could just realize there is help out there and make that first step, to make that call."

"But I think by telling my story, it could help someone else and maybe they will realize they're not the only one out there," she said.

In Weyburn and surrounding area, call 306-842-8821 for counselling or to make enquiries about local services. In Estevan 306-637-4004, or Carlyle, 306-453-2405.

Envision Counselling and Support Centre has been supporting Southeast Saskatchewan for over 25 years by providing innovative programming and diverse counselling and support services to individuals, couples and families. Individuals looking for more information can find it on Envision Counselling's website at [www.envisioncounsellingcentre.com](http://www.envisioncounsellingcentre.com).