

# Weyburn Review

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

Sabrina Kraft / Weyburn Review -- FEBRUARY 9, 2021 11:42 AM



It can be difficult for anyone who is feeling the stress of being isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that those who are most at risk, seniors and shut-ins, Envision Counselling and Support Centre has introduced their 'Bridging the Distance' program.

"It has been a really great expansion for our programming, since COVID-19 restrictions were put in place. We received funding from the United Ways (Regina and Estevan) so that we could expand where there are gaps in regards to mental wellness," explained Christa Daku, Envision Counselling and Support Centre Executive Director.

"One of the ways that we decided to expand is to assist the senior population, those who are most likely to feel isolation and loneliness."

Bridging the Distance has no cost attached, and the program was 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.

Individuals who are housebound, or those living with disabilities can now access Bridging the Distance counselling. 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. 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.

"This specific program was for seniors specifically, and we have applied for the Community Initiatives Fund for the next fiscal year so that we can continue with the program. During the application, we noticed an additional gap, and that was with individuals that may be experiencing difficulties with mobility, or with isolation," said Daku.

She noted that Envision Counselling and Support Centre has seen increased calls for service in the past few months, especially with increased needs in the community. The organization is currently working on re-branding their Walk-In Counselling program, since people can access the program with a phone call to.

"We highly recommend that anyone who needs the Walk-In Counselling to call us first thing in the morning, (on Tuesdays and Fridays), as often times our clinic gets full right away," said Daku.

During December, Envision wanted to be creative and do something client specific, that would encourage donations to the organization. They had a successful gift card donation program that really supported their clients in need.

The hope for Envision is to make the Bridging the Distance program long-term. "The point of an expansion is to pilot the program first, to see the community response and the numbers. Then we will look at core funding through a government ministry for sustainable funding," said Daku.

"I always want to shout out to my team. They are amazing, across the board, and we have grown so much. The demands get higher and higher, and they keep stepping up. They are a good crew."