



KEY MESSAGES REGARDING UPCOMING CHANGES TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT NORTHERN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The following Question & Answer document strives to address some of the most asked questions about changes relating to youth mental health services at Northern Secondary School.

WHY IS LUMENUS CHANGING THE WAY SERVICES ARE DELIVERED AT NORTHERN SECONDARY?

With the need for mental health support at an all-time high, our responsibility at Lumenus is to ensure equitable access to the mental health support provided by our team of four School Focused Workers by all schools in Toronto.

For years, Northern Secondary school has been in the unique position of having an on-site, full-time School Focused Worker who, over time, has become a valued member of the school community. This long-standing arrangement at Northern pre-dates Lumenus (our organization is the still-recent result of an amalgamation of four smaller agencies, each with their own histories of partnerships, collaborations, and service arrangements). Not long after Lumenus came to be, we realized that the arrangement with Northern was unique, but stood in the way of our ability to ensure students across Toronto have equitable access to our four School Focused Workers.

As of the start of the next academic school year (September 2023), the School Focused Worker at Northern will no longer be working on-site at the school but will continue to be available along with three other School Focused Workers employed by Lumenus, to help address the mental health needs of students at Northern and other schools in Toronto.

We have been working with the school and TDSB to ensure the community is well informed about the coming changes and knows that support services remain in place for students.

WILL STUDENTS AT NORTHERN STILL HAVE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THROUGH LUMENUS? IF SO, HOW AND WHERE?

Yes! Lumenus employs a team of four School Focused Workers who provide mental health support to students in Toronto. In addition to support offered by this team, Lumenus offers a variety of programs and services that can be accessed by students attending Northern Secondary and by all youth throughout Toronto. They include:

- Central Toronto Youth Wellness Hub at 40 Orchard View Blvd., (a short walk from Northern) <https://www.lumenus.ca/programs-and-services/central-toronto-youth-wellness-hub-ontario/>
- What's up walk-in clinics <https://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/>
- Help Ahead – centralized intake for all child and youth mental health services in Toronto <https://helpahead.ca/>

WHEN WILL THE NEW MODEL OF SERVICE TAKE EFFECT AT NORTHERN?

September 2023.

ARE THERE ADVANTAGES TO THE NEW MODEL OF SERVICE?

We are confident that the new model of service will continue to support students at Northern as well as from other schools. Between our team of four School Focused Workers, the Central Toronto Youth Wellness Hub, and the Walk-in Clinic within blocks of Northern Secondary, students have more options for support as well as options outside of regular school hours. If one member of our staff team is not the right fit for an individual requiring support, there is also an opportunity to switch to another member. Broadening the diversity of the qualified professionals supporting students is a strong benefit of the new model as identity and representation in direct service roles are impactful for outcomes and engagement for young people of all backgrounds.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO NORTHERN STUDENTS WHO HAVE AN ONGOING NEED FOR SUPPORT DURING THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION?

Lumenus is committed to ensuring continuity of service and all current service plans will continue to be addressed throughout the transition. We know continuity of care is important.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE SCHOOL FOCUSED WORKER WHO HAS BEEN ON-SITE AT NORTHERN FULL-TIME?

Our School Focused Worker who has worked on-site at Northern is part of a team of four who will continue to support students at Northern as well as from other schools throughout Toronto. We are committed to ensuring schools and students have equitable access to our services.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THOSE FROM LUMENUS WHO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS?

School Focused Workers are professionals able to provide psychotherapy services to children, youth, adults and families. Some have Master of Social Work or Master of Psychology or related degrees. All must be registered with a relevant college to offer psychotherapy.

CHANGE CAN BE HARD. WE KNOW THIS.

We acknowledge that the new service model represents a change and are allowing for a transition period whereby the current arrangement with Northern will remain in place until the end of this academic year (June 2023), with the new model commencing in September of 2023. Our commitment at Lumenus is to ensure that our team of four School Focused Workers are available to provide equitable access by students, to the mental health supports we offer.

WILL THE NEW MODEL OF SERVICE MAKE ACCESSING PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT SERVICES HARDER?

We are confident that the new model of service will continue to support students at Northern as well as other schools. Between our team of four School Focused Workers, the Central Toronto Youth Wellness Hub, and the Walk-in Clinic within blocks of Northern Secondary, students have more options for support as well as options outside of regular school hours.

A NEW SYSTEM THAT CENTRALIZES ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN TORONTO WILL BECOME OPERATIONAL NEXT YEAR.

In 2023, Help Ahead will become the central point of intake (CPI) for infant, child and youth mental health services in Toronto. The redesign will match clients to the service(s) in the area of the city that best suits their needs and improve service navigation. Over the last few years, extensive research and consultation were conducted to arrive at the recommended model including insight from clients and families who have received or are receiving service, and the input of system partners, including representatives from education, child welfare and government. We believe this new approach will simplify access to services and help ensure a seamless continuum of services for those who need them.

DOES LUMENUS HAVE LONG WAIT LISTS FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

Students will connect with TDSB's Professional Support Services at Northern who will contact the Manager of Lumenus' School Focused Worker program who will ensure that a School Focused Worker is assigned to the student. While we endeavor to ensure those in need of our programs and services have access quickly and efficiently, there are periods of peak demand that sometimes require waiting for services. Our goal is always to attend to and support those in need of mental health supports as quickly as possible.

WHY IS THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH IN TORONTO – AND IS ENOUGH BEING DONE TO ADDRESS IT?

The mental health needs of young people across our city are at an all-time high, especially after the past few years of Covid-induced social isolation and anxiety. Of course, there are other contributing factors too – things like physical, emotional, and social changes, poverty, exposure to abuse, and more. At Lumenus, we are committed to ensuring the funding and donations we receive help as many infants, children, youth, adults, and families as possible.

WHO IS LUMENUS? WHAT DOES THE AGENCY OFFER?

Lumenus Community Services is one of Ontario's largest community agencies offering mental health, developmental, autism and early years intervention services to infants, children, youth, adults (where an appropriate service/program match exists), and families across the Greater Toronto Area. Through an integrated and collaborative approach, our clinical staff wrap our over 120 programs and services around our clients to find the best way to address each of our clients' unique needs.

Each year Lumenus provides vital supports to over 12,000 infants, children and youth. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing the demand for our mental health services increase year after year.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT LUMENUS?

<https://www.lumenus.ca/programs-services/>

HOW IS LUMENUS FUNDED?

Lumenus receives funding from the provincial government, specifically the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children Community and Social Services. We receive a small portion of funding from other sources including City of Toronto, United Way, federal government, and donors.

IS THE GOVERNMENT INVESTING ENOUGH IN MENTAL HEALTH GIVEN THE NEED?

Mental health needs are very high, and funding is insufficient to address the current needs let alone the exponential increase in demand. Lumenus works in partnership with the provincial government to ensure that the funding we receive is used as effectively and efficiently as possible to reach the most people as quickly as possible. When someone with mental health needs can access services early, quickly, and for the duration of need, we are often able to restore wellness earlier and more completely, often resulting in less suffering to the individual and significant savings to our health care system. We believe it is vital that the investment in our services reflect the true need, and as such, remain strong advocates for increased funding for our organization and sector, and ever grateful to those who support our organization by way of donations.

If you have reviewed this document but still have questions for our team, please email us at communityrelations@lumenus.ca