

COMMUNITY
NetLink

NEWS FOR THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK



SPRING 2022 | VOLUME 36

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Youth Pulse Check

“The Youth Pulse Check survey was designed to better understand the gaps and barriers that English-speaking youth face when they try to access services,” explained Amy Bilodeau, Program Manager for Youth and Mental Health at CHSSN.

“This 15–29 youth demographic is new to many of our networks so these results will help concentrate our efforts in improving the pathways to mental health care.”

Dr. Sunita Nigam, a researcher based in the Eastern Townships, worked with the Youth Mental Health Initiative to design an online questionnaire concentrating on mental health needs and service accessibility.

The survey was distributed through a variety of CHSSN networks and partner

organizations including PROCEDE, McGill, Concordia, Bishop’s, and YES Montreal. This resulted in 456 respondents, a significant survey sample with a demographic that’s notoriously hard to reach.

“It’s not a large enough sample to be fully representative,” cautioned Nigam, “but there was enough response for us to report significant findings. The big standout was the impact financial stress is having on mental health among anglophone young people.”



Youth Pulse Check
continued...

Nearly two thirds of respondents said they were struggling financially and half of those reported that this was having a negative impact on their mental health. The link between financial struggles and mental health challenges is notably stronger among some identifiable groups like young people who have exited foster care and gender nonconforming youth.

These and other issues like stigma identified by Nigam mean that follow up is required. Bilodeau said that one element of CHSSN's response is clear:

"We asked survey respondents if they wanted to stay connected with us and keep the conversation going. A strong majority said yes so we intend to reinforce these links."

"This is our first time talking directly with youth in a survey," observed Jennifer Johnson, the Executive Director of CHSSN. "We know that this kind of information is critical to ensure that youth are getting the services they need from community-based and public system programming."



(L to R) Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN and Amy Bilodeau, Program Manager of Youth & Mental Health, meet a delegation from Y4Y Québec (from left to right: Jennifer Johnson; Cecilia Eraso, Events Coordinator; Madeleine Lawler, President; Amy Bilodeau; Alexandre Pettem, Executive Assistant).

For Bilodeau the study represents a major engagement with youth.

"By connecting in this way," she said, "we want to reinforce young people's sense of agency and give them a sense of meaningful engagement in all our initiatives."

To read a full analysis of the results of the survey, visit CHSSN's document centre at chssn.org/document.



Amy Bilodeau, Program Manager for Youth and Mental Health at CHSSN

ONLINE INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE YOUTH PULSE CHECK.



Mardoché Mertilus, trainer and liaison officer of Regroupement pour la Valorisation de la Paternité (RVP)



Outreaching to English-speaking Dads

Founded in 1997, the *Regroupement pour la Valorisation de la Paternité (RVP)* brings together more than 250 organizations and individuals from the 17 regions of Quebec. RVP gathers and mobilizes social actors in Quebec concerned with influencing public policy and services offered to families to make them inclusive of paternal realities.

Collaboration between RVP and CHSSN began in 2018 with the intent of better understanding the reality and needs of English-speaking dads in Québec. It was evident that both organisations could help each other reach their goals by working together. Using a multi-strategic approach, they did just that. Now, three years later, dads and men have become an important dossier at the CHSSN as well as with many of our Network organisations.

Already there are several important outcomes from this partnership including the creation of a full-time resource to support English-speaking organisations in better reaching dads, adaptation of multiple tools for community practitioners and parents, and several community-led projects and activities for English-speaking dads across Quebec.

"We're very pleased with this collaboration," says Anne-Marie Cech, Program Director with CHSSN, "especially with the work RVP liaison officer Mardoché Mertilus is doing directly with our networks. As a trainer with RVP's *Groupe papa* program, Mardoché is working with several NPIs to help English-speaking fathers access group-support structures and parenting skills training."

Growing Again!

The CHSSN has welcomed two new staff members since our last newsletter.

Pascale Guilbault, our new Financial Manager, started in February and has many years working as a controller and financial director in both the private and cooperative sectors. Pascale was looking to work in the community sector and found the mission of CHSSN matched her own.

The most recent recruit is Céline Lebigot, who joined us as our new Executive Assistant in April. Celine comes to us from the marketing sector and in addition to helping keep the CHSSN machine in fine working order will also help us navigate our growing social media presence and technology demands. She too was looking to work for an organization that "makes a difference" and has a passion for helping vulnerable populations just like all of our team members.

Welcome to the CHSSN family, Pascale and Céline!

(L to R) top row: Sara Lakhri, Jenn Cooke, Pascale Guilbault, Anne-Marie Cech, Amy Bilodeau ; bottom row : Céline Lebigot, Jennifer Johnson, Erica Botner, at a CHSSN team retreat at Lac-Delage.





The Community Liaison Worker:

A Critical Bridge to Improve Access to Health and Social Services!

Several NPIs, in collaboration with their CISSS-CIUSSS across the province, have been implementing a “community liaison” approach to improve access to health and social services in the English-language.

Sometimes referred to as patient navigators, outreach workers, or information and referral agents, the community liaison has been notably defined by its role in acting as a BRIDGE between an English-speaking clientele and the health and social services professionals serving them. This go-

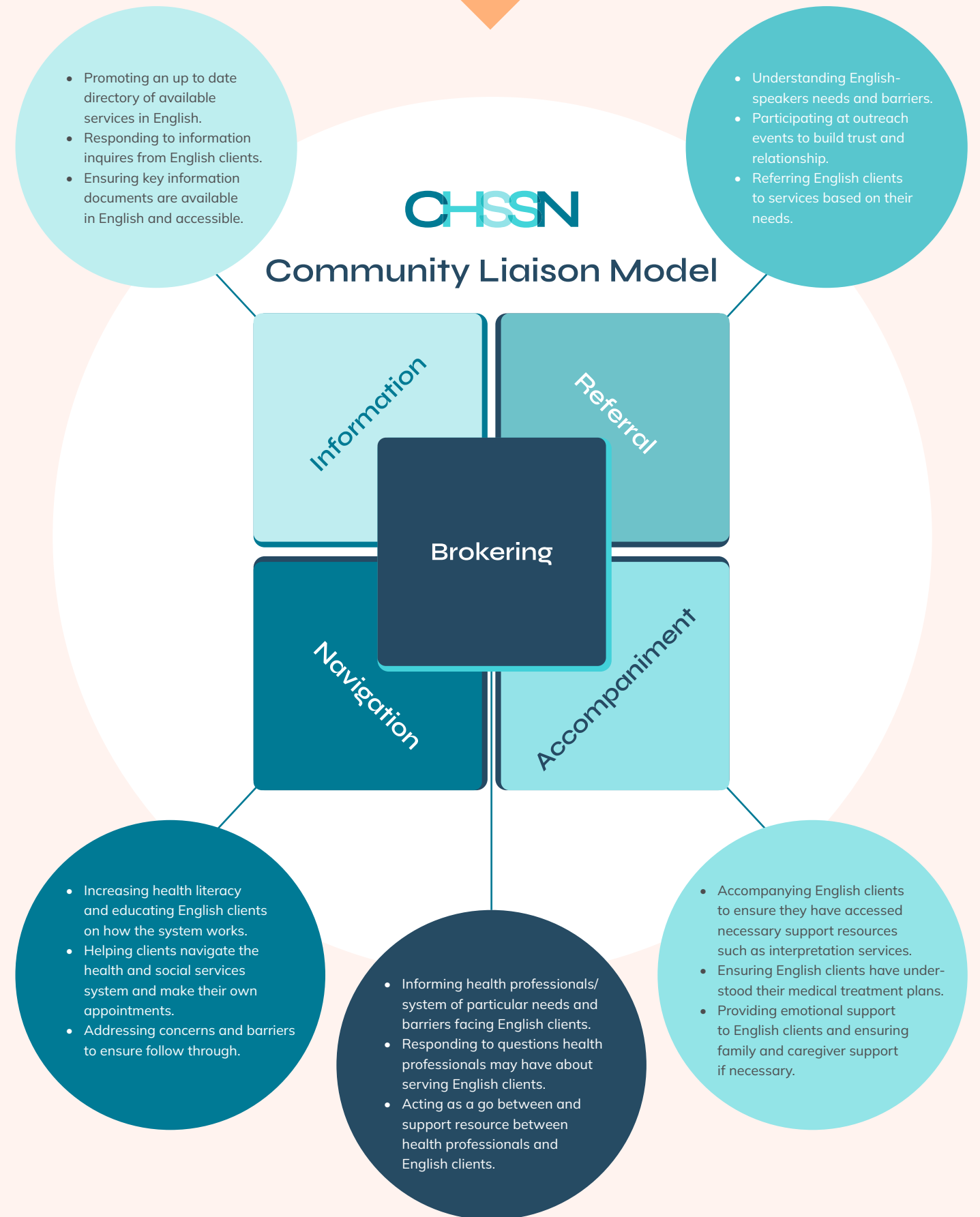
between role helps link English-speakers to services, assists in navigating the health and social service system, and, at times, involves accompanying clients to their appointments. As health and social services professionals become aware of the community liaison, they also benefit by asking questions and seeking information about English-speaking clients.

A recent study conducted by research consultant Dr. Joanne Pocock interviewed CHSSN and five NPI organizations (CASA, Neighbours, ARC, CASE and ACDPN) and captured their experiences in implementing this community liaison approach. A CHSSN community liaison model was also created which illustrates the integration of five successful and key activities of the community liaison in improving access to health and social services for the English-speaking population. The study

promotes this comprehensive approach as an innovative and leading practice to be expanded to other regions in Quebec.

“Having community liaison officers who facilitate individual access is a natural progression for our networks,” says Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. “Several networks and their CISSS-CIUSSS partners led the charge on this innovative practice. This study documenting their success should inspire other communities to adopt a community liaison approach and help service providers recognize the value of these positions for the benefit of good patient outcomes.”

At right is a visual graphic of the community liaison model and its five components. To access Dr Pocock’s research study, please visit chssn.org/document-category/chssn-publications/



Eva Marsden Centre:

Doing What's Needed for the People it Serves



The Eva Marsden Centre for Social Justice and Aging is a new name for an organization that's been known and respected in Montreal for almost 50 years — the N.D.G. Senior Citizens' Council (NDGSCC). Since its earliest years, the Eva Marsden Centre (EMC) has been “dedicated to restoring humanity and dignity to the experience of growing older in our society.”



Sheri McLeod, Executive Director at EMC



“Through our history,” explained Sheri McLeod, Executive Director at EMC, “as the public health and social service system evolved, we evolved with it.”

EMC intervenes on behalf of individuals who are experiencing roadblocks related to housing, finances, accessing health services or interpersonal difficulties. Starting in 2006, a new mission was added to EMC’s work with seniors — people aged 50+ with low-income became part of an initiative to promote citizen engagement and participation.

After several small projects done in partnership with CHSSN, EMC was invited to become an NPI in development in 2019, thereby committing itself to improving access to health and social services more generally with a particular focus on the English-speaking community within the CIUSSS-CODIM territory.

“This new partnership with CHSSN meant that we really had to consolidate our work,” said McLeod. “We needed to be clear about what we brought to the table especially when interacting with health and social services leaders in the public system. It’s been a good fit.”

Jenn Cooke, Montreal Program Manager with CHSSN, agrees. “EMC is the epitome of resiliency in a community-based organization. When COVID hit their neighbourhood, they took a leadership role, going into action to look after the people they serve.”

“We went into crisis mode with COVID,” remembered McLeod. “We ended up delivering essential services in ways we’d never imagined; it’s what was needed, so it’s what we did.”

New CHSSN Research Collaborations



Dr. Jacques Roy, lead researcher responsible for the development of the portrait.



(Left) Darla Fortune PhD, Associate Professor, Applied Human Sciences, Concordia University and (Right) Sandra Smele, Coordinator, Inclusive Aging, Diversity, Health and Wellness, CREGÉS, will be conducting the leading practice study



Pôle d'expertise et de recherche en santé et bien-être des hommes

The CHSSN has collaborated with the *Pôle d'expertise et de recherche en santé et bien-être des hommes* to create a Portrait of Men and Fathers in Quebec's English-Speaking Community and Their Relationship to Services.

“The *Pôle* is well-known and very credible with the Québec government and the findings contained in the Portrait have already been disseminated to those responsible for the provincial action plan on the health and well-being of men,” explains Russ Kueber, CHSSN Director of Programs.

Centre for Research and Expertise in Social Gerontology Expertise (CREGÉS)

The CHSSN will be working with the CREGÉS to investigate how CHSSN’s Senior Wellness Centre Initiative can become a “Leading Practice”. A Leading Practice is a set of structured activities designed to fill gaps or address needs in service delivery and to produce innovative knowledge and tools.

“We are thrilled to be collaborating with such a well-established research centre which excels in the domain of Inclusive Aging, Diversity, Health and Well-Being,” said Erica Botner, Program Manager for Seniors at CHSSN.

ALLO
Assistance,
Linguistic, Liaison
and Orientation
project

Just Say ALLO

for Better Communications and Health Outcomes

COVID brought lots of things to a standstill in the health and social services network,” said Jody Lessard, chair of her region’s access committee, “but that didn’t stop us moving forward with a creative idea like ALLO to increase access in English for people in our community. It’s a completely voluntary system that’s cost-effective and helps people navigate their way through what can be a complicated system in any language.”



▲ Sharon Tardif, Liaison Officer with the CISSS de la Côte-Nord

“The CISSS de la Côte-Nord should be proud of their Assistance, Linguistic, Liaison and Orientation (ALLO) project,” said Nathalie Lokoka, CHSSN adaptation program coordinator. “It’s a simple visual cue in the form of a yellow ‘pochette’ for the I.D. cards of workers in the public health and social service network who are able to speak to clients and patients in English.”

“The idea came from community groups in the Gaspé and the Abitibi and everybody got on board right away,” remembered Lessard. “When people saw how easy and effective it is, the ALLO initiative started getting requests from doctors in private family medicine clinics to participate too.”

Nancy Bilodeau, the CISSS de la Côte-Nord’s *répondante* for English language services, was a key organizer of the ALLO program. She stresses how useful it can be for staff as well as patients in the CISSS’s nearly 50 public system institutions.

“We have a number of clients who are ‘linguistically vulnerable’, especially those coming from the Lower North Shore for secondary and tertiary care,” said Bilodeau. “For unilingual francophone staff, the ALLO pochette is an easy way to find some help quickly to communicate with these patients.”

Thanks to this innovative collaboration, health workers, patients, and their families on the Côte-Nord need only say ‘ALLO’ for better access to care in English. 🇵🇸



▲ Jenn Cooke, creator of Jenn’s Tuesday Musings

“So far, I’ve gotten really positive reactions!” reports CHSSN’s Jenn Cooke on the buzz around her new fortnightly email to people in the Montreal community networks she works with.

Cooke describes her regular email contact as “my biweekly conversation with you, Montreal organizations, where I keep you informed on everything CHSSN, share observations as the Community Development Officer for Montreal, profile organizations and individuals so we can learn from the experts, and let you know about interesting upcoming events and other stuff.”

Jenn’s Tuesday Musings is another great way to extend and deepen the networks that improve access in English to health and social services in Montreal. 🇵🇸

Another Year of COVID Mental Health Funding

“The CHSSN is extremely pleased that the Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers (SRQEA) has renewed its COVID mental health funding for another year,” said Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. These funds support the expansion of mental health services and programming to English-speakers particularly impacted by the pandemic.”

According to Bill Floch, *Secrétaire adjoint* for the SRQEA, “We became aware of the research findings on how the pandemic has had a greater impact

on the English-speaking community, and these funds will provide direct support to those in need.”

“Our first-year results for this programming were outstanding,” said Johnson. “We’re confident that our networks and participating organizations can continue and enhance that success with this year’s support.” 🇵🇸

To learn more about the organizations participating in this funding program, please visit chssn.org/projects/cmhi/

Pauline Wiedow

awarded a Silver Lieutenant Governor's Medal

Richly deserved congratulations are in order to Pauline Wiedow, Executive Director of the Montérégie West Community Network (MWCN), on the reception of a Lieutenant-Governor Medal (for a second time) for her dedication as a volunteer serving the needs of her community on April 23, 2022.

“I was really, really surprised,” said Wiedow. “Of course I’m pleased to receive this recognition from the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec but the fact that someone took the time to nominate me for the award is awesome!”

Wiedow says that she worked for eighteen years strictly as a volunteer to get MWCN going, starting in 1999 as “The Focus Group” before adopting the name of Châteauguay English Community Network in 2004, then widening the geographic and cultural scope of the organization’s action as MWCN in 2016.

“Our funding only began in 2018,” said Wiedow with quiet pride, “and now we have five offices in five MRCs and thirteen employees working on a growing range of programs.”

But, as with so many NPIs across the province, it all started with the hard work of dedicated volunteers like Pauline Wiedow. ■



Pauline Wiedow,
Executive Director of
the Montérégie West
Community Network
(MWCN)

Brenda Edwards,
CHSSN Director
of Administration



Happy Retirement to CHSSN’s Director of Administration, Brenda Edwards!

“Brenda has been my right hand,” says Jennifer Johnson, CHSSN Executive Director. “She began with us officially in 2007 and has worked behind the scenes to ensure good project management since the first Federal investments in CHSSN.”

“She also helped us build a strong organization and leaves us in a very solid position” continues Johnson. “The good fiscal and narrative reporting habits that she established in our organization have been cornerstones of CHSSN’s success since she joined us.”

“We’re so thankful to Brenda for all her guidance and support throughout the years,” says Kevin McLeod, Executive Director of AGAPE in Laval. “I’m a better executive director and AGAPE is a better organization because of her.”

“It’s going to be very hard to see her go,” says Johnson with emotion, “and even harder to express adequately how important she has been for this organization. Brenda has been a role model for us at CHSSN and she’ll be greatly missed.” ■