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Our Kids Count receives a \$25,000 Bell Let's Talk Community Fund Grant *Funds will support new counselling groups in our community*

THUNDER BAY, ON – January 28, 2021. Our Kids Count (OKC), in partnership with Catholic Family Development Centre (CFDC), is pleased to receive a \$25,000 grant from the Bell Let's Talk Community Fund to provide additional group counselling in our community including support groups for men, post-natal parents, children who are experiencing anxiety, children living in homes with separation or divorce, youth, groups for those experiencing grief and loss, as well as suicide loss support.

This is the 2nd Bell Let's Talk Community Fund grant for the partnering organizations who received their first grant in 2019 when they launched *Our Kids Count Let's Talk Walk-In Counselling* services. This latest funding is in response to needs identified by people attending the walk-in counselling.

"OKC participants have clearly identified the need for mental health supports," said Kathryn Hughes, Executive Director at OKC. "OKC is thrilled to be receiving its second Bell Let's Talk Community Fund grant which allows our very important partnership with Catholic Family Development Centre's team to meet those needs in a variety of ways. During a pandemic we are exploring new ways to continue to serve those who need support."

"Bell Let's Talk is proud to help Our Kids Count provide additional group counselling for people in the community who need support including a virtual Post-Partum Support Group," said Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell Let's Talk. "The Bell Let's Talk Community Fund supports a diverse range of mental health organizations in all regions of Canada, like Our Kids Count, that are taking action to improve access to mental health care and working to make a positive difference for people living with mental illness and their families."

Covid-19 has put the walk-in counselling services on hold until future notice; however, virtual and phone counselling services are still available.

"We're here to meet our community members' mental health needs in the pandemic," said Jack Cleverdon, Executive Director at CFDC. "There has been an increase in the number of people calling to access counselling services and to avoid having people on waiting lists, we've hired more staff to help meet the need. Cleverdon also shares that 60% of the calls they're receiving are to address anxiety, depression and isolation in the pandemic. We're also seeing an increase in calls concerning grief

including loss of jobs, not being able to attend post-secondary courses, and calls from people struggling with the loss of pre-pandemic everyday routines and activities. The group sessions will focus on addressing these and other mental health topics.”

“This grant has also allowed us to create coping kits which will be a link for support until a person’s counselling sessions can start,” said Margaret Hajdinjak, Program Manager at OKC. “We have kits for children/youth and adults. The kits include colouring paper, pencil crayons, mints, candles, a stress ball, journal, meditations and positive affirmations – something to stimulate and relax all your senses.”

One of the new group counselling supports will be offered to participants of the Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds in school mentoring program for girls 11 - 14 years. This funding will provide a counsellor who will join the group once a month to help answer some of the girls’ more difficult questions.

“Some girls don’t feel comfortable asking teachers, friends or family these questions; sometimes a person from outside their immediate circle is easier to approach,” said Kimberly Russell, OKC’s Big Brothers Big Sisters Coordinator. “Providing the young girls with group counselling will help them get answers to questions our mentors may not be trained to answer. Many questions regarding family relationships, mental health and friendships have come up during Go Girls! Sessions and having a counsellor available within the program will help these young girls get the answers they need.”

Today is Bell Let’s Talk Day

Bell is inviting everyone to take part in the mental health conversation. You can use a wide range of communications platforms to join in on Bell Let’s Talk Day – and directly drive Bell’s donations to Canadian mental health programs simply by participating.

Today Bell donates 5 cents to Canadian mental health programs for every applicable text, local or long distance call, tweet or TikTok video using #BellLetsTalk, every [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#), [Snapchat](#), [TikTok](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) view of the Bell Let’s Talk Day video, and every use of the Bell Let’s Talk Facebook frame or Snapchat filter. All at no cost to participants beyond what they would normally pay their service provider for online or phone access.

All individual and group counselling provided through Our Kids Count is free and is available to anyone who needs it. Thanks to the funding received through the Bell Let’s Talk Community Fund OKC is able to start a virtual Post-Partum Support Group which meets the second Wednesday of the month from 3 pm - 4 pm via Zoom. The next meeting is Wednesday February 10, 2021. Anyone interested in attending can email ppn@ourkidscount.ca or call 807-346-6863.

About Our Kids Count

Our Kids Count (OKC) is a community development organization and through the pandemic we continue to provide free on-site and virtual programs that address food security, parenting, social isolation, and mental health. Our programs are built on needs identified by the families we serve and include community kitchens, parenting and life skills workshops, pre/post-natal support, home visiting, the emergency food cupboard, Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring, and counselling. To learn more visit www.ourkidscount.ca.