



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Rural Micro-Grant in Action: Senior Outreach Coordinator

With support from West Fraser, CMHA South Cariboo hired a new Senior Outreach Coordinator in South Cariboo, British Columbia. The Senior Outreach Coordinator helped move older adults out of isolation toward the care and support they need.

The need

The vast geography of South Cariboo, British Columbia creates profound challenges for seniors' ability to access care and mental health support, including a lack of access to transportation, inclement weather conditions, and large distances between social and community supports. Some seniors in this area have low trust of government and social services due to experiences of stigma and may therefore be hesitant to seek support. These many barriers can lead to isolation for seniors and make it harder for them to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The grant in action

Funding allowed CMHA South Cariboo to hire a new Senior Outreach Coordinator, whose role was to help frail and socially isolated seniors access the services they need to thrive, including transportation support to crucial appointments (i.e., medical appointments), on-site support at appointments, advocacy for medical and housing needs, and help navigating systems.



The impact

An evaluation showed that the introduction of a new Senior Outreach Coordinator had two major impacts for seniors in the South Cariboo community.

1. Increased Personal Trust and Safety

A survey of seniors and interviews with staff from CMHA South Cariboo demonstrated that program participants developed strong interpersonal relationships with the Senior Outreach Coordinator that improved their mental well-being. This relationship led seniors to feel that they had someone to rely on for safety and security.

"I feel more secure having someone help me filling out forms and answering the questions I have."

– Participating Senior

"She answers all my questions, no matter if they are important or not, without using words I don't understand... I feel comfortable discussing my needs with the worker. She does not make me feel belittled by any questions I have."

– Participating Senior

By establishing profound personal trust, the Senior Outreach Coordinator helped restore the seniors' sense of physical safety and sense of security.



2. A shift from crisis to well-being

The program initially focused on managing client emergencies, such as neglected immediate health needs. As seniors were successfully shifted out of crisis, the Senior Outreach Coordinator was able to focus on long-term planning, proactive support, and establishing a community of seniors, all of which had a positive impact on the seniors' mental health.

"I think [the Senior Outreach Coordinator] was finding that so many clients hadn't gone to the doctor and the dentist in so long that, for a while, she was taking care of those emergency-style needs. But then it became more proactive as she kept going because once the critical incidents were taken care of, it could become more of, "Now let's shift gears and get into doing the paperwork and the wills and the social gatherings and medical appointments just for checkups, not because you are in distress."

– Member of the Project Team

CMHA acknowledges the full evaluation of CMHA's West Fraser Rural Mental Health Micro-Grant Initiative: Mitri, K. & Newberry, J. (2025). From Isolation to Connection: Evaluating the Impact of the West Fraser Rural Mental Health Grant Initiative. Evaluation report submitted to the Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA]: Taylor Newberry Consulting. For more information, contact ruralandremote@cmha.ca.



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