

New clinic serving survivors of human trafficking to open in Ottawa

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OTTAWA -- One of a kind clinic has received funding to provide primary and preventative health care for survivors of human trafficking. Unlike any other health service in Canada, H.E.A.L.T.H. is a collaborative project between Voice Found, Ottawa Victim Services and Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner, Tara Leach.

“Over the past year we have collectively worked with over 170 survivors of human trafficking and we know how desperately this clinic is needed”, said Cynthia Bland, Founder and CEO of Voice Found.

Funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, H.E.A.L.T.H. is available to survivors 13 years of age and older, and will offer primary and preventative health care. The clinic is exclusively designed to support trafficked persons, who sometimes find mainstream health care environments traumatic, and thus H.E.A.L.T.H. is a thoughtfully-designed space, informed by the experience of survivors.

“As a professional with lived experience I know how daunting it can be for victims of Human Trafficking to get help,” said Simone Bell, Peer Support Manager, Voice Found. “Once you have reached out for help it becomes even more challenging to move from agency to agency to receive different pieces of care that you so desperately need.” I am so happy that today the pieces of the puzzle have come together. Combining Health Care, Victim Services and Survivor Lead Crisis Intervention and Peer Support all under one roof. I can’t wait to share the news with all the courageous survivors we see.”

The clinic will be a safe, non-judgmental, and LGBTQ-trans friendly setting, and also offer training to frontline works that centres the experience of survivors. Through a peer-support model, some survivors can also be employed by the clinic as health staff. This trauma-informed approach is critical to a compassionate, integrated approach to healing for those who have experienced trafficking.

“Our mission is to create a single space where regional service providers are working together to provide comprehensive, holistic, trauma-informed care to our clients,” said Tara Leach, Primary Care Nurse Practitioner. “H.E.A.L.T.H will compose concierge-like services aimed to increase health and well-being, reduce harm, while also promoting self-care patient behaviours.”

The clinic will open in early 2018 and be located in downtown Ottawa.

“We believe that a collaborative response to survivors of trafficking is the best way to address the complex and unique needs of this population,” said Melissa Heimerl, Executive Director of Ottawa Victim Services.

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