

Briefing Note for Lacombe County Alix/Mirror Community Resource Centre

Issue:

The rural community of Alix recognizes a significant gap in social and mental health services available in the community as well as the surrounding rural areas. This affects all sectors of the community including justice, health, education and social services. The cost of living in rural communities is considerably lower for families which allows them to stretch their dollars further. This promotes/attracts low income families to rural communities, which often creates a greater need for supports and services in the rural population than the urban population. The demographics show that Lacombe and County is 56% urban and 44% rural. This defies the perspective that more services and resources are necessary for urban communities due to a higher population. It is more accurate to say that it is easier to access and deliver services in urban communities than in rural communities where the population is less concentrated in a convenient location.

Background:

The Alix/Mirror community has created an initiative to meet increasing community needs and challenges by establishing a community hub for services and referrals. Multiple partners are committed to a coordinated effort and have supported the initiative. The needs of many of the Alix and surrounding area individuals and families are complex and finding what they need can be difficult and complicated. Many are not entirely sure what they need and therefore require assistance so appropriate referrals can be made or programs accessed/developed. These community members will require someone to help them explore their situation and begin supported planning to meet their needs.

Current Situation:

1. The Community of Bashaw has developed a Regional Wellness Hub that includes the community of Alix and surrounding rural area. The Bashaw Community Wellness Team (Bashaw District Support Services, RCMP, Bashaw School, and Adult Learning) are committed to providing the support and mentoring necessary to develop a hub in the Alix community area.
2. With minimal investment, the Alix/Mirror team has met with stakeholders to assess the needs, acquire space and develop partners and collaborations to ensure a successful initiative.
3. The efforts to date are focused on leveraging partners due to an inability to fund raise or acquire start up grants due to the current situation surrounding the pandemic.
4. The need is greatest now and is anticipated to elevate over the next year due to the recession and fallout of the isolation measures, such as financial pressures and mental health challenges.

Recommendations

1. The Lacombe County become a partner and support for the Alix/Mirror Community Resource Centre closing the gap of support for rural residents in the east end of the Lacombe county.
2. The Lacombe County support could include funding, in-kind support, and consulting.
3. The development of the Alix/Mirror Community Resource model be promoted and shared with appropriate agencies and organizations to develop appropriate ways of serving the rural residents.
4. The model and the outcomes achieved to be shared with stakeholders, government and services after one year of completion.