

Suzanne Witt-Foley

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Profile: Suzanne is a dynamic and experienced speaker and educator, having created and delivered hundreds of presentations nationally. Passionate to build understanding about mental health and addiction, she engages her audience by exploring our fast paced, toxically stressed culture and why now, more than ever, building relationships and community connectedness is essential to our wellbeing. As an innovator in knowledge exchange, training and education, Suzanne has over 25 years of experience in community development and capacity building. Recognized and respected as a leader and strong communicator with proven abilities in facilitating change in the mental health/addictions, education and social services field. Suzanne is currently one of Canada's leading Mental Health First Aid Instructors and has provided 150+ Mental Health First Aid-Basic training events since January 2014. This represents close to 10% of all Canadian events, certifying over 3000 participants with glowing reviews.

Skills/Qualifications: Successes in consulting to professionals in education and the health care field in Ontario and other provinces. Natural ability to develop and foster collaborative relationships and partnerships at a grass roots level. Demonstrated high degree of flexibility and adaptability in bringing theory to practical applications in a variety of services/programs. Proven expertise in the fields of health promotion, community development, youth prevention initiatives, public education, anti-stigma, needs assessment, program planning and implementation. Advanced skills in project management, communications and presentations, media relations coupled with strong technological abilities in a variety of software applications.

Work Experience:

MakingConnections4Health, SELF-EMPLOYED PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER & EDUCATOR: September 2012-present

Provide customized workshops, training and presentations. Topics related to mental health & addictions within a social determinants of health framework. Tailored material for a broad range of audiences. Training includes Mental Health First Aid Basic & Virtual Certification and Bridges Out of Poverty workshops. Worked with Parent Action on Drugs to provide "Challenges, Beliefs, Choices" program (substance use prevention) for senior students; contracted with Healthy Communities Link to provide provincial consultation and presentations; Parent Education Facilitator with Muskoka Family Focus and Resource Centre.

Addiction Outreach Muskoka Parry Sound, COMMUNITY OUTREACH CONSULTATION: September 2012-March 2015

Through relationship building and leadership, work in partnership on a variety of local and regional committees and strategy development initiatives. Provide customized workshops, training and presentations on a variety of topics related to addiction, mental health and poverty. Work included the development and presentation of a series of weekly 15 minute in-service modules for health centre staff at Parry Sound Health Centre.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATOR: November 2013-March 2015

As part of the provincial mental health strategy, provided leadership, coordination and support to the Simcoe Muskoka Service Collaborative with particular focus on the creation of momentum and investment in Muskoka. The service collaborative focus is on transition age youth and utilizes a common framework for supporting young people in transition (Transition to Independence (TIP)).

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YWCA Muskoka, Bracebridge, Ontario Knowing Her Mind FACILITATOR: Contract September 2012-April 2013

Hired to develop and implement 4 community workshops for service providers and 6 short presentations for municipal decision makers. Through a gender based lens, project raised awareness about the connection between living conditions in Muskoka and the impact on mental well-being.

Muskoka Strengthening Families Collaborative, Bracebridge Ontario. Strengthening Families Program COORDINATOR: September 2000-present

Coordinate an evidence based, family change program designed to reduce factors that put families at risk for substance misuse and mental health problems, and enhance factors that can help families to function well.

Trillium Lakelands District School Board, Bracebridge, Ontario. DISTRICT MANAGER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: November 2011-August 2012.

Responsibilities included providing system leadership, development and initiation of a long term mental health strategy for the board reflective of Open Minds, Healthy Minds. Direct supervision of Student Service Attendance Counsellors. Development, coordination and provision of mental health literacy training, resources and awareness for all board staff, community partners, parents and the broader community. Collaboration with community partners to provide evidence based programs and services to meet the needs of all students.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Bracebridge, Ontario. PROJECT CONSULTANT: February 2000 to November 2011.

Work involved significant successes providing leadership to a variety of project/program initiatives across the districts of Parry Sound and Muskoka, regionally and at a provincial level. This position was created to bring CAMH to the area for the first time and required high levels of energy, enthusiasm and diplomacy in order to achieve success in this under serviced area of the province. Numerous examples of programming success in public education, anti-stigma and communication initiatives, agency liaison in the areas of mental health promotion and training, and in advocating for and raising awareness of resource needs across the districts.

Addiction Research Foundation, Hamilton, Ontario. PROGRAM CONSULTANT: April 1995 to February 2000

Developed and coordinated a diverse array workshops for professionals on subjects ranging from alcohol risk assessment and interventions through to concurrent disorders theory and practise. Consulted to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care regarding the regional addictions treatment system through the process of rationalization/restructuring of services. Provided expert advice on health promotion and prevention initiatives by engaging and collaborating with a variety of coalitions, committees and professional networks across the region.

Niagara District Health Council, Pelham, Ontario. MENTAL HEALTH PLANNER: October 1994 to April 1995

Responsibilities included leading a process of engaging all community agencies in moving mental health reform forward in the regional system. Managed an extensive consultation process involving service agencies, consumer/survivor groups, planning committees and task forces in establishing priorities and outcomes/goals that aligned with "Putting People First". Provided advice to Ministry of Health and Long Term Care regarding investment priorities and funding proposals within a variety of grant programs.

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Grenfell Regional Health Services, St. Anthony, Newfoundland. MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION COORDINATOR: September 1993 to September 1994

Utilizing key informant and focus group formats, developed and implemented a comprehensive health needs assessment across a region of 21 isolated and culturally diverse communities. Engaged and effectively collaborated with communities to implement strategies to address living conditions and community mental health issues and concerns post moratorium. Successfully engaged hospital and nursing station staff in adopting health promotion principles in the areas of alcohol/substance misuse, mental health, violence and suicide.

Provincial Project Leadership Initiatives-CAMH

School Curriculum Project 1999-2006, Cannabis and Youth project 2003-2006, Making the Connection Work training initiative (older adults, mental health & substance misuse), 2007-2011

Regional Project Leadership-CAMH

Strengthening Families for the future 2003-2011, Opening Doors School Intervention Program 1997-2000, We All Belong Anti-stigma Campaign 2000-2005, Talking About Mental Illness 2000-2012, Rookie Mistakes/Party Fouls Student led campaign 2007-2011, Parry Sound/Muskoka Prescription Opioid Prevention Strategy 2008-present

Corporate CAMH committees/project teams

CAMH Opiate Project – 2009-2011, CAMH Youth Team 1999-2006, Drug Policy Advisory Group 1998-2000, Strategic Directions Implementation Team on Health Promotion and Prevention 2000, Harm Reduction for Rural Youth 1998-2000, Travelling Together 1999-2001

Volunteer Involvement

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health - Participating Member of Constituency Council
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Muskoka - Communications Advisory Committee Member: 2015-2017
Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network - Simcoe Muskoka Chronic Disease Prevention Advisory Committee Member: 2015/2016
Dominican Crossroads – Volunteer Mission Trip – Dominican Republic 2011
Costa Rica Wildlife Rescue Centre – Volunteer - 2017

Education:

Bachelor of Science (Honours), Cooperative Health Studies, minor in biology/physiology. University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario 1992
CAMH Emergent Leader Training, 2009
Youth, Drugs and Mental Health, CAMH 8 week online course.
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, 2011
Mental Health First Aid Instructor, 2013
Bridges Out of Poverty Instructor, 2014
Mental Health First Aid for People Who Work With Youth Certificate, 2014
CPR certification, 2014

Papers, publications & research initiatives:

Anxiety Warrior: Contributing Author – Self Help Anxiety Workbook. Elke Scholz. 2017

About Oxys, Percs and Pain Pills. CAMH 2012 (Co-Author)

Youth and the Misuse of Prescription Pain Killers: What Parents Need to Know. CAMH. 2012 (Author)

CAMH Framework for Prevention and Health Promotion: Toronto. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. 2001 (Co-Author)

Freedom To Act; The Harm Reduction for Rural Youth Project Experience: Toronto. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. 2000 (Co-Author)

Travelling Together: A Hands-On Guide for Moving Your Community Group to Action: Toronto. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. 2000 (Co-Author)

Educating Students about Drug Use and Abuse: Ready To Use Lesson Plans for Drug Education in Your Classroom: Toronto. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. 1999 (Co-Author)

Communities Have Their Say: What's Affecting Peoples Health? Community Consultation Project : St. Anthony NFLD. Grenfell Regional Health Services. 1994 (Co-Author)