



NEWS RELEASE

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI | August 13, 2015

Atlantic Symposium addresses the Mental Health of Children and Youth

More than 200 people will gather in Charlottetown from August 17-19 to take action on the mental health of Atlantic Canadian kids and teens. Teachers, parents, youth, health care workers, community groups, researchers and government representatives from across the region will collaborate to mobilize decision makers during a *Symposium on Child and Youth Mental Health*.

The Symposium has enlisted prominent international, national and regional experts to share their strategies for supporting children and youth. Keynote speakers Dr. Ian Manion and Dr. Mark Greenberg agree that mental health plays an essential role in overall health and well-being, and an investment in programs for children and youth has positive long-term results that last a lifetime. Dr. Manion, a clinical psychologist and scientist-practitioner who has worked for over 30 years with children, youth and families, will speak Monday night about hot topics and partnering for system change. On Tuesday morning, Dr. Mark Greenberg will address the benefits of social emotional learning in schools. Since 1981, he has been a leader in research on the benefits of prevention efforts on children and families.

An Atlantic Community Showcase at the Symposium will increase the spotlight on child and youth mental health programs and leaders in the region. The showcase will feature sixteen presentations and exhibits from organizations involved in innovative collaborative practices, policies, and research. In addition, two panel discussions and many workshops will give participants the opportunity to learn from others and build relationships to extend the work beyond the Symposium.

Participation by youth and children will be a key feature of the event. Twenty young leaders from across the region were selected to attend the Symposium as part of the Youth Leadership Program, which includes an additional day of workshops, in partnership with Girls Action Foundation, on the importance of youth leadership, peer support and intergenerational relationships. The youth delegates will attend workshops alongside the adult participants, as well as participate in their own teambuilding activities such as an Amazing Race through Charlottetown, wearing custom-made T-shirts from Fredericton-based clothing company Wear Your Label, which designs clothing to spark conversations about mental-health issues. In addition, a Children's Program will engage kids ages 3-14 in activities emphasizing positive mental health and its relationship to physical activity and the environment.

The *Symposium on Child and Youth Mental Health* will be hosted by the Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities (ASI), a not-for-profit organization committed to promoting and supporting healthy and safe communities in the region. Since 2004 ASI has provided regional, year-round collaborative community education, online and in-person. ASI Coordinator Patsy Beattie-Huggan says, "Momentum has grown over the years with new people and new ideas, and it inspires me every day. The Atlantic Summer Institute presents an opportunity for knowledge exchange and ideas and for creating a better region, if we can share the resources that we have. There are lots of challenges facing the region, but we have a wealth of resources in our people."

The Symposium is a partnership between the ASI and the Socially and Emotionally Aware Kids (SEAK) project, managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division, and Atlantic Canada Children's Effective Service Strategies in Mental Health (ACCESS-MH). Support has been provided by the government of Canada and all four Atlantic Provinces, as well as many sponsors. The Symposium will be held at Holland College in Charlottetown, PEI.

For more information about the *Symposium on Child and Youth Mental Health*, visit www.asi-iea.ca, call 902-894-3399 or email info@asi-iea.ca. Stay updated on ASI events via Facebook (www.facebook.com/ASIHSC) or Twitter [@ASI_HSC](https://twitter.com/ASI_HSC) and #ASIP EI2015.

Media Contacts:

Patsy Beattie-Huggan

Coordinator, Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities
902-894-3399

Kirsten McKnight

Consultant, Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities
kirsten@thequaich.pe.ca