



Canadian Mental  
Health Association

**TALK TODAY**



## NEWS RELEASE

### **MHL, CMHAs partner to support mental health of Jr. A hockey players across Maritimes**

(Nov. 19, 2019) – More than 280 players across the Maritime Junior Hockey League (MHL) will benefit from mental health awareness and suicide-prevention training this season through a new partnership between Canadian Mental Health Associations (CMHAs) throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

With generous support from the NHL Foundation, this new partnership will see CMHA's *Talk Today* program made available to all 12 teams in the MHL.

*Talk Today* is one of the most comprehensive mental health programs for amateur sports in Canada. It was created in 2014 and is now offered by more than 50 CMHAs nationwide. *Talk Today* has four key elements:

- Mandatory evidence-based mental health and suicide awareness workshops for athletes that enable them to not only recognize when a teammate, classmate, friend or family member may be struggling, but gives them tools to speak openly about suicide and assist in getting individuals support.
- A designated CMHA Mental Health Coach is connected to each MHL team so that they can help in case someone with the club is struggling or seeking mental health information or services.
- MHL clubs will host *Talk Today* game days with related social media activities to raise awareness and reduce the stigma associated with mental health and addictions issues.
- A club Mental Health Champion who works with CMHA personnel to help implement the training and awareness activities.

The launch in the MHL is the first phase of a broader partnership between the Canadian Junior Hockey League (CJHL), its member leagues, and local and provincial CMHAs across Canada.

This year, nearly 1,000 players on almost 50 teams across four leagues (MHL, Central Canada Hockey League, Manitoba Junior Hockey League and Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League) will benefit from *Talk Today*.

The CJHL and CMHAs will work toward supporting the remaining leagues within the Canadian Junior Hockey League with *Talk Today* over the next two years.

“From the demands of schooling to the pressures of elite competition and high performance, there are many factors that can affect the well-being of MHL athletes, and it’s important to us that they know there’s support available,” said MHL President Steve Dykeman. “Through this



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partnership with CMHA, we're making mental health education and awareness a priority for our athletes and the communities in which they play."

"Since 2014, *Talk Today* has created mental health conversations and reduced stigma in dressing rooms, hockey rinks and communities across Canada," said CMHA New Brunswick Executive Director Christa Baldwin. "Thanks to the MHL and the NHL Foundation, we're pleased to bring *Talk Today* to hundreds more players, team staff, families and fans, which we believe will create positive change and save lives."

"We've seen the impact of *Talk Today* and how it can help reduce stigma and normalize conversations about mental health around the rink and in the community," said CMHA Nova Scotia Executive Director Pamela Magee. "Mental health should no longer be a taboo subject in sports and the expansion of *Talk Today* across the MHL will help raise awareness and provide resources to players who need it."

"Working with the MHL allows us to share with these players and teams the benefits of maintaining positive mental health," said CMHA PEI Executive Director Reid Burke. "And together with all our partners, *Talk Today* can help create environments where people aren't afraid to speak up and ask for help should they be struggling."

"The NHL Foundation recognizes the positive impact and long-term value *Talk Today* has provided the hockey community through other development leagues and we're pleased to have a role in bringing this important initiative to teams in the CJHL," said John Sanful, Manager of the NHL Foundation. "We strive to create positive change by investing in initiatives that build healthy and vibrant communities through hockey, and we're pleased to support a program that provides valuable life skills for players which they can use beyond their playing careers."

#### **Fast facts:**

- *Talk Today* was launched in 2014 and the initiative has since expanded into junior hockey leagues, high schools, colleges, universities and minor sports organizations across the country.
- Since 2014, more than 4,000 *Talk Today* participants have been trained in safeTALK, a globally recognized suicide-prevention workshop.
- #TalkToday on social media has earned more than 62 million impressions since 2014.

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