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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

PHSA offers free help for the holiday blues, anxiety and other mental health issues **PHSA-backed resources support mental health at home and at work**

While the holiday season may be an emotional and stressful time for many people, the good news is that free help is available through mental health resources and services funded by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA).

Through its agency, BC Mental Health & Addiction Services (BCMHAS), PHSA provides funding for www.HereToHelp.bc.ca which offers evidence-based, user-friendly information to all British Columbians through the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. Free resources cover topics ranging from anxiety to eating disorders, depression to schizophrenia.

The Kelty Resource Centre is a free, one-stop virtual resource centre that links BC families dealing with mental health and substance use disorders to appropriate information and services for children and youth that are tailored to their individual needs:
www.bcmhas.ca/KeltyResourceCentre.

The Antidepressant Skills at Work workbook, which teaches “antidepressant skills” designed to help people affected by depression in the workplace, may be downloaded for free at the BCMHAS website, www.bcmhas.ca/research. Originally developed for PHSA employees, it was produced in partnership with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), faculty of health sciences, Simon Fraser University, and may also be downloaded from a CARMHA link on the BCMHAS website.

“At a time of year when holiday pressures create additional stress and expense for people dealing with mental health issues, we want to remind British Columbians that free resources exist and are readily available through PHSA-funded programs and initiatives,” said Lynda Cranston, President and CEO of PHSA.

PHSA also provides mental health services for its own employees.

One of those initiatives, “Responding with Respect,” is a new workshop for managers and supervisors -- facilitated in collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Vancouver/Burnaby branch -- designed to help them recognize and respond appropriately to signs of depression and low mood in staff.

PHSA has introduced a web-based self-assessment tool, “Feeling Better Now,” to assist employees with early diagnosis of mild mental health problems, including depression.

PHSA also has an active Mental Health Working Group that is a partnership between its unions and management, and an executive subcommittee to provide senior leadership around this important issue.

Recently recognized as one of BC’s top 50 employers by Mediacorp Canada Inc., PHSA’s leadership in the area of employee mental health issues has supported other organizations –

such as London Drugs and Coast Capital Savings – in developing and implementing workplace mental health initiatives.

The BC Partners is a group of seven leading provincial mental health and addictions nonprofit agencies, consisting of AnxietyBC, BC Schizophrenia Society, Canadian Mental Health Association, Centre for Addictions Research of BC, FORCE Society for Kids' Mental Health Care, Jessie's Hope Society, and Mood Disorders Association.

PHSA plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians.

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Backgrounder -- Holiday Mental Health Tips

One in four people in British Columbia will experience a mental disorder at some time during their lifetime, and it is conceivable that every individual in BC will be either personally affected by, or know someone close to them, who is affected by mental illness. Stress, worry, financial pressures and depression may have an impact at this time of year and it is important to remember to look after your own mental well-being and that of others.

- Ask for help - don't be afraid to ask for help or accept it
- Practice self care - make time to do some things that you enjoy and find relaxing
- Be active - physical activity can improve your mental wellness
- Spend time with people - communicate and tell those you trust how you are feeling
- Balance responsibilities and work with recreation and leisure activities
- Use alcohol in moderation - alcohol can act as a depressant
- Don't overindulge - enjoy holiday goodies in moderation
- When trying to help others: respond proactively to requests for help; listen without judgment; and encourage them to use resources and contact skilled professionals for help
- Be aware of behaviour or attitude changes, and of those who may need support.