

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – National Mental Health Week

Mental Health and High School Curriculum Ready to Implement in Canadian Schools for Fall, 2010

Ottawa, ON. May 6, 2010 -- The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health (SLFC) are pleased to announce the completion of the first Canadian Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide.

School-aged youth are a vulnerable population. They are in a period of time that is crucial in their mental health development. Canadian youth spend more time in school than anywhere else. Schools are often challenged to deal with youth mental health, but are seriously under equipped and inadequately supported to handle this responsibility.

Over the last three years, our organizations have worked in partnership to develop a guide that would empower schools to promote mental health literacy. The curriculum guide provides a complete set of educational tools to increase understanding of mental health and mental disorders among both teachers and students.

The guide, developed by CMHA and SLFC, focuses on training teachers (in their module) to be comfortable with their own knowledge of mental health. The guide then empowers the teachers to share this knowledge with their students through a multiple module program. The program uses a variety of interactive sessions that help to promote dialogue among students, as well as with their teachers. Discussing mental health in a supportive, familiar environment enables youth to feel safe, ask questions, gain knowledge, combat stigma and develop their own opinions of the world around them.

The program has been developed in cooperation with teachers, educators and mental health professionals across Canada. Over the last two years, it has been tested in a number of schools across Canada, and is currently being piloted in several schools in Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia.

The guide will be officially launched early in the 2010 school year, and at that time will be made available to teachers and school boards across Canada, in a variety of formats. Individuals interested in being kept up-to-date on its progress, can send an email to: info@teenmentalhealth.org.

The Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide project was made possible by funding received from the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; Canadian Mental Health Association; Sun Life Financial; IWK Health Centre; Dalhousie University; TR Meighan Foundation; Kathryn A. Weldon Charitable Foundation, e-Learn Campus and The Printing House.

About CMHA, National

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), founded in 1918, is one of the oldest voluntary health organizations in Canada. Each year, it provides direct service to more than 100,000 Canadians through the combined efforts of more than 10,000 volunteers and staff across Canada in some 135 communities. As a nation-wide voluntary organization, the Canadian Mental Health Association promotes the mental health of all Canadians and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness. CMHA accomplishes this mission through advocacy, education, research, and service delivery. For further information, please visit www.cmha.ca.

About the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health

The Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health was established in October 2006 as an endowed academic chair, in partnership with Sun Life Financial, Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre. The Chair is held by Dr. Stan Kutcher. The chair team is responsible for mental health research; developing, disseminating and evaluating mental health resources, programs and training services for youth, educators and other related stakeholders; and implementing innovative strategies and new approaches to improve youth mental health through inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination. To find out more about the programs, visit www.teenmentalhealth.org.

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For additional information, or to arrange an interview with Dr. Stan Kutcher (Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health) or Dr. Taylor Alexander, CEO (Canadian Mental Health Association, National Office) please contact:

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