



## **OHL and CMHA partner to launch *Talk Today***

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Toronto, ON – The Ontario Hockey League (OHL) and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario today announced a new partnership and launch of a new initiative called *Talk Today*.

*Talk Today* is a mental health education program CMHA Ontario specifically designed for OHL players and team staff to help identify and deal with mental health issues.

“Mental illness directly or indirectly affects everyone at some point in their life,” said OHL Commissioner David Branch. “We are pleased to partner with Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario with our program *Talk Today* to further enhance the playing environment for our student athletes.”

The *Talk Today* program is one of, if not, the most comprehensive mental health programs for amateur sports in Canada. It consists of several components including mental health and suicide-awareness workshops, mental health coaches, *Talk Today* community awareness events at OHL games, and mental health champions.

*Talk Today* stems from a pilot program organized by the Peterborough Petes last March. Twenty four players and coaches participated in a workshop, safeTALK, which helps teach individuals the importance of talking about mental health, how to acknowledge signs of suicide, seeking help when they’re in need of support, and connecting others in need of support to suicide first aid resources.

At the heart of *Talk Today* is the relationship between OHL clubs and their local CMHA branch. A CMHA Mental Health Coach will serve as a liaison for the team and be available to provide mental health resources, provide referrals to community mental health and addictions support, or mental health crisis intervention services. The Mental Health Coach will help their club develop a Mental Health Champion, an individual within each OHL organization who can further serve as a resource for players regarding mental health issues and support.

“*Talk Today* provides the players and those associated with the league new life skills they can take with them beyond the dressing room or hockey rink. It is our hope that this program encourages individuals to break free from stigma and discrimination so that they can speak openly about these serious issues to help themselves and others,” said Camille Quenneville, CEO, CMHA Ontario.

*Talk Today* is a mandatory program that will work in conjunction with the OHL’s other league programs in areas such as drug awareness, health and safety education, and will become an important piece of the league’s ‘Players First’ guide.

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