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**YOUTH TO PROMOTE MENTAL ILLNESS MESSAGES**

WHITEHORSE – A Vancouver-based youth group, *ReachOut*, will be in Whitehorse this week to shine the spotlight on Yukon Mental Illness Awareness week, Oct. 19 to 25.

Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart said today the group will help increase Yukoners' awareness about early psychosis.

"Mental illnesses affect many Yukoners and their families," Hart said. "We are pleased to offer opportunities, such as *ReachOut*, to help people educate themselves about the signs and symptoms of mental illness. Using young people to deliver the information lends credibility to the initiative and helps reduce the fear and stigma that surrounds mental illness."

*ReachOut* complements work underway by Mental Health Services to increase awareness of the early signs of psychosis in young people, and offers services and supports to at-risk youth and their families and friends.

Symptoms of psychosis include confused thinking, hallucinations and false beliefs, with symptoms usually presenting themselves between the ages of 15 and 25. Psychosis affects three per cent of the population at one point in their lives, and can be triggered by the use of alcohol and drugs.

"Early intervention is key," Clinical Manager of Mental Health Services Marie Fast said. "Many people don't realize that psychosis is a treatable medical condition. The sooner an individual gets help, the greater the chance of a full recovery."

*ReachOut* will perform in the Yukon College Gymnasium at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, October 21, and at the Old Fire Hall at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 22. Everyone is welcome, and admission is free.

More information on the week's events can be found at: [www.hss.gov.yk.ca](http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca).

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