

Government of Prince Edward Island
The PEI *Bridge* Model

Gouvernement de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard
Le modèle *Bridge* de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard

The Government of Prince Edward Island in partnership with police services and community-based organizations has launched a new initiative, known as the “Bridge”, which puts the immediate needs of individuals and families at the center of the risk detection, coordinated actions, and support identification of areas for broader social policy change.

The Bridge brings together relevant service providers such as health, education, justice, police, First Nations, and family services who work together to connect individuals and families to the services and programs they need to reduce harm for those who have an elevated level of risk of harm occurring soon.

The Bridge model is a risk-driven triage and problem-solving approach. Using this approach, when the needs of a high risk person or family are identified by a situation table, action will be taken within 24 to 48 hours to connect individuals and families to the services and programs they need. Many communities across the country who are using similar models have already seen reductions in emergency room admissions, child protection cases, prosecutions, crime and victimization.

Our government has recognized the need for better coordination and mechanisms to reduce barriers to information sharing among social departments and community based agencies that work with individuals and families in situations of acute risk. To help strengthen the systems that support Islanders, the PEI government has adopted a new model of service to foster inter-sector collaboration.

This initiative is made up of activities aimed mobilizing change at individual, organizational, community, and government levels. The situation table coordinates actions and intervenes in

situations of immediate risk; organizational change includes increasing capacity for risk detection, client centered responsiveness, and collaboration; community change includes fostering a culture of collaboration and effective networking; and governmental change includes reduced barriers to information sharing and 'bottom up' identification of policy and program issues.

In July 2015 the PEI Government provided the mandate necessary to adopt this multidisciplinary, risk-based intervention process and customize and enhance it for Islanders. This successful model is based on the COR-Hub model of service delivery that was first developed in Saskatchewan. *Unlike other implementations of this model, which focus on cities and regions, the Prince Edward Island Bridge initiative is province-wide in scope.*

This initiative required an unprecedented and comprehensive development of an information sharing agreement between four government departments, federal and municipal police agencies, First Nations and non-government organizations. As a result of this enabling action, the information sharing approach has been replicated to support the development of an inter-sector service delivery approach in school settings. It has shifted the dialogue to a problem solving approach to information sharing.

The intervention process is about offering support and assistance that, in many cases, at-risk individuals were not previously aware of, or were unable to access. It is not about enforcing or apprehending. It is about responding to risk, working to prevent incidents and crises, and empowering practitioners to do *things differently*.

The Bridge was launched in September 2016. In the year since its inception:

- 159 Islanders facing situations of acutely elevated risk have been assisted by the Bridge.
- 140 service providers from across the Province in social departments, police agencies and community based organizations have received comprehensive Bridge training.
- Presentations on the Bridge have been made to 1,111 community members, groups,

service agencies, public servants, etc, communicating the importance of inter-sector collaboration.

- A range of systemic issues and barriers have been identified by Bridge partners and are being worked on by the province.

The Province is currently developing an evaluation and monitoring framework for the Bridge. Anecdotal feedback from service providers and Islanders is positive. Benefits of this new collaborative approach are highlighted in a service provider video at <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/prince-edward-island-bridge-model>. The initial evaluation will focus on impact and outcomes for individuals and families at acutely elevated risk of harm. The ongoing monitoring and the work of the Bridge steering committee is to use the data emerging from the situation table to identify systemic issues, explore those matters more comprehensively, and generate potential solutions.

For many years front line service providers across Prince Edward Island have struggled with the challenge of working within strict departmental or agency mandates which limited opportunities for meaningful collaboration to serve the best interests of individuals and families at risk. Implementation of this initiative required persistence and courage to identify and address a number of both real and perceived barriers to effective collaboration – it has really challenged the status quo. Taking the steps to provide a mandate and support for meaningful collaboration among human service agencies demonstrates a true appreciation of the evidence of what works for individuals and families at risk of harm.

Engaging service providers to think differently about their approach and see the value and impact of collaboration took time and the determination of all the leaders involved. Despite considerable resistance at the outset, the feedback from Situation Table participants is positive and acknowledges Bridge is an important mechanism for working together and improving the lives of Islanders.

Relationships have been strengthened; a more coordinated, timely and enhanced service delivery model is helping vulnerable Islanders; and, *new examples of multi-disciplinary*

collaboration for different target populations are now being built on the success of this model.

The Bridge model is an important initiative for the future of our province. By moving further towards evidence and risk-based collaborative approaches to support people experiencing acutely elevated risk of harm, we are advancing ways we can work together to help all Islanders.