

HARMONIZED RELIGIOUS SERVICE OFFER AT THE CISSS DE LA CÔTE-NORD

Baie-Comeau, December 19th, 2018 – The Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de la Côte-Nord recently reached an agreement for harmonized services with the Diocèse de Baie-Comeau, in charge of all the parishes on the North Shore. This agreement will enter into force on January 1st, 2019. Several services are now standardized in all municipalities where there is a facility of the CISSS:

- Weekly church services (masses) (or bimonthly according to current practices) in all territories served by the CISSS de la Côte-Nord (usually in residential and long-term care centre (CHSLD))
- Special celebrations for certain religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, etc.)
- Collective celebrations for the sacrament of the sick
- Certain other sacraments and individual accompaniments according to the community's culture (anointing of the sick, communion, penance, etc.)

Most of the services are delivered to users of residential environments and hospital centres. Occasionally, other services or pastoral activities may be delivered to other clienteles served by the CISSS (youth accommodation, palliative care, etc.). Certain pastoral or spiritual care activities are carried out in collaboration with the team of the CISSS and the volunteers involved (special celebrations, communion, etc.).

Regional consultation on spiritual care and pastoral services

This agreement follows the broad consultation on spiritual care and pastoral services led by the CISSS de la Côte-Nord in 2017. The purpose of this consultation was to redefine and to harmonize the service offer in spiritual care and pastoral services, while taking care of reflecting and respecting the needs and interests of users, of their relatives, and of the population in general. The consultation mainly concerned the residents of CHSLDs, but could extend to other clienteles, such as in hospitalization, in end-of-life care or in mental health.

Meetings were held in Havre-Saint-Pierre, Sept-Îles, Port-Cartier, Baie-Comeau, Forestville, Les Esoumins and Les Bergeronnes. In total, over a hundred residents, intervenors, and members of end-of-life and residents' committees participated in it. In order to also get the perspective of the population on the matter, a questionnaire was made available online: 130 people answered it. Certain parishes, namely Sept-Îles, Baie-Comeau and Forestville, stepped in to gather the opinion of their faithful, many of whom completed the paper version of the questionnaire. This process helped reach 336 people having an interest. Finally, mail-outs including the questionnaire were sent to every citizen of the Lower North Shore and 22 people returned the completed questionnaire.

Findings and preoccupations

Among the respondents, 86% said that they or their relatives receive or have already received spiritual care or pastoral services during hospitalization.

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The activities listed that are particularly appreciated all concern the Catholic religion. The masses in CHSLD – where there are some – appeared to be essential to maintain as far as may be possible. The other appreciated religious activities are, in order, the visits of the priest or the chaplain, the sacrament of the sick, the communion and the confession.

Several people also mentioned the necessity of developing the spiritual accompaniment more in its broad sense and not religious: train volunteers or employees ready to offer this type of support and listening and better frame these services, inform more about the services available, etc.

What has appeared essential for everyone who was met and for most of the respondents to the questionnaire is to maintain a spiritual service and pastoral activity offer within the health and social services network and to show openness toward the Catholic religion.

Among the difficulties experienced in terms of spirituality and pastoral, several participants to the meetings mentioned the difficulty to recruit volunteers.

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