

## MARS-A: INFORMATION FOR REFERRING PROVIDERS

### Mindful Awareness and Resilience Skills for Adolescents BC Children's Hospital

#### Overview:

This skills-based group is based on the work of two programs developed for adults: 1) **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction** for coping with stress and illness (MBSR, Jon Kabat-Zinn); and 2) **Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy** for coping with depressive symptoms and preventing depressive relapse (MBCT, Williams, Teasdale, Segal and Kabat-Zinn). This program is modified to reflect adolescent developmental concerns. Some of the goals include teaching skills to manage stress and pain associated with chronic medical conditions, to help prevent relapse of depression, and to develop better self-regulation and attention control.

The groups will be educational and instructional in nature (as opposed to classical therapy groups). The groups will be facilitated by Dr. Dzung Vo (Adolescent Medicine) and/or Dr. Jake Locke (Psychiatrist). Trainees may also participate as co-facilitators or participant-observers.

**Criteria:** Age **15-19 years**, with **Psychological Distress:** Participants can be referred for management and coping with stable, non-acute depression and/or anxiety (current or prior); and/or management of stress, pain, and mood symptoms related to a chronic medical condition. **MARS-A is intended as a supplement to (not replacement for) standard care.** Every participant will require their own individual therapist / physician (not necessarily active therapy) outside of the group, who is available and agrees to follow up if significant concerns or distress arise during the group. A **willingness to participate** in group mindfulness practice and a reasonable degree of motivation is requested.

**Exclusions:** Acute/unstable depression, acute suicidality, active substance abuse, psychosis, significant cognitive/developmental disability, severe disruptive behaviour

#### Format:

- 8-Week Outpatient Group, 90 minutes/week, plus one 3-hour half day Saturday session

**Referrals:** Recruitment will be mainly from BCCH Pediatrics or Psychiatry Outpatient programs, and from local Child and Youth Mental Health Teams.

- **To refer patients:** Please contact the BCCH Youth Health Secretary at 604-875-3472 or Email: [youthhealthprogram@cw.bc.ca](mailto:youthhealthprogram@cw.bc.ca)
- **For clinical questions and inquiries:** Pediatricians, Family Physicians: contact Dr. Vo at [dvo@cw.bc.ca](mailto:dvo@cw.bc.ca). Mental Health specialists: contact Dr. Locke at [jlocke@cw.bc.ca](mailto:jlocke@cw.bc.ca).
- **Intake:** participants will be invited by Dr. Vo or Dr. Locke for a 30- minute intake meeting to describe the program and assess if the participant is a good fit.
- **Please provide youth/families with the "Information for Youth and Families" flyer, below**

## MARS-A: INFORMATION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

### Mindful Awareness and Resilience Skills for Adolescents

**Mindfulness means “paying attention in a particular way: On purpose, in the present moment, and without judgment”** (Jon Kabat-Zinn). Much of our stress, pain, and suffering comes from being pulled away from the present moment, with regrets about the past, worries about the future, and judgments about the present. Mindfulness practice can help us to free ourselves from this kind of suffering. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) are mindfulness trainings for adults to cope with stress and depression. BC Children’s Hospital is offering an adaptation of MBSR and MBCT, for adolescents with psychological distress (depressive and/or anxiety symptoms); and/or stress, pain, and mood symptoms associated with chronic health conditions. Adolescents will learn and practice mindfulness, in a safe group environment, supported by other adolescents. Together, we will train ourselves to live more fully in the present moment, connect more deeply with the conditions that we already have to be happy, and learn to understand and transform our suffering and pain with mindfulness.

**For more general information on mindfulness**, see the “Greater Good Guide to Mindfulness” [http://educ.ubc.ca/research/ksr/docs/mindfulnessguide\\_may2010.pdf](http://educ.ubc.ca/research/ksr/docs/mindfulnessguide_may2010.pdf)  
And the Kelty Mental Health Resource Center’s page: <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/mindfulness>

**The groups will be facilitated by Dr. Dzung Vo (Pediatrics, Adolescent Medicine) and/or Dr. Jake Locke (Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) at BC Children’s Hospital.**

#### **Format of the course:**

- **8 weeks**, 90 minutes each, plus one 3-hour “half-day of mindfulness” on a Saturday
- **Age 15-19 years**, small group (5 to 15 adolescents per group)
- Light snacks/refreshments will be served
- **Experience-based:** Learning and applying mindfulness practices in class and at home
- This is **not a replacement for individual care** provided by your other doctor(s)/therapist(s).

#### **What we ask of participants:**

- Come in with an “open mind,” willing to give something new a try, and let go of any expectations, positive or negative.
- Attend all eight sessions plus the half day of mindfulness
- Practice mindfulness at home every day

#### **For More Information**

- **Referrals:** Speak with your doctor/therapist to see if MARS-A might be appropriate for you or your child. If you both feel like this might be a good fit, your doctor/therapist can refer you to for an intake meeting with Dr. Vo or Dr. Locke to learn more.
- **Questions?** Contact the Youth Health Program Secretary at 604-875-3472 or Email: [youthhealthprogram@cw.bc.ca](mailto:youthhealthprogram@cw.bc.ca)