

March is Social Work Month, a time dedicated to honouring the work and commitment of social workers.

As a vital member of rural health professionals, RhPAP is pleased to support social workers' efforts through programs such as the Rural Education and Advanced Learning (REAL) Program.

Through REAL, rural health professionals are able to access continuing professional development and education opportunities to enhance the healthcare services they offer in their communities. Learn below how REAL helped two social workers collaborate in their practice.

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Learning new knowledge is beneficial but when a colleague tags along, collaboration is elevated to a whole new level.

For two rural social workers, teaming up for training through RhPAP's REAL program did just that.



Desiree Morris



Ardelle Layden

Ardelle Layden and Desiree Morris, who both work at Canopy Cove Counselling in Olds,

signed up for the Four Day Essentials and Emotionally Focused Family Therapy training in May 2024.

“Having several clinicians trained in the same model that work in the same clinic, it’s just amazing to see the growth that happens,” says Morris, a social worker who specializes in pediatrics, teens, and couples.

When Morris starts working with a youth, she often recommends the parents see Layden or another colleague with similar training.

“It supports the entire family unit using the same model, so they are all able to come together,” she says.

“If the parents have already been working with their individual therapist, it’s so much easier for them. It’s almost like they already know the language of emotions and understanding when they come into working with their child. Progress happens so much faster when it comes to focusing on the parent-child relationship.”

Layden, who practises as a therapist for individuals, couples, and families, agrees.

“The first relationship that we have is with our families,” she says. “We really believe that healing is not necessarily an individual process but should encompass the entire system whether that be working with couples or working within the entire family system. That was a big motivator in taking the course.”

The course helped Layden gain more insight into her clients and “what family struggles they might be going through.”

Both social workers are grateful the Calgary course was funded through RhPAP’s REAL Program.

While the course is proving beneficial to their work, both women say without RhPAP’s support the cost of the training would not have been feasible at this time.

“It’s invaluable, it’s so important,” says Morris.

“How beneficial it is for clinicians and therapists to be able to get this sort of funding, to get this training to prevent burnout and help support families. It is so needed, especially in these rural communities where there’s just not a lot of access to resources.”

REAL’s spring application cycle runs May 6 to June 17.