



Minister's Medal Honouring Excellence in Health Quality and Safety

Individual Champion
Garry Laws

The “Elephant in the Room” Anti-Stigma campaign was developed by and with **people living with mental health and addictions challenges** throughout the South East who are part of the Peer Support Network. Mental Health Support Network South East Ontario (MHSNSEO) responded to the need through their community engagement exercises during the development of their organizational strategic plan in 2010. The concept from Consumers was to educate their community neighbours rather than hide or let someone else create a program. The program is in layperson’s terms and is intended for any audience, from early school-age children through to seniors. The Board of Directors of MHSNSEO endorsed the concept and encouraged the delivery of a program that is aimed at **dissolving the myths and assumptions** and to literally **engage in a conversation**. Therefore the “Elephant in the Room” is an interactive program that is motivating, inspirational and speaks directly to the elephant in the room – using a small, squishy blue elephant that has literally taken over the South East and beyond.

Garry Laws is the Executive Director of MHSNSEO and consumer who developed the “Elephant in the Room” campaign after considerable consultation and consideration to the issue of how Stigma has been a significant contributing factor to the recovery of persons, including himself, with addiction and/or mental health challenges. Through MHSNSEO Board endorsement and support, Garry developed the “Elephant in the Room” program on a shoestring budget in collaboration with numerous health care providers in the South East, the Provincial Consumer Survivor LHIN Leads Network.

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The information provided above is taken directly from 2013 Minister's Medal applications – Facts and information herein have not been verified for correctness.