

PRESS RELEASE

Under embargo until 11:00 a.m.

A new telephone help line for Alberta's French-speaking residents

EDMONTON, May 5, 2022 – The Réseau santé Alberta and TAO Tel-Aide signed a three-year collaborative agreement to make TAO Tel-Aide's Helpline available to all French-speaking Albertans. The realization of this project is possible thanks to the collaboration of the Société Santé en français and the financial contribution from Health Canada under the Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future. As of today, Alberta's French-speaking residents experiencing situations of psychological distress or simply needing an empathetic ear will have access to this free service in French at any time of the day or night. The introduction of the TAO Tel-Aide Helpline in Alberta is intended to provide improved access to French-language health services upstream of the mental health services continuum for all of Alberta's Francophone minority communities.

"This partnership with TAO Tel-Aide is great news for French-speaking Albertans. In today's global context, our mental health is put to the greatest test. When in crisis, it's never easy to express your feelings, especially if you have to do it in a second language. It is therefore essential to offer more services in French to reduce psychological distress and improve the well-being of Francophone communities in Alberta," explains Paul Denis, Réseau santé Alberta Executive Director.

TAO Tel-Aide's 60 volunteers are trained and supervised to offer a caring and empathetic ear and to provide guidance and support within a solution-focused approach. Besides making an important contribution to preventive mental health, the TAO Tel-Aide Helpline provides other benefits, including:

- Decreasing psychological distress and demand for crisis services
- Reducing isolation
- Referrals for callers to French-language community support services
- Increasing awareness of the services that are available in French in the province
- Increasing population's wellness.

"It is with enthusiasm that TAO Tel-Aide team and I welcome the news of this agreement with the Réseau santé Alberta. This is a great opportunity for TAO Tel-Aide to share its expertise once again to make its quality listening services available to a greater number of French speakers across Canada. We are convinced that the implementation of TAO Tel-Aide in Alberta will greatly contribute to the continuum of mental health supports," mentions Monique Chartrand, TAO Tel-Aid Executive Director.

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“The TAO Tel-Aide service is a promising practice that complements the wide-range of French-language health services available to Francophone communities in Canada, and now in Alberta. The Société Santé en français (SSF) is very pleased and hopes that this initiative will produce an enduring effect conducive to the emergence of other equally beneficial services,” says Antoine Désilets, executive director of the Société Santé en français.

« S’exprimer dans sa langue maternelle ou dans sa première langue officielle parlée ne devrait pas être une option, mais bien un droit fondamental et ce, surtout lorsqu’il est question de notre santé et de vulnérabilité. La ligne d’écoute empathique offerte de nouveau par TAO Tel-Aide en Alberta est un service essentiel qui sera accessible à tous et à toutes, peu importe où l’on se trouve dans la province. Félicitations au Réseau santé Alberta et merci à TAO Tel-Aide pour cet important partenariat ! » a ajouté Sheila Risbud, présidente de l’ACFA.

TAO Tel-Aide

TAO Tel-Aide is a not-for-profit organization that has been active in the Ottawa-Gatineau region now for 48 years. TAO Tel-Aide offers a confidential telephone help line in French to assist people of all ages who are experiencing psychological distress. TAO Tel-Aide’s listening, support and referral line is a basic service provided by a dynamic team that supports over 60 dedicated and engaged volunteers. The organization, strongly rooted in Francophone communities, responded to 12,739 calls in 2020-2021 in its four call centres.

A reminder that TAO Tel-Aide’s help line is now available to Alberta Francophones, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The service is free, confidential, and answered only in French. There’s just one number to remember: 1-800-567-9699.

Réseau santé Alberta

Created in 2004, the Réseau santé Alberta (RSA) is one of 16 French-language health networks that are members of the Société santé en français. As a leader, the RSA influences decisions that affect the personal and collective health and wellness of French-speaking Albertans. Its mandate is to improve and increase access to French-language health services in Alberta.

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