



Jan. 6, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention: Health/Food/Lifestyle Section Editors

Parenting skills, education critical to treatment of anxiety disorders in children and teenagers

Almost 2,000 Maple Ridge kids affected by anxiety disorders

Vancouver – Anxiety disorders are surprisingly common in children and teenagers, affecting approximately 10 per cent of them. Unfortunately, 80 per cent of anxiety disorders in this age group go untreated which makes educational opportunities for parents -- such as AnxietyBC's family skill building seminars -- more important than ever.

To help parents learn how to deal with anxiety disorders in their children, AnxietyBC, with assistance from the F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids Mental Health, is bringing to Maple Ridge a family skill building seminar.

The free and helpful seminar takes place in Maple Ridge on Jan 12, 2009, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Thomas Haney Centre, 23000-116th Avenue. The seminar will teach parents how to identify if a child has an anxiety disorder, and how to manage the problem at home.

"Most children with significant anxiety problems do not receive professional help usually because the problem is not recognized or there are no available resources to provide help. For this reason, it is so important that parents and teachers learn how to recognize symptoms of problematic anxiety and learn coping strategies," said Dr. Melisa Robichaud, a psychologist and AnxietyBC spokesperson.

"The good news is that anxiety problems can be managed, and both parents and children can learn effective strategies for dealing with anxiety that do not involve medication," added Robichaud.

According to Robichaud, everyone experiences anxiety from time to time as it is a normal and healthy human process. Children with a definitive anxiety disorder, however, experience more than just normal anxiety; they experience significant and disabling anxiety that may be long-lasting and interfere with important aspects of their lives, such as attending and concentrating in school, and making friends.

Anxiety disorders may first present in children and teens as an unwillingness to participate in normal activities most kids enjoy such as sports, sleepovers and even attending school, as well as in somatic symptoms such as chronic stomachaches and headaches. However, these disorders may eventually permeate every area of life.

Parents can play an integral role in helping children learn strategies to manage anxiety such as showing them how to calm themselves down, problem solve challenging situations, and gradually face fears. These strategies are part of an evidence-based psychological treatment called Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT), which is the most effective treatment for anxiety disorders.

The AnxietyBC seminar on managing child anxiety will enable parents, teachers, and counselors to learn about helpful CBT strategies, as well as ways to teach these strategies to children.

“One of the greatest benefits of teaching children CBT is that they learn how to manage their own anxiety symptoms and take back control of their lives, rather than become victims of their anxiety. Learning how to manage distress is an important life skill that we all need as adults as it allows us to feel confident and have a strong sense of self-esteem,” said Robichaud.

AnxietyBC is also hosting seminars in Nanaimo and Kamloops. For more information, call (604) 525-7566 or visit www.anxietybc.com.

Funding for AnxietyBC programs is provided by Fraser Health, BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, and other regional health authorities and foundations. AnxietyBC members play a key role in supporting the ongoing dissemination of resources and advocacy with their membership fees and donations, while the public and corporate sponsors assist AnxietyBC during its fund-raising campaigns. AnxietyBC is very grateful to all its supporters and well-wishers.

AnxietyBC is one of seven provincial agencies that make up the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. These agencies are working together to provide high quality, evidence-based information on mental health and substance use to help individuals and families living with mental health and substance use problems live productive, fulfilling lives. Funding is provided by BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, with additional support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

AnxietyBC, a non-profit organization, was established in 1999 by a group of concerned consumers, family members and professionals. Its mission is to facilitate positive solutions for those living with anxiety by increasing awareness, promoting education and improving access to effective treatments.

-30-

**Media Contact: Michele Penz, Calico Communications for AnxietyBC
778.888.2249**