



CMHA National: National youth advisory council

Background and Purpose

With more than 75 per cent of mental health concerns emerging in early adulthood – between adolescence and early 20s – and with suicide being the second highest cause of death between 15- to 29-year-olds, it is clear that the voice of youth must be embedded in conversations about mental health, mental illness, and substance use. By incorporating youth into decision-making and engaging youth and their peers, they will take a leadership role in decisions that affect them.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is creating a national youth advisory council, working directly with the CMHA national office, to serve as an authentic means of youth engagement. The national youth advisory council will support CMHA National's goal of facilitating access to the resources youth require to improve their mental health and support their recovery from mental illness.

The national youth advisory council will serve in an internal advisory capacity, making recommendations on matters that impact youth, family and community mental health. The youth council's mandate will include:

- Providing feedback on organizational strategic planning and decision-making
- Collaborating on the development and evaluation of CMHA National initiatives (including programs, research and policy, fund development, operations and communications-related projects)
- Empowering youth through self-directed, self-initiated projects
- Building relationships and supporting allyship with Indigenous communities
- Contributing to CMHA's mandate of helping to increase youth mental health literacy and to contribute to the elimination of stigma or negative stereotypes around mental health

Membership Description

The national youth advisory council will be comprised of 10-15 members, aged 15-30, representing the diversity of youth and those served by the 87 CMHA's across Canada, who are passionate about mental health. To honour CMHA National's journey towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, at least three membership positions for the council will be held for Indigenous youth.

The members will be asked to participate in regular teleconference meetings and dedicate five to eight hours per month on council-related activities. Members may also be required to travel within Canada for one in-person meeting a year.

The members of the youth advisory council will gain first-hand experience in the not-for-profit and mental health sector with Canada's largest mental health organization and develop their leadership skills in an advisory role. Members will also have the opportunity to contribute in areas of interest through voluntary participation in project-specific groups created to design programs or initiatives with youth input. Formal and informal mentorship opportunities, along with opportunities to participate in CMHA programs, trainings and events will be provided to members in recognition of their time and dedication to council activities.