

Let's seize this moment for mental health

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the mental health and well-being of Canadians.

From the loss of lives, jobs and homes, to extended isolation, fear of infection, and the sustained disruption of daily life, the pandemic has highlighted chronic gaps of an underfunded mental health care system. It is a system in crisis.

Federal investments in mental health in recent years haven't come close to meeting the need for quality care. While the investments made are most welcome, they do not address the serious underfunding of community mental health services.

This federal election presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make meaningful and lasting reforms to the mental health system so that Canadians can get the help they need, when and where they need it. To do this, we need your help.

CMHA invites you to become a mental health champion in this election campaign. We need your commitment to help people in your community get timely access to the treatment and support programs they need to survive, recover and thrive.

**CMHA believes
federal investment in
a pan-Canadian
community mental
health plan is the
key to our collective
recovery.**

A mental health crisis: by the numbers

1 IN 5
CANADIANS

1 in 5 Canadians experiences a mental illness or a mental health issue in any given year. 7.5 million people in Canada live with a mental illness or mental health problem.

1.6 **MILLION**
CANADIANS

Even before the pandemic, 1.6 million Canadians had unmet mental health needs.

\$50 **BILLION**
PER YEAR

The cost of mental health problems and mental illnesses to the Canadian economy is well over \$50 billion per year.

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable Canadians.

- Mental health has deteriorated in 70% of **school-aged children**, 66% of **preschool-aged children**, **Indigenous people**, people who identify as **2SLGBTQIA+**, **women** and **people with disabilities**.
- More of these people are also experiencing **suicidal thoughts and feelings**.
- **Canadians with low incomes** have been twice as likely to have trouble coping.
- **Indigenous people** have suffered more than the general public.

What is community mental health?

Canadians require timely access to care and treatment in their own communities in order to recover from mental illnesses and substance use problems. Community mental health includes:



Programs to prevent mental illness and promote mental health, such as social and emotional learning for youth, suicide awareness and prevention programs, and community connections programs.



Direct services such as counselling, substance use treatment, peer support, housing, employment services, and case management.

Whether they live in urban or rural areas, earlier access to publicly funded services at the community level can prevent Canadians from needing more costly and time-consuming interventions later. Community mental health prevents Canadians from being in crisis in the first place and reduces the number of trips to the Emergency Department.

Community mental health also allows people with severe mental illness to live in the community, recover, experience fewer crises, and have fewer symptoms and hospitalizations. Community mental health is proven to be efficient, life-saving and cost-saving for the health care system.

Why should community mental health be a federal priority?

Provinces and territories are unable to meet the incredible demand in their communities for mental health and substance use services and supports.

Since these critical supports are often delivered outside of hospitals and physicians' offices, they are not considered 'medically necessary' under the Canada Health Act, and, as such, are excluded from federal health transfers.

The mental health care provided by physicians and hospitals is limited: physicians typically offer drug therapy, emotional support, health promotion and wellness counselling, advice and referrals to people experiencing a mental health or substance use problem, but do not have the necessary resources to treat people with mental illness or meet the service demand.

In the Emergency Department, those experiencing a mental health crisis will receive medical care and intensive services delivered by a range of mental health professionals, but they are time-limited and may not include follow-up after discharge from the hospital.

Canadians who need mental health services thus have to wait long periods for services funded through their province or territory, or other funding sources, or they rely on limited employer benefits or pay out-of-pocket for private services. Because of these barriers, many will never receive the services they need.

Making meaningful progress on mental health will require federal leadership. Only the federal government has the responsibility and capacity to transform the mental health system in a fundamental way.

It will not be possible to recover from the pandemic if Canadians don't have good mental health. Strong federal leadership in community mental health will ensure a healthier future for Canadians and for Canada.

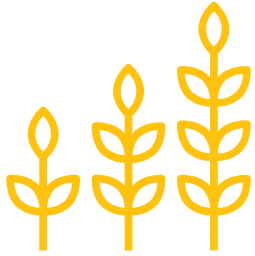
You can advocate in Ottawa by calling for a pan-Canadian community mental health plan that includes:



Direct federal investment to sustain and improve access to chronically underfunded community mental health programs and services to ensure every Canadian who needs mental health supports can get them.



Investment in additional supportive and affordable housing for people with mental illnesses and substance use problems to ensure that they have safe places to live as they recover.



An increase in funding for Indigenous-led mental health services to advance reconciliation and to better support Indigenous communities.



More funding to support people who use substances; including funding for substance use treatments and supports, integration between mental health and substance use supports, increasing the number of supervised consumption sites, and decriminalizing simple drug possession.

How CMHA is helping Canadians and communities

With one national office and a presence in every province and one territory, CMHA's community-based branches provide services and supports to more than 1.3 million Canadians. This is possible through the combined efforts of more than 5,000 dedicated staff and 11,000 volunteers.

Some of our programs include:

BounceBack®

BounceBack®: One of our most effective programs to help build skills to improve mental health. Based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), this free self-help program provides a trained, short-term coach, and access to customizable materials and resources. It has helped tens of thousands of Canadian adults and youth experiencing prolonged stress or mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression.

Housing and housing services

Housing and housing services: helping people with mental illnesses and substance use problems find a place to live that is safe and affordable. CMHA supports people to find and maintain their housing, provides transitional, supportive, and affordable housing in some communities, and connects people with the community resources that assist them in their recovery.

Suicide prevention and awareness

Suicide prevention and awareness: programs that help the public recognize when a person may be having thoughts of suicide, what to do and where to get the necessary help. CMHA offers materials, awareness-raising campaigns, presentations and workshops and services, such as crisis lines.

Substance use services and supports

Substance use services and supports: a broad range of services that include group programs for adults and youth, residential treatment programs, case management, individual counselling and peer-based supports, among others. These services provide treatment and supports or help people to find appropriate treatment and set their own recovery goals.

Workplace Mental Health

Workplace Mental Health programs include “Not Myself Today” – a program that provides activities, tools and resources to engage workforces around understanding mental health, reducing stigma and fostering safe and supportive work cultures – and other locally designed workplace mental well-being programs.

*Resilient Minds

*Resilient Minds: Developed by firefighters, this program helps first responders and front-line workers to recognize the effects of psychological stress and trauma in themselves and their peers. Participants learn about psychological disorders and better ways to manage stress, mitigate trauma and boost resilience.

*Recovery Colleges

*Recovery Colleges: These innovative mental health learning centres offer knowledge, new skills and social connections to promote recovery. Led by mental health practitioners and peers with lived experience, the program helps people rediscover passions and meaning in life. They also reduce healthcare costs and service use.

*Peer Support Canada

*Peer Support Canada: Peer support promotes emotional and practical connections between two people who share a common experience, such as a mental health challenge or illness. A Peer Support Worker is trained to support others. Peer Support Canada offers a certification program that certifies Peer Support Workers to ensure they fulfill the nationally endorsed Standards of Practice.

*These programs are currently offered in English only.

If you or someone you love is struggling, please contact your local CMHA branch. You can find the CMHA in your community at cmha.ca. If you are in immediate crisis or are thinking about suicide, please call 1-833-456-4566 toll free in Canada (1-866-277-3553 in Quebec) or visit your nearest emergency department.

About the Canadian Mental Health Association

Founded in 1918, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is the most established, most extensive community mental health organization in Canada. Through a presence in more than 330 communities across every province and one territory, CMHA provides advocacy, programs and resources that help to prevent mental health problems and illnesses, support recovery and resilience, and enable all Canadians to flourish and thrive. For more information, please visit www.cmha.ca