

# Care

## AFTER THE CALL

The **Canadian Mental Health Association** is urging the federal government to ensure that people who call the **9-8-8 crisis line** receive “**Care after the Call.**”

## THE ISSUE

Every day in Canada, an average of

**12** people die by suicide

**60** people are hospitalized for self-harm.

Starting November 30, 2023, people in suicide or emotional crisis will have access to a national crisis line by calling 9-8-8. This line is intended to de-escalate emergencies and provide immediate crisis support. It will save lives. However, a call to a crisis line is often not enough. And it doesn't prevent crisis in the first place.

A four-to-six-fold increase in crisis calls is expected as Canadians become familiar with 9-8-8; as such, the

crisis line will be a channel for urgent, unmet mental health needs, increasing the demand for care.

By its very nature as a crisis line, 9-8-8 will only offer short-term support. Callers will frequently need follow-up care and supports that often don't exist in their communities or are already overwhelmed by demand.

No funding has been allocated to frontline mental health providers to deliver crisis response and suicide prevention care. Time-limited funding to the Public Health Agency of Canada will only support the implementation and operation (staffing) of 9-8-8.

Without preventative or follow-up care, people who are in a mental health crisis will have nowhere to go but emergency departments, placing greater strain on our hospitals.

## THE SOLUTION

**\$190 million** annually over **5 years** through the Public Health Agency of Canada to create a “**Care after the Call**” Fund for community-based crisis prevention and response services.

Having created a national crisis line, the federal government now has the responsibility to ensure that people will receive the care they urgently need after the call. The federal government can resolve pressures in the mental health care system that

are within its jurisdiction, such as mental illness prevention and mental health promotion.

Introducing a “**Care after the Call**” Fund for communities is sound stewardship of federal taxpayer dollars as it will provide a cost-effective way to resolve crisis situations and prevent future crises. Investing in care before, during and after a crisis will redirect costly hospital, paramedic, and police services and lead to long-term savings and reduced pressures on health, judicial, and correctional systems. And it will save more lives.

## SERVICES FUNDED UNDER CARE AFTER THE CALL WOULD INCLUDE:



crisis beds



mobile crisis response



suicide prevention programs



ongoing counselling



referrals to housing, income, and food supports



peer support



mental health promotion and mental illness prevention



programs to prevent frequent emergency department use

## Caroline's story: *from crisis caller to crisis responder*

Meet Caroline. She works as a crisis line responder and is on her way to becoming a supervisor. She is a mental health advocate for the Canadian Mental Health Association. And she is a suicide survivor.

Caroline lost her dad to suicide and, when things were at their bleakest, she tried to take her own life. She mostly got through it on her own, she says. That's because she didn't know where to turn for help.

Now, Caroline gives callers space to talk through their darkest moments. It's rewarding, yes, but she feels powerless a lot. "You feel really helpless when you have to tell someone, 'I'm sorry, I can't point you to specific help.'"

When they call, she says, "people have already exhausted what's available through public health care, or they're on a waitlist." And they can't afford to pay for private care.

Ask Caroline what would make the difference, and she'll tell you very simply: "People need longer term support." People need peer supporters and mobile crisis teams and community-based counselling, and they need mental health workers. They need *care after the call*.



## About the Canadian Mental Health Association

Founded in 1918, the **Canadian Mental Health Association** (CMHA) is the most established, most extensive community mental health network in Canada. Through a presence in more than **330 communities** across every province and the Yukon, CMHA employs **7,000 staff** and engages **11,000 volunteers**, to provide 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.

Learn more. Connect with SM Leduc, National Government Relations Advisor, [smleduc@cmha.ca](mailto:smleduc@cmha.ca)



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
*La santé mentale pour tous*