



CMHA NATIONAL
**IMPACT
REPORT**
2023-2024



**PASSIONATE
ABOUT
CHANGE**



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO



Rana finished folding their laundry, planned their dinner, and jumped in the shower before going for a walk—seemingly simple acts that wouldn't have been possible only a month ago due to a severe depressive episode that had kept them isolated and exhausted for months. Rana's journey of resiliency toward better mental health was supported by millions of people across Canada: advocates demanding government make system-wide changes to policy and health care; people normalizing conversations about mental health at home, at work, and in their communities; and on-the-ground programs and services delivered by expert care providers at Rana's local CMHA branch.

What drives all these people? Compassion for self and others. Humans are hardwired for connection, and compassion connects.

Rana is one example of the people that CMHA helps everyday thanks to your support. Yet so many more people need access to better care. And this simply isn't possible without people. Funders, sponsors, partners, individual donors, volunteers, and staff at CMHA offices and facilities across Canada: you make good things happen; it's your compassion that makes Rana's story possible. **Thank you.**

“

Humans are hardwired for connection, and compassion connects.

”

CMHA believes that mental health is a universal human right, but while one in three people in Canada will struggle with mental health, addiction, or substance use health, a third of us also don't have access to the resources and support we need.

This is the story of what we did over the last year to help fix that.

Margaret Eaton
CEO, CMHA National

This Impact Report covers the CMHA National fiscal year April 1, 2023–March 31, 2024.

OUR GUIDING VOICE

The [National Council of Persons with Lived Experience](#) (NCPLE) is an advisory committee to CMHA National and our National Board of Directors. Comprised of volunteers with lived/living experience of mental illness(es) and/or addictions from across Canada, NCPLE's members are instrumental in infusing the voice of lived experience in our work and ensuring we center the needs of the people we serve with compassion.

Our NCPLE committee members with Margaret Eaton, CEO (back row, far left) and Rebekah Sears, National Lived Experience Specialist (front row, second from left)



Three new members have joined the NCPLE: two from rural Newfoundland and Labrador and another member from the Greater Toronto Area.



All nine members gathered in person in Toronto in March for the first time since the pandemic.



Members formed connections and forged the future direction and vision of the NCPLE.

Thank you to all our NCPLE members for sharing your time, experiences, knowledge, and insights; your compassion for change makes our work better.



Read stories from our NCPLE members [online](#).

OUR COMMITMENT TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

At CMHA National, we're committed to Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation.

Our National office in Toronto is situated on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

We recognize the impacts of colonization on mental health care for Indigenous Peoples in this country. We're reflecting on our role and responsibilities in this area and working to address the need for an inclusive and anti-racist approach to delivering our services in communities across Canada.

Our National Truth and Reconciliation working group guides our efforts to decolonize and indigenize the CMHA Federation, our programs, policies, and practices.

We hired a senior manager of Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation who has helped us engage in challenging conversations across our federation to understand and acknowledge CMHA's history and our role in colonization. We're learning together while listening to Indigenous voices—experiences, perspectives, and knowledge—as we continue our journey toward reconciliation. The outcome of this effort will be the creation of an action plan to guide the important work of true reconciliation, and we look forward to sharing more about this as we progress.

CMHA National commits to advancing reconciliation, better supporting Indigenous communities, and working as allies with Indigenous mental health organizations to advocate for increased funding for Indigenous-led mental health services.

IMAGINE A CANADA WHERE MENTAL HEALTH IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT

The last year brought unique challenges that impact mental health, addictions, and substance use health across Canada, particularly among youth. The economy, climate, and employee burnout are all impacting mental health globally. In Canada, conversations around the impacts of inequity on mental health and substance use health continued, while medical assistance in dying (see page 11) and the toxic drug crisis became a focus of CMHA National's work.

The Great Exhaustion

Not only are people more stressed at work, experiencing burnout and work/life imbalance, but we're increasingly emotionally fatigued by negative information about conflict and political instability, climate change, and inflation.¹

1 Ore, J. (2024, May 26). *Stressed at work? Anxious about the wider world? You might be part of 'The Great Exhaustion.'* CBC Radio. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/costofliving/the-great-exhaustion-1.7210589>

Inflation

One in three Canadians now report struggling with mental health, up from one in five in 2016. Economic stressors related to affordability, housing, and food security are contributing factors, and the cost of mental health care remains a barrier.²

2 Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2024, March 21). *Canadians increasingly report poor mental health, cite growing economic concerns as a contributing factor.* <https://www.cihi.ca/en/news/canadians-increasingly-report-poor-mental-health-cite-growing-economic-concerns-as-a>

Youth mental health

Youth and young adults report a 1.3 times higher rate of depression than adults.³ Among youth 16-24, a diagnosis of clinical depression was 1.6 times more common among 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and 1.8 times more common among non-binary youth.³

3 Canadian Mental Health Association. (2023, December). *Mental Health at the Pandemic's End: Youth still reporting higher rates of mental health problems.* <https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CMHA-YouthMHRC-Final-ENG.pdf>

These signs all point to the very real need for making mental health a universal human right. That's our vision and here's how we're making it happen:



STRENGTHENING THE FEDERATION

to create a unified, effective, and highly regarded CMHA federation



SOCIAL CHANGE

to create a society that understands and fosters good mental health



SYSTEMS CHANGE

for a stronger community mental health system in which people in Canada have access to community mental health services

Read more of our [Theory of Change](#)

STRENGTHENING THE FEDERATION

At CMHA National, we understand the power of collective strength. That's why we're building a unified, effective, and highly regarded federation to deliver the best services. We work on behalf of branches, regions, and divisions (our federation) to maximize our impact. We strengthen the capacity of the federation to deliver quality programs and services by providing grants, sharing knowledge, facilitating communities of practice, and developing tools and materials for the federation's use.



› Better together: a new collaborative playbook

We collaborated across the CMHA federation to chart where we're headed and how we'll get there—**together**. Our Collaboration Playbook leverages our strengths to make it easier for each of us to best deliver what we are uniquely positioned to do while being aligned around our shared purpose. The playbook is helping us maximize our collective impact across Canada as we strive to make mental health a universal human right.

› Expanding CMHA Recovery Colleges



Last October, the [Green Fischer Family Trust](#) [donated \\$1M](#) to enhance and expand CMHA's federation-run [Recovery Colleges](#) for people across Canada over a five-year period. About 5,000 people attend our Recovery Colleges each year, learning new skills for personal recovery in mental health and well-being while connecting with others in their community.



“I can't think of anything more meaningful than to redeploy my family's good fortune in support of fellow Canadians through community-based mental health care.”

– George Fischer



Other highlights

› Nurture a thriving, productive and healthy internal culture

Walking the talk on workplace mental health: In January, Forbes listed CMHA as one of [Canada's best employers](#) for the fourth year in a row, ranking us 11th out of 300 organizations. Initiatives like our four-day work week pilot and flexible work hours foster well-being and support a life outside of work for our people.

› Connect and support the federation capacity

Connecting our federation: Our federation wants to be more connected, engaged, and aware of what's happening at all levels. We launched a nationwide engagement strategy with more opportunities for connection and collaboration.

We also launched a federation newsletter sent to over 900 people with quarterly updates on national initiatives and CMHA stories from across Canada.

› Modernize our structure to create effective and cohesive structure and policies

Making the most of your support: We know there are many worthwhile organizations needing support and we're grateful for your trust. Making sure we use resources effectively is critical to realizing our vision. That's why we're aligning our work with [Imagine Canada's standards](#) for accountability and performance. We completed an audit of our policies and practices and are preparing to seek accreditation in 2025.

A leader in mental health

CMHA has been a leader in community mental health for over 100 years. We work across Canada to promote mental health for all. The powerful CMHA federation includes:



1
national
office



11
provincial/
territorial divisions



69
local branches/
regions



7,000
staff



11,000
volunteers
and
members



Presence in
over
330
communities

CMHA branches, regions, and divisions operate as individual charitable organizations and offer a range of mental health, addiction, and substance use health programs and services such as:

- ▶ service navigation
- ▶ mental health education and promotion
- ▶ crisis services
- ▶ customized supports in community
- ▶ in-patient treatment and residences
- ▶ individual and group therapy and support
- ▶ supports in other systems and sectors
- ▶ partnering with communities

SOCIAL CHANGE



Enrolling in CMHA programs helps people learn mentally healthy habits to better support themselves and others, creating a more compassionate society. We inspire people to cultivate good mental health and mobilize them to act for themselves and others. We build understanding by talking about the state of healthcare in Canada as it relates to mental health, addictions, and substance use, and by sharing real stories from people with lived experience. From understanding we spur people into action.

› 50,000 people unite to push for better mental health



In February, 50,000 people across Canada put their stamina to the test for our first [Push-Up Challenge](https://thepushupchallenge.ca). Together we did over 44 million pushups and raised almost \$2.5 million while sparking conversation about mental health and boosting mood from the physical act of exercising. Join us for the 2025 Push-Up Challenge—sign up for updates at thepushupchallenge.ca.

› Youth choose mental health as top charitable choice

More young people are prioritizing their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities, signaling positive social change. CMHA was a top choice for student-directed donations during [RBC's annual Give/Get campaign](#) which has raised over \$250,000 for CMHA over the last three years.



Other highlights

› Influence norms, beliefs, and behaviors via communications and interventions in key settings to create a climate of acceptance

Helping people help each other: Compassion is about meeting suffering—ours and others’—with kindness and a desire to lessen that suffering. That’s the act people are practicing when they participate in CMHA programs.

- In the final year of the Health Canada-funded [Campus Peer Support pilot program](#) we trained 37 students across five post-secondary campuses to support peers struggling with mental health.
- [Peer Support Canada](#) relaunched a more equitable and streamlined certification program; 81 people became certified peer supporters bringing our nationwide total to 293.
- We prepared over 50 organizations and hundreds of people to create mentally healthy work environments by delivering 80 custom and introductory sessions and 10 [psychological health and safety](#) certificate courses.
- Over the last year we engaged over 300 organizations and almost 250,000 employees through our Not Myself Today program

Read about all our programs at cmha.ca/programs

Check out our biggest stories at cmha.ca/Impact2024



CEO Margaret Eaton on CP24 Breakfast (March 7, 2024) talking about the impact Daylight Savings Time has on our sleep and how sleep disruptions can harm our productivity, and physical and mental wellbeing.

› Inform the public about mental illness, mental health, and how to take care of them

Changing the narrative: building understanding of mental health, addictions, and substance use health means telling authentic and (often) hard stories. But it also means sharing stories full of hope that reduce stigma and create acceptance by helping others understand what it’s like to live with mental health and substance use disorders. Here’s the impact of those stories:

- ▶ We landed **1.4 billion** media impressions across 1,518 media outlets.
 - » Our 2023 Mental Health Week campaign garnered **five percent** more news stories than in 2022
- ▶ Our social media followers (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X) grew by more than **eight percent** with growth **above industry averages** on each channel
- ▶ cmha.ca pageviews increased by **27 percent** compared to last fiscal year
- ▶ Engagement with our social content exceeds industry (health and wellness) average⁴

⁴ Hootsuite. (2024, February 12). *Average Engagement Rates for 12 Industries (January 2024)*. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/average-engagement-rate/>

SYSTEMS CHANGE



People shouldn't have to wait for help when they need it and should be able to access help close to home. We work with federal policymakers to create a stronger, more compassionate mental health system in which people have access to community care and services. Governments play a key role in improving mental health, addiction, and substance use health care across Canada. We know our healthcare system can and needs to be better and we proactively advocate to and work with decision-makers for better local access to care; share overlooked perspectives in response to government decisions and actions; and provide research and resources so decision-makers are well-informed.

› Launching 9-8-8, a national crisis helpline

In November, the Government of Canada launched the [national, bilingual, 9-8-8 suicide crisis helpline](#) to support people thinking about suicide or worried about someone who is. CMHA played a key advisory role in the development of the helpline and 10 local CMHAs are responding to calls and texts. More than 200,000 calls were placed to the helpline in the first six months.

>200,000
calls in the first
6 months



averaging
>1,000
calls per day

› Building mental health and resilience in rural communities

In January, West Fraser Timber, a Canadian maker of renewable wood building products, donated \$450,000 to CMHA to support our [Resilient Minds®](#) program in Alberta and British Columbia and to fund research towards a rural mental health strategy.



“At West Fraser we recognize the importance of prioritizing mental health and supporting the well-being of those in our communities.”

Sean McLaren, West Fraser president and CEO



Other highlights

› Develop public policy positions to improve the community mental health system

CMHA published 15 policy briefs, factsheets, and research papers to inform public policy conversations and engage media on emerging topics in mental health, addictions, and substance use health.

Our three most accessed reads were:

- [Preventing drug-related deaths](#): our fact sheet on the toxic drug supply, decriminalization, and the continued stigma around substance use
- [Let the kids be who they are without fear](#): our response to legislative and policy changes aimed at limiting rights of gender diverse children and youth
- [Investing in community](#): our submission to the Standing Committee on Finance in advance of the 2024 Federal Budget

› Advocate change to key decision makers

CMHA participated in two Parliamentary-driven roundtables and held 38 meetings with 50 federal decision-makers to advance healthcare policy and legislation in Canada and advocate for better funding for mental health, addictions, and substance use health.

- Based on concerns that insufficient time and resources had been allocated to ensure appropriate safeguards, CMHA advocated for a delay of the [planned expansion of Medical Assistance in Dying](#) (MAID) for people whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental disorder. The Government of Canada announced a postponement in January citing safe delivery as the reason.
- CMHA appeared before the Senate to [support the Canada Disability Benefit](#) and provide expertise to strengthen the law. CMHA also participated in five technical roundtables to inform the forthcoming Benefit and continues to advocate for the needs of people living with a mental illness or substance use disorder.



CEO Margaret Eaton speaking to decision-makers and others in Ottawa

Read all the year's
published papers at
cmha.ca/Impact2024

OUR ALLIES AND SUPPORTERS

Changemakers



Green Fischer Family Trust

Leaders



Supporters



More than 1,500 donors raised over \$230,000 for CMHA through third-party fundraising events. Thank you for your support.



“Supporting CMHA through the MBA Games allowed us to contribute to an organization that profoundly impacts mental health in our communities, and we hope to inspire future business leaders to join this vital cause, ensuring a healthier, more resilient Canada.”

Mudit Chhabra, MBA Games which raised over \$37,000 for CMHA in January 2024



Legacy Donors

Estate of Patricia Anne Foster

Estate of Denis Wade Trust

Estate of Irene Pangrazio

Read more donor stories at cmha.ca/Impact2024



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Mental health for all

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