

# BACKGROUND

## The Road to Mental Readiness Program

### Why Support the Mental Health of Public Safety Personnel?

- Work stress, workloads and work-life issues can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of public safety personnel.
- Stigma is a major barrier preventing people from seeking help for mental health problems and illnesses.
- The fear of stigma often delays diagnosis and treatment.
- To identify and treat mental health problems early.
- Employees who understand normal reactions to stress and how to manage these reactions are more resilient. They have the ability to recover from stress, traumatic events and adverse situations.
- It is possible to train people to recognize changes in their mental health and to become more resilient.

### About the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Opening Minds

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is a catalyst for improving the mental health system and changing the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians around mental health issues. As a national consensus builder, the MHCC oversaw the creation of *Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada*. Through partnerships with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, the MHCC continues to influence policy and accelerate the uptake of the Strategy. Engaging people with lived experience and their families is key to the MHCC's ongoing work. The MHCC was created in 2007 and is funded by Health Canada.

Established by the Mental Health Commission of Canada in 2009, The Opening Minds initiative seeks to change Canadians' behaviours and attitudes toward people living with mental illness to ensure they are treated fairly and as full citizens with opportunities to contribute to society like anyone else. Opening Minds is the largest systematic effort in Canadian history focused on reducing stigma related to mental illness.

Opening Minds is addressing stigma within four main target groups: health care providers, youth, the media, and the workforce. As such, the initiative has multiple goals, ranging from improving health care providers' understanding of the needs of people with mental health problems to encouraging youth to talk openly and positively about mental illness.

Ultimately, the goal of Opening Minds is to cultivate an environment in which those living with mental illness feel comfortable seeking help, treatment, and support on their journey toward recovery.

### Road to Mental Readiness

The Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) program is part of the Opening Minds initiative. Launched by the MHCC in 2013, R2MR was developed by clinicians and peers and based on scientific research and best-practices.

R2MR has been adapted to suit a first responder workplace audience working in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in New Brunswick, the Calgary Police Service, Edmonton Police Services, the Vancouver Police Department, the Ontario Police College, Peel Regional Police, Quebec City police and the Fredericton Police Force.

The program aims to:

- Improve short-term performance and long-term mental health outcomes.
- Reduce barriers to care and encourage early access to care.
- Provide skills for leadership to support employees who may be experiencing a mental illness.
- Assist leaders to maintain their mental health and promote positive mental health in employees.

Goals:

- To support the mental health and wellbeing of first responders and public safety personnel.
- To enable the full productivity of employees.
- To ensure the workplace is respectful and inclusive of all employees.
- To encourage employees to seek help for mental health problems and mental illness.

Central Components:

- The Mental Health Continuum Model reconceptualises how one thinks and talks about mental health, categorizing signs and indicators of good to poor mental health under a four-colour continuum: green (healthy), yellow (reacting), orange (injured), and red (ill).
- The “Big 4” — a set of cognitive behavioural therapy-based techniques that help individuals cope with stress and improve their mental health and resiliency. The Big 4 are positive self-talk, visualization, tactical breathing and SMART goal setting.
- Scenario-based practical applications and custom videos of people with lived experience of mental illness.

Course formats:

- Primary (4 hours), where participants are provided with valuable skills, tools and resources specific to:
  - stigma and barriers to care
  - healthy coping strategies
  - mental toughness
- Leadership (8 hours), where in addition to the topics covered in the employee course, leaders acquire tools and skills specific to:
  - workplace accommodations and return to work
  - the role of leadership in promoting positive mental health in employees
  - ad hoc incident reviews
  - early recognition
- The 5-day train-the-trainer course equips people with the tools and skills to present both the Primary and Leadership formats of R2MR.

**For more information:**

Website: [www.r2mr.ca](http://www.r2mr.ca) or Email: [r2mr@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:r2mr@mentalhealthcommission.ca)

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