



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

## MEASURING PROGRESS:

Resources for Developing a Mental Health and Addiction  
Performance Framework for Canada

Key Messages

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# The Path to Better Mental Health and Addiction Outcomes for Canadians

Growing recognition of the profound impact of mental health problems and illnesses on individuals, families and communities has driven changes to policy and practice in Canada and other jurisdictions. It has also triggered calls for better data to determine if those changes are having a positive effect — and to inform further system change.

Collecting data that will truly support better mental health and addiction outcomes across Canada requires a collaborative and consensus-based pan-Canadian information and performance measurement framework for mental health and addiction.

## THE PROMISE OF A FRAMEWORK

A shared framework would help focus mental health and addiction (MHA) performance measurement on aspects of Canada's complex system that are key to effecting change. It would articulate a "system" vision aligned with common policy directions and stakeholder values — increasing the likelihood of impact.

## TOWARD A PAN-CANADIAN SYSTEM

Ultimately, a pan-Canadian MHA information and performance measurement framework could be parlayed into a performance measurement *system* that would make it possible to measure and report on MHA outcomes across the country — stimulating data-informed service change, enabling greater collaboration and making a difference in the lives of people living in Canada from coast to coast to coast.

## A CHALLENGE WORTH PURSUING

Better data on the MHA status and needs of people living in Canada, the services they receive and outcomes they experience could guide significant improvements to Canada's MHA services and systems. That potential makes it worthwhile to pursue the development of an MHA performance measurement framework despite challenges posed by the Canadian context, such as service complexity, fragmented service delivery, data silos and other issues.

## THERE ARE MODELS OF SUCCESS

Lessons from other framework development initiatives suggest a pan-Canadian framework is possible despite the plurality of data systems across and within the provinces and territories. Australia and New Zealand, which have healthcare delivery systems that are structured similarly to Canada's, have both achieved progress on this front, and the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) has established a performance measurement system for cancer outcomes that includes mechanisms for reporting and collaborative improvement.

## MOMENTUM IS BUILDING

There are reasons to be optimistic about the success of an MHA framework development initiative in Canada. The Government of Canada has made MHA a priority (with funding and an aim to report on outcomes) as part of *Health Accord* negotiations with the provinces and territories, and explicit commitments to monitor and report on MHA progress and outcomes are present in virtually all current provincial and territorial MHA policy documents. The selection of access indicators as part of the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)-led *A Common Statement of Principles on Shared Health Priorities* has also stimulated momentum and set the stage for more comprehensive work.

## A LONG-RECOGNIZED NEED

Calls for better data to inform and support system change go back at least two decades. The Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, Statistics Canada, and provincial and territorial authorities have all undertaken MHA data-related initiatives. While this has been encouraging, the initiatives themselves have been relatively disconnected, limiting their impact.

*Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada* was the first-ever comprehensive pan-Canadian mental health policy document. Released in 2012, it underscored the importance of improving information and measurement for Canada's mental health care system. The Mental Health Commission of Canada has helped advance this agenda since.

## OVERCOMING “INDICATOR CHAOS”

Today, thousands of health and MHA indicators are in use across existing provincial and territorial performance measurement frameworks. *Think Big, Start Small, Act Now*, the national summit report of the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council, refers to the sheer number and variety of indicators in use as “indicator chaos.” It will be imperative to narrow these down substantially into a coherent, conceptual approach. A framework would ensure balance across sets of indicators to provide a comprehensive rather than piecemeal picture.

## A STARTING POINT

In 2017–2018, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) Knowledge Exchange team collaborated with a group of research consultants to compile *Resources for Developing a Mental Health and Addiction Performance Measurement Framework for Canada* — a document that identifies strategic areas of focus for developing a pan-Canadian information and performance measurement framework specific to MHA.

The goals of the project were to:

- systematically compile resources to support the development of a pan-Canadian, system-level performance measurement framework for MHA
- map common policy priorities across provinces and territories
- learn from existing performance measurement frameworks and related development processes
- formulate recommendations for an engagement and consultation process to drive framework development

The report was refined based on review and input from 20 subject-matter experts. It provides background on Canada’s MHA context, outlines the rationale for a pan-Canadian performance measurement framework, and identifies concepts and issues related to developing such a framework. The intent was to inform a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process to develop a pan-Canadian framework.

## NEXT STEPS

Improving MHA outcomes for Canadians requires a comprehensive, systematic engagement process that honours multiple stakeholder viewpoints and addresses key issues in the co-design of the essential features of an effective MHA performance management framework.

Learn more about how that might be achieved by downloading *Resources for Developing a Mental Health and Addiction Performance Measurement Framework for Canada* today.

## EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

Subject matter experts (SMEs) provided in-depth and rich feedback on a draft version of *Resources for Developing a Mental Health and Addiction Performance Measurement Framework for Canada*. Their observations and insights are included in the final report.

The SMEs were selected to represent the top nine provincial/territorial policy priority areas the research team identified as part of the project. They were also chosen for their expertise in MHA services and performance measurement, and included people with lived experience