



Together We Spark Change



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada



Improving Canada's mental health system is a big job—and too big for one person or organization alone. The Mental Health Commission of Canada is collaborating with people and organizations all over the country. Together, we are sparking the changes that will help improve the mental health system for all Canadians.

PARTNERING FOR CHANGE

You or someone you know will be among the one in five Canadians who will experience a mental health problem or illness this year. Your friend, family member or colleague may also be one of the many Canadians who will struggle in silence.

Less than half of the adults and children who need help will access services, treatments and supports.

Reasons for this include a fragmented and under-resourced mental health system, the stigma and fear of being labelled, and the inability of some people to recognize that they have a mental health problem or illness. This has to change.

The changes we need must happen in many different settings—in the home, the workplace and communities, and in the health, housing, education and justice systems. All of us must work together to ensure that people receive the care and support they need, and that all Canadians can achieve better mental health. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is partnering with governments, groups and people across the country to realize this goal.

Journalism students at the University of King's College attend a *Stigma in the News Media* symposium presented by Opening Minds.

Photo: Dan Callis



OUR HISTORY

Mental health in Canada comes out of the shadows
Most Canadians never used to talk about mental health. Not to their doctors, families or closest friends.

So consider the courage it took for thousands of Canadians to talk about it to a Standing Committee of the Senate that was investigating the issues of mental health and mental illness. People with mental health problems and illnesses and their families described their struggles within a broken system.

The Committee published those brave stories in 2006 in *Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada*, the first comprehensive report on mental health in the nation's history. It also recommended the creation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which the federal government did in 2007, to help lead improvements in the mental health system for the mental wellness of all Canadians.

OUR PRESENT

The MHCC moves mental health into the spotlight
To help make those improvements, the MHCC is partnering with hundreds of groups and individuals, such as governments, service providers, community organizations and researchers. Our most important partners are people with mental health problems and illnesses and their families. After all, the MHCC was ultimately created to help them.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

With a ten-year mandate and funding from Health Canada, the MHCC and its partners are helping to make mental health a higher priority for our country and achieve real change.

The MHCC is focusing its efforts on many of the issues and concerns that must be addressed to improve the mental health of everyone in Canada. We are working to change the attitudes of Canadians toward mental health problems and illnesses, improve the exchange of knowledge and best practices, identify the best ways to help those who are homeless and living with mental illnesses, and create policy changes to improve services and supports. We are also working to address the particular issues that affect children and youth, families, seniors, and First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, and others.

Each of our initiatives and projects is led by experts from across the country who bring a variety of perspectives and experience to our work. Our experts, staff, Board and Advisory Committee members all share the same goal—improving the mental health system for all Canadians.

CANADA'S FUTURE

A world leader in mental health
Mental health will not disappear into the shadows again. Through the work of the MHCC and its partners, Canada can become a world leader in reducing stigma, in promoting mental health, and in preventing and treating mental health problems and illnesses. We can have a mental health system that rises to every challenge and meets the needs of every Canadian.

Members and partners of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Advisory Committee join graduates of the Victoria Master of Education in Counselling for Aboriginal Communities Program during a celebration in Victoria.

Photo: Michel Joffres





A participant in the At Home/Chez Soi initiative (l) joins a mental health researcher (c) in Vancouver and the MHCC President and CEO (r) to celebrate the opening of a residence in that city.

Photo: Andriy Mischenko

INITIATIVES

ISSUE	INITIATIVE	WHAT IT IS DOING
There are serious gaps in the way our country addresses mental health needs.	Mental Health Strategy for Canada	Canada requires a mental health system that promotes mental health in all parts of our lives and better supports people living with mental health problems and illnesses, no matter how serious. Working with people and organizations across the country, we have created a blueprint for change.
Many people experience stigma and it can prevent them from seeking help.	Opening Minds	This initiative is working to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health problems and illnesses; it is about changing the way Canadians think about mental health and behave towards individuals living with mental illnesses. Opening Minds is evaluating existing anti-stigma programs across the country and then promoting successful ones.
Research and best practices about mental health are not always shared.	Knowledge Exchange Centre	The Knowledge Exchange Centre is ensuring that knowledge about mental health is shared with groups and individuals who can put it into action.
It is estimated that more than 150,000 Canadians are homeless.	At Home/Chez Soi	This national research project is identifying best practices to help some of Canada's most vulnerable people. It is learning about the Housing First Approach and is providing housing and services to about 1,000 people based on that approach.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

ISSUE	COMMITTEE	WHAT IT IS DOING
<p>Mental health problems and illnesses most frequently have their onset in childhood, yet children's mental health needs are not well understood or well served.</p>	<p>Child and Youth Mental Health Advisory Committee</p>	<p>The Committee is leading a project to provide policy makers in several areas with a variety of options to help deliver school-based mental health and addictions services. It has also developed Canada's first evidence-based national children's mental health framework to guide the development of policies and strategies related to infant, child and youth mental health. All of the Committee's projects engage youth, families and caregivers as key advisors.</p>
<p>A loved one's mental health problem or illness can impact family, friends and supporters.</p>	<p>Family Caregivers Advisory Committee</p>	<p>The Committee is working to make sure that caregivers' needs are recognized and supported. It strives to improve existing services and ensure that a proper range of supports is available in every community throughout the country.</p>
<p>Aboriginal Canadians have long experienced poorer mental health outcomes than other Canadians and have special cultural considerations that health care providers should be aware of and sensitive to.</p>	<p>First Nations, Inuit and Métis Advisory Committee</p>	<p>The Committee is promoting a holistic approach to mental health and reducing the threats to well-being among Aboriginal people, while demonstrating the importance of cultural respect. The Committee also provides guidance on engaging Aboriginal Canadians in other MHCC projects.</p>
<p>People with mental health problems and illnesses may face unique challenges to their legal and human rights when interacting with police, the justice system and correctional authorities.</p>	<p>Mental Health and the Law Advisory Committee</p>	<p>The Committee is assessing how the current laws impact the human rights of people with mental health problems and illnesses, examining best practices in how police are trained to interact with them, evaluating how the justice system responds to the particular circumstances of people found unfit to stand trial or not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder, and studying the best practices in mental health care within correctional facilities.</p>

A member of the MHCC's Child and Youth Mental Health Advisory Committee (l) and a member of the Youth Council (r) attend a public awareness event in Vancouver.

Photo: Andriy Mischenko



ADVISORY COMMITTEES

ISSUE	COMMITTEE	WHAT IT IS DOING
There is a growing need to be aware of, and invest in, areas of mental health research that have proven to be effective.	Science Advisory Committee	The Committee offers a scientific perspective on major projects and initiatives of the Commission and supports attention to evidence in planning and implementation activities.
Mental health problems and illnesses are often overlooked in older adults because the signs and symptoms are viewed as a natural part of the aging process.	Seniors Advisory Committee	The Committee is ensuring that the mental health of seniors is addressed in all of the work of the Commission and its initiatives. It led the development of a set of guidelines to support people who work with seniors and who are involved in service and policy planning. The goal is to meet the diverse mental health needs of Canadian seniors in the coming decades.
Mental health care is comprised of a range of factors such as social networks, education, housing and more. Each of these must work well in order to meet the needs of people living with mental health problems and illnesses, and their families.	Service Systems Advisory Committee	The Committee informs the MHCC on how to create a high performing mental health system. It is examining strategies that the mental health system can consider to meet the needs of an increasingly ethnically diverse population. It is also studying the benefits of peer support and developing a strategy to develop housing and supports for people living with mental illnesses.
Psychological health and safety is the leading cause of short- and long-term disability in Canadian workplaces, and the financial and personal impacts are substantial.	Workforce Advisory Committee	The Committee is developing tools to improve the mental health of employees with a focus on prevention. Activities include a standard that will lead to measurable and sustainable improvements in psychological health and safety in the workplace, a leadership initiative to manage mental health in the workplace that includes an action guide for employers, a project to enhance the utilization of peer support, and a project to understand how to enhance employment opportunities and sustainable income for the aspiring workforce.

Stakeholders meet with the MHCC in Ottawa to consult on the first-ever Mental Health Strategy for Canada.

Photo: Christopher Pike



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