

No Health without Mental Health

Introduction

The foundation of a healthy society begins with a mentally healthy population. One of CMHA PEI's key beliefs is that positive mental health can be achieved by all. At CMHA PEI we address all aspects of mental health and mental illness. It could be a high school student experiencing unbearable stress, a bereaved woman over-whelmed by her feelings, or a father with mental illness who can't find work. Approximately one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem or addiction every year. Mental illness indirectly affects us all at some time through a family member, friend or colleague. While the costs of mental health care and lost productivity related to mental health exceed \$51 billion each year in Canada, recommendations by the Mental Health Commission of Canada suggest that the proportion of health spending devoted to mental health should be increased to 9 per cent. It is time to restore productivity to our province and come together to support our communities. Mental health begins where we live, work, and play. CMHA PEI promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people struggling with their mental health and wellness.

We advocate for the formal mental health and addictions system to adopt a philosophy that is 'recovery oriented'. The system must be grounded in the belief that individuals whose lives are impacted by mental illness and poor mental health can and do get better. Our system needs to instil hope and encouragement for all those who connect to it. Recovery is an individual, self-directed process that includes the overall improvement of health and wellness and the ability for people to live a life to their fullest potential. This is achieved by ensuring Islanders have access to a range of community based clinical and social supports which will enhance people's ability to cope with, and manage, their mental illnesses and mental health problems while maintaining their connection and contribution to their communities. Community based supports provide assistance for people to obtain and maintain employment, experience social inclusion through reducing isolation, support and facilitate education and learning, enhance self help, family and peer support, and ensure decent and affordable housing. These can all facilitate a process of restoration of community functioning and the overall well-being of an individual. Building community capacity for these supports in turn builds an individual's capacity for self-care and wellness management. Community supports and services are proven cost-effective ways to support the recovery of people struggling with mental health and addiction. These supports may eliminate or reduce the need for hospitalization, thereby reducing pressure on an already over-burdened costly acute care system.

CMHA PEI is calling on the provincial government to further invest in mental health and addictions by increasing the proportion of health spending devoted to mental health to 9 per cent as per the Mental Health Commission of Canada's recommendation. We are asking the provincial government to evaluate current mental health and addictions spending with a view to strengthen the service areas that can alleviate pressure on the acute care system.

Building the Community's Capacity to Support Better Mental Health

Since 1959 the Canadian Mental Health Association PEI (CMHA PEI) has been providing mental illness prevention, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention initiatives, and has been on the 'front lines' of delivering a broad range of direct supports and services for individuals and families. As an organization we know that achieving better mental health outcomes for everyone involves developing more proactive and effective approaches and individual capacity building for all Islanders including those who are struggling with life's challenges. We know that early treatment and diagnosis and access to a wide range of social supports lead to better outcomes. Therefore, we need to: (1) ensure the availability and accessibility of clinical and social supports for those who are currently dealing with mental health problems and mental illness; (2) ensure that there are adequate and effective community services to support the person before, during, and after treatment; and (3) engage in education, awareness and mental health promotion activities with front line workers, policy makers, and the general public to reduce stigma and discrimination.

CMHA PEI's Call for Action

CMHA PEI urges all political parties to adopt a whole of government approach in developing an action plan for mental health and addictions services that:

1. Recognizes the responsibility for mental health and addictions clients falls within all departments so as to help address any gaps in service delivery and need. This plan should ensure there is a full continuum of care, accessible to every person in the Province, when and where needed.

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Establish a medically supported community based-**crisis response model**, designed to care for persons who are experiencing acute and complex mental illnesses, suicidal ideations, and addiction; this specialized model would ensure quick access and accurate assessment and treatment. As an integral component of the continuum of care it must include appropriate discharge planning and follow-up aftercare in the community.
- More effective and **seamless case management** should be in place to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated delivery of all required supports and services to clients in need.
- Best practice research suggests that **mental health and addictions** are best treated in an **integrated approach**. This approach will also help to serve as a safety net for those people who 'fall through the cracks' struggling to seek appropriate treatment.

2. Ensures that there are wide ranges of community supports available to individuals who are dealing with, or recovering from, a mental health and addictions problem. Aftercare and maintenance supports

are integral pieces to relapse prevention and recovery for people with mental health and addictions problems and these services are best delivered in a community setting.

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Establish a **provincial funding policy target** that requires an increased percentage of allocation of the annual mental health and addictions provincial budget be invested in community based services and supports to expand the capacity of community agencies to deliver services and supports to persons recovering from a mental health or addictions problems. These should include services such as psychosocial rehabilitation, aftercare and peer support.
- **Embed specialized mental health and addictions** assessment and treatment resources (Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Counsellors and other therapeutic practices) *within community-based organizations*.

3. Ensures that people with mental health and/or addiction problems have access to safe and affordable housing, with supports as needed. Safe and affordable housing is critical to recovery and positive mental health. However, social housing options on PEI are limited; the Province needs to increase the availability of safe, affordable, and supported housing for persons recovering from a mental illness or addiction.

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Implement intragovernmental **social housing** and funding policies with shared responsibility that will increase the amount of safe, affordable, and supported housing options within the Province for persons dealing with mental illness and addiction. Many of these individuals have presented as clients to multiple departments for service and are the responsibility of all government social policy. Access to affordable and appropriate housing should be streamlined, and responsibilities shared to reduce costs and increase housing placements.

4. Ensures that there are adequate resources committed to public education and mental health promotion. While there have been some improvements in recent years, many people in need of mental health services are still apprehensive to seek help for mental illness because stigma is still so pervasive on the front lines, in the workplace, and in families. We must adopt a culture of acceptance and recognition that there is no health without mental health so that people can get back to living productive, fulfilling lives by contributing to their families, communities and the economy of our Island.

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Need to communicate a **message of hope, recovery and resilience**. This message needs to be promoted much more strongly at all levels of government by aligning with community based service partners that work to promote mental health and recovery, through collaborative partnerships and resource investments.

Summary

CMHA PEI wants all Islanders to live in a province where they can reach out anywhere and at anytime and get the help they need. We believe that mentally healthy communities are within our reach. Politicians, government, and the public must respond to action items being presented. It is through continued conversations within communities and with our candidates that we can voice our concerns because the time for change is now.