

#b4stage4



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

He's ready to take off.
Mental illness and addiction
shouldn't hold him back.

Early intervention is the key.

A manifesto for better mental health and addiction care in British Columbia

There is a clear opportunity sitting in front of all of us. If, together, we take the bold steps needed to improve mental health in our province, we can improve the lives of thousands of people across British Columbia.

It is time to focus on prevention, early identification and early intervention. We currently pay for a system of care in the most expensive ways possible. People wait too long for care and too many people get their care from emergency departments and from police.

We can offer proven choices and supports to help people recover—clinical services, medications, peer supports, counselling, family supports, and other therapies. And keep people connected to their families and their community. Intervening as early as possible preserves a person's education, employment, social supports, housing—and it also costs less than the tragic revolving door of incarceration, hospitalization, and homelessness.

The Canadian Mental Health Association is calling for community organizations, academic institutions, professional associations, labour organizations, elected officials and business leaders to value mental health and addiction care equally to physical health care.

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We, the undersigned, believe action in these five areas will lead to better mental health in British Columbia

1. Focus on prevention and early intervention

- We must spend smart and invest wisely in effective community-based services and supports designed to prevent mental illness and intervene quickly with the early signs of mental health and addictions problems.
- We must work together to make sure people do not have to wait for months to receive a basic level of mental health and/or addictions help. People should be able to “ask once and get help fast.”

2. Build access to addictions health care

- We must focus on building a standardized, compassionate, and evidence-based system of care, for people living with addictions problems.
- We must level the playing field and ensure people have just as much access to mental health and addictions health care as physical health care.

3. Strengthen recovery closer to home, in community

- We must strengthen the safety net for the most vulnerable members of our community, living with mental health and/or addiction problems.
- We must build and implement a provincial housing strategy to ensure more people living with mental health and/or addictions problems have a safe place to call home.

4. Improve crisis care

- We must continue to work together to reduce the number of suicides in British Columbia.
- We must ensure a reduction in the use of police, emergency departments, and the justice system as treatment for people living with mental health and/or addiction problems.

5. Lead change in mental health and addictions

- We must have a province-wide plan for mental health and addictions, for both young people and adults that extends beyond two political terms.
- We must enable leadership and accountability through the appointment of a dedicated cabinet Minister of Mental Health and Addictions with a dedicated budget.

I stand with the Canadian Mental Health Association in calling for a system of care that addresses mental health, addiction, and physical health equally.

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