

The Chronic Underfunding of Mental Health Services and Addiction Treatment in Alberta

A health-equity approach must be undertaken for mental health in Alberta, which means government spending targets for mental health and addictions should approach 12 per cent of the total health budget.⁴¹



Issue Summary

Despite efforts made by different levels of government across the country, evidence shows we are not meeting the mental health needs of all Albertans. Programs and services are not as effective as they could be, and there are still long wait times for people to get the care they urgently need.

Solution

All levels of government must invest in mental health and addictions treatment, along with wraparound supports such as recovery and resilience programs.

The Chronic Underfunding of Mental Health Services and Addiction Treatment in Alberta



Research

“In Canada, the estimated \$15.8 billion spent by the public and private sectors in 2015 on non-dementia-related mental health care represented approximately 7.2% of Canada’s total health spending (\$219.1 billion). This spending is well below that of other western countries. By comparison, the National Health Service in England spends 13% of its health spending on a similar set of services.”

—*Strengthening the Case for Investing in Canada’s Mental Health System: Economic Considerations*, Mental Health Commission of Canada,⁴² 2017



Alberta Examples

Recovery Colleges in Alberta provide a range of free, recovery-focused courses for individuals, families, workplaces and cultural and spiritual communities. Recovery Colleges provide transformational and progressive education through free, college-like courses, which are co-developed and co-facilitated with the community and peers. Alberta Recovery Colleges enable individuals to gain and retain hope, understand their strengths, engage in an active life, have personal autonomy, social identity, meaning and purpose in life.

⁴¹ Institute of Health Economics (2008). *How much should we spend on mental health*. Retrieved from <https://www.ihe.ca/publications/how-much-should-we-spend-on-mental-health->

⁴² Mental Health Commission of Canada (2017). *Strengthening the Case for Investing in Canada’s Mental Health System: Economic Considerations*. Retrieved from https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2017-03/case_for_investment_eng.pdf