

# Community Development is Important

Communities need an opportunity to identify what mental health and addiction supports they need. It is important to invest in community development strategies for rural, remote and Indigenous communities. This approach will improve access and supports related to mental health and addictions in these underserved communities.



## Issue Summary

Accessing addiction and mental health services is challenging, especially in rural and remote areas. Frequently individuals must travel long distances to receive treatment and support for mental health and addiction issues. Sadly, some choose not to seek help because of these barriers.

## Solution

As much as possible, individuals should be able to receive services within their own communities.

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## Research

“A social determinants of mental health approach that includes the life-course perspective would require long-term and sustained policies that focus on reducing inequalities in health through community development, capacity building, partnerships, and local institution building across the life-course.”

–Social Determinants of Mental Health, World Health Organization,<sup>25</sup> 2014



## Alberta Examples

CMHA, Alberta Division’s Rural Mental Health Project is a community development project focused on the growth of local mental health community action plans in 150 communities across the province. Local community Animators in participating rural and remote communities convene local stakeholders, including community members and elders, agencies, educators, and community associations, to collectively scan the current mental health and addictions landscape.

Together, communities can set direction, generate solutions, and implement a transformational roadmap dedicated to supporting a mentally healthy community. Roadmaps will identify existing services, community strengths and opportunities, promising practices and a set of key strategic activities to consider as communities strive for better mental health.

For more information on the project, please visit: [www.ruralmentalhealth.ca](http://www.ruralmentalhealth.ca).

<sup>25</sup> World Health Organization (2014). *Social determinants of mental health*. Retrieved from [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112828/9789241506809\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112828/9789241506809_eng.pdf?sequence=1)