

# Understanding Depression

Depression is a common mental illness, and its impact on our society is considerable. Advancing discussions of depression and other mental illnesses will decrease stigma and increase treatment options for those with mental illness.



## Issue Summary

Around the globe, more than 264 million people suffer from depression, and it is a leading cause of disability worldwide.<sup>18</sup> In Alberta, many people who suffer from depression do not receive the support or treatment they need.

“Depressive Disorders are among the most diagnosed mental illness. An estimated one in every four Canadians has a degree of depression severe enough to need treatment at some time in his or her life.”

–Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division,<sup>19</sup> 2019



## Solution

A stepped, coordinated model of care offers varying levels of service depending on the needs of those seeking support. Continued efforts to destigmatize depression and other mental illnesses will decrease barriers to seeking out care.

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## Research

Research concluded that Albertans feel there are limited treatment options through the public system. “Barriers to receiving these treatments include wait times, appointment scheduling and service locations. Nearly all participants (86.7%) reported experiencing financial difficulties since their diagnosis. In the focus groups, high out-of-pocket treatment costs and gaps in social funding support were the main reasons identified for financial distress. Expanding the publicly-funded treatment options would reduce the out-of-pocket expense and improve participants’ supports.”

–*“Do I want to live like this?”*, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division,<sup>20</sup> 2019



## Alberta Examples

Alberta’s Recovery Colleges offer peer support to individuals seeking help for mental health concerns, including depression. Recovery Colleges help people recognize and develop their own resourcefulness and awareness to support themselves or their loved one’s recovery journey. All courses are developed and delivered in partnership with peer supporters who are experts by experience: they have their own story of a mental health or substance use concern or are supporting a loved one.

<sup>18</sup> Depression (2020, January). *World Health Organization*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>

<sup>19</sup> Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) Research Project (2020, June). Canadian Mental Health Association. Retrieved from <https://alberta.cmha.ca/mdd/>

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association (2019). *“Do I want to live like this?”* Retrieved from <https://alberta.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Major-Depressive-Disorder-Research-Project-PDF-CMHA-Alberta.docx-1.pdf>