

Mental Health Promotion

Better mental health begins with health promotion for all Albertans. These are “upstream” approaches to a mentally healthy society, such as building resiliency, awareness and development. Mental health promotion is proven to be a low-cost solution with high returns on society's health.



Issue Summary

Early intervention and education can reduce overall demands on the health care system.²¹ Investments made in community-level programs strengthen mental health and wellbeing across the population.²² In Alberta, disparate mental health promotion activities undertaken provincially lack strategic coordination.

Public education is fragmented between providers such as Alberta Health Services, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and other not-for-profits with little to no harmonization.



Solution

Coordinated service and funding can ensure that mental health promotion in Alberta is as effective as it can be, both in cost and impact.

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Research

“The considerable and growing annual cost of treating mental health problems and mental illness in Canada— \$42 billion nationwide and \$6.3 billion in workplaces—has brought increased attention to the early and continuous development of positive mental health. Through interventions in communities, workplaces and schools, mental health promotion (MHP) cultivates positive mental health for all people, including those living with and without a mental illness.”

—Cohesive, Collaborative, Collective: Advancing Mental Health Promotion in Canada,²³ CMHA



Alberta Examples

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Alberta Division’s Healthy Campus Alberta (HCA) is an example of a successful mental health promotion initiative. HCA is a community of practice that serves to partner with campuses and stakeholders interested in post-secondary mental health and addiction from across the province.

HCA’s vision²⁴ is to “educate, collaborate, and advocate; transforming culture and creating caring campus communities throughout the province of Alberta.” The project is committed to achieving the mission through accessible and sustainable program ideas, sharing best practices and research, and fostering a culture of support and compassion for all post-secondary institutions across Alberta. This work is done while recognizing the unique needs for success.

CMHA Calgary’s YouthSMART (Youth Supporting Mental Health and Resiliency Together) integrates collaborative, youth-initiated mental health learning opportunities in local junior and senior high schools. YouthSMART knows that students are incredibly influential amongst their peers, within their schools, families, and communities. As such, YouthSMART approaches youth as valuable peer contributors who are actively involved in the programming and opportunities that directly impact their wellness. YouthSMART works with youth leaders to transform the mental health culture of their schools.

²¹ Canadian Mental Health Association (2018). *Mental health in the balance: Ending the health care disparity in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://cmha.ca/ending-health-care-disparity-canada>

²² World Health Organization (2004) *Promoting Mental Health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice: summary report*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/promoting_mhh.pdf

²³ Canadian Mental Health Association (2019). *Cohesive, collaborative, collective: Advancing mental health promotion in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MHP-Summary-Report-FINAL-EN.pdf>

²⁴ Our approach (n.d.). *Healthy Campus Alberta*. Retrieved from <https://www.healthycampusalberta.ca/about-us/our-approach/>