

Local Government's Role in Mental Health

2022 Union of BC Municipalities Convention Clinic

September 14th, 2022

Whistler, BC.

Local Leaders for Mental Health

- **Initiated by Mayor Richard Stewart**
- **Working group supported by Her Honour, Lt. Gov. Janet Austin, and CMHA-BC**

Why?

- Local governments are at the forefront of the mental health crisis in communities

How?

- Convene Mayors and Councillors from across BC
- Leverage the perspectives and resources of local governments to raise awareness and affect change



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
British Columbia
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
Colombie-Britannique
La santé mentale pour tous

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About CMHA

Mentally Healthy People in a Healthy Society

OUR VISION

OUR SUPPORT

- Education & Training
- Service Delivery
- Policy & Advocacy

OUR REACH

- CMHA operates in BC through the BC division and 14 branches that service over 100 communities to meet local needs.



What's the Difference?

Mental Health

A state of well-being, we all have it.

Mental Illness

A disturbances in thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that are severe enough to affect day-to-day functioning.



Mental Health Challenges in our Communities

In BC, mental illness will affect **one in 5 people** in any given year; that's almost **900,000** British Columbians.



By **40 years** of age, **1 in 2** Canadians have or have had a mental illness

Mental Health Challenges in our Communities



of people in Canada reported a decline in their mental health since the onset of the pandemic.

This decline is more pronounced for those who experience health, social and structural inequities (e.g., people with disabilities, gender diverse peoples, Indigenous and racialized communities)

Mental Health Challenges in our Communities

- In the same UBC study, 1 in 5 people living in B.C. said they needed help with their mental health during the pandemic but didn't receive it.
- Of these people

35%

didn't know how or where to get help,

41%

couldn't afford to pay for help,

37%

found that access to care was limited.

Substance Use in our Communities

- Approximately 21% of Canadians (about 6 million people) will meet the criteria for addiction in their lifetime
- People with substance use disorders are up to 3 times more likely to have a mental illness
- Over 10,000 people have died as a result of the toxic drug supply in B.C. since 2016

Best Practices for Local Leaders



Consider language and framing



Center the voices of people with living and lived experience



Ensure a human rights and evidence-based approach



Consider social determinants of health in decision-making



Advocate for a community and/or health response

Case Study: Peer-Assisted Care Teams

- PACT is a mobile civilian-led team that responds to crisis calls related to mental health and/or substance use, including:
 - thoughts of self-harm or suicide
 - family members experiencing challenges
 - substance use
 - loss of reality
 - feelings of hopelessness or despair
 - social isolation and loneliness
 - fear, anxiety, and depression
 - other mental health-related emergencies
- The program pairs a mental health professional and a peer worker to provide **trauma-informed, culturally safe support to youth aged 13+ or adults.**
- **First pilot:** North Shore, with Victoria and New Westminster to come

BC-Wide Distress Services

- BC Mental Health 24/7 Support Line: 310-6789 (no area code)
- 24/7 Suicide Support Line: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- Online Service for Adults: www.CrisisCentreChat.ca (noon - 1 am)
- Online Service for Youth: www.YouthInBC.Com (noon - 1 am)
- Kids Help Phone 24/7: kidshelpphone.ca or 1-800-668-6868
- Seniors Distress 24/7 Line: 1-604-872-1234

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Discussion

- How are issues related to mental health relevant to local government policy and response?
- What are some of the key priorities a group like Local Leaders for Mental Health can address?
- In terms of first steps, how can we convene and engage participants in order to move LLMH forward?

Connect



Follow us on Twitter: **@LLMHBC**

- Send us a direct message on Twitter or email [**ALILLY@SHAW.CA**](mailto:ALILLY@SHAW.CA) to sign up for information on the first meeting