

#GetLoud



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

Vote Mental Health 2020 BC General Election

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The health, well-being and economic security of British Columbians have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Now more than ever before, our new government will have a moral imperative to prioritize mental health and well-being alongside economic recovery. Neither can be achieved if the other is left behind.

THE ISSUES

Overall decline in mental health

Nearly 40% of Canadians feel their mental health has worsened since the onset of COVID-19, with many feeling, isolated, anxious, worried, and having difficulty coping.

Underserved populations are struggling more

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the mental health of populations such as low income residents, older adults, and people already experiencing health and social inequities. People struggling with their mental health prior to the pandemic are twice as likely to have harmed themselves, and three times more likely to have thoughts of suicide.

Economic downturn impacting mental health

Many people have experienced employment insecurity, temporary layoffs, and job loss due to COVID-19. An increased unemployment rate increases the risk of suicide and other substance use-related deaths.

Climbing overdose death numbers

The toxic illicit drug supply has fueled a poisoning epidemic for over four years and now the added pressures of COVID-19 have led to overdose rates increasing month-on-month—with the highest monthly numbers of overdose deaths ever recorded within the province.

OUR SOLUTIONS

The Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division has identified four principles for political parties to commit to that will guarantee the mental health of British Columbians is the foundation for our province's recovery:

1. Bold leadership

Mandate the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to provide strong provincial leadership on the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and substance use and convene a cross-sector provincial leadership task force to inform a co-ordinated, targeted response.

2. Increase funding

Invest \$2B over four-years for health authority delivered care, Ministry delivered child and youth mental health services and community-based providers of youth and adult services to achieve a more accessible and integrated system.

3. Establish accountability

Install an independent Mental Health Advocate that reports directly to the legislative assembly to monitor the performance of public services that impact people with mental health and substance use-related health issues.

4. Reinforce equity

Earmark part of the \$2B investment for funding for mental health and substance use services that are developed by and for populations that are experiencing more severe impacts—such as Indigenous peoples, Black people and people of colour, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ folks, people with low incomes, and older adults.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Care before crisis: No one is turned away from receiving the care they need

1. Continue recent investments for prevention and early intervention services that target populations who are at a higher risk of developing a mental health or substance use problem due to impacts of the pandemic.
2. Provide counselling and other proven therapies free at the point of use at primary care networks and through community-based organizations where people already access services.
3. Fund culturally-safe, community-driven wellness programs and practices that meet the mental health and substance use needs of underserved populations that encounter barriers to accessing clinical care.
4. Reinforce the public health approach to substance use that promotes health and equity for people who use drugs through decriminalization and pharmaceutical alternatives to the toxic drug supply.
5. Implement a full evidence-based youth and adult substance use system of care that spans prevention, screening, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services.

Foundations for wellness and recovery: Everyone has the essentials they need to be well

1. Immediately raise income and disability assistance rates to ensure no income in BC is legislated below the poverty line.
2. Build on housing investments to create a continuum of social housing that offers a flexible and progressive range of supports that meet the needs of people with severe and complex conditions and enable their transition to safe, permanent housing.
3. Enable phone and internet access for all people living at or below the poverty line through the provision of technology grants for personal devices and \$10 per month high-speed Wi-Fi to support access to virtual care.

Dignity always: Everyone is treated with dignity and respect, in care and in community.

1. Initiate a full and independent review of the Mental Health Act to guarantee that BC's laws and policies protect the human rights of people who are involuntarily detained.
2. Provide support to municipalities to pilot civilian-led mental health crisis teams made up of clinicians and peers as an alternative to police-led interventions.
3. Direct health authorities to collect race-based, Indigenous and other disaggregated demographic data on mental health crises and overdose events to reveal and address systemic discrimination in health care.



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CMHA is the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health. We facilitate access to the resources people require to maintain and improve their mental wellbeing across the lifespan, and strive to influence both our health and social services systems to ensure a foundation for wellness for all. In BC, CMHA is made up of a provincial office and 14 branches providing community-based services in over 100 communities throughout the province.