



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Ontario  
*Mental health for all*

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
Ontario  
*La santé mentale pour tous*

## **Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario**

### **Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017**



## About CMHA, Ontario

Founded in 1952, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division (CMHA, Ontario) is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to improving the lives of people with mental illness and their families and to promoting mental health for all. CMHA, Ontario is a dedicated partner within the CMHA network operating at the national, provincial and local levels and working towards a common mission: to make mental health possible for all.

Through funding provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as well as other sources, CMHA, Ontario works to improve the lives of people with mental health and addictions, and their families, through policy analysis and implementation, agenda setting, research, evaluation, and knowledge exchange. As a leader in community mental health and a trusted advisor to the Ontario Government, CMHA Ontario actively contributes to health systems development through policy formulation and by recommending policy options that promote mental health for all Ontarians. CMHA, Ontario also supports the 31 CMHA branches providing comprehensive mental health and addictions services to individuals in diverse communities across Ontario.

## Our Vision

A society that believes mental health is key to well-being.

## Our Mission

To make mental health possible for all.

## Our Values

**Self-determination** - We support individuals' involvement in decisions that affect their lives.

**Diversity** - We value diverse perspectives and the lived experience that all people bring.

**Social justice** - We are committed to removing barriers and discrimination that impact quality of life and supporting equitable access to resources, so people can fully participate in society.

**Creativity** - We encourage innovative ideas and new ways of working that are responsive to the changing needs of Ontario.

**Social Responsibility** - We are committed to working in the public interest and for social good.

**Integrity** - We value honesty and ethical behaviour.



## The Planning Context

In June of 2011, the provincial government released “Open Minds, Healthy Minds, Ontario’s comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.” This document, while aligning with other key government initiatives, focused its first three years on improving services for children and youth in need of mental health supports. In short order, the government will inform the public of its intent for the next phase of their 10 year strategy, and there is every indication that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term care will continue to emphasize the importance of the community-based system of mental health care across Ontario.

At the same time, awareness continues to grow. Corporations continue to invest in mental health – both publicly by supporting the cause and internally by recognizing the importance of good workplace mental health. The media is paying attention with more frequent and often in depth coverage of mental health issues, and politicians at both Queen’s Park and on Parliament Hill are speaking out from all parties.

For those who dedicate themselves to advancing the cause of mental health and advocate for the reduction of stigma, the future is bright. The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division has a unique opportunity to demonstrate our leadership through new partnerships and extensive promotion of all facets of our work, including programs and services delivered by our 31 branches.

### CMHA Ontario: Our Focus Forward

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division Strategic Plan for 2010-2013 had four key directions. They were:

- Leadership in the Evolution of Ontario’s Mental Health and Addictions System.
- Promoting Mental Health
- Advancing Equity in Mental Health
- Branch Partnerships

In reviewing these four key areas, it was determined that they remain relevant, and that while some of the focus has shifted in each of these key directions, much work remains to be done.

Our 2014-2017 strategic plan takes an extensive look at each of these areas and emphasizes our priorities over the coming years.



## Leadership in the Evolution of Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System

### Overview

The relationship between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and CMHA Ontario Division is both long standing and positive. The policy work developed in our organization is high quality, useful and relevant to the Ministry, our branches and partners. However, much work remains to be done. Our work across government can and should be more engaging. To improve our success in moving our policy work and the government's agenda forward, we must continue to communicate and engage with multiple Ministries – those that we currently interact with and others. Housing; justice supports; social supports; income stability; child and youth mental health; workplace mental health; resources for the education system etc. are all issues we research and advocate for, and they demonstrate that we need to ensure that the whole of government is aware of the importance of our work.

Much of our policy work is done in conjunction with our various partners in the community-based system. We have and will continue to rely on our strong collaborative relationships. As the system evolves we must remain aware of strategic partnership opportunities to both reinforce the importance of the community-based system and CMHA Ontario's role within it.

As the sector evolves, so too does public awareness and attention. Increased collaboration with media affords an opportunity to enhance our brand and the importance of our work across the province. Engaging with people with lived experience, assisting them to tell their story to become our best advocates is to our advantage. Focusing on communications opportunities for both print and social media is key to expanding our reach throughout the coming years.

### Strategic Direction 2014 - 2017

We will be the recognized leader in the evolution of Ontario's community-based mental health and addictions system through strategic partnerships, engagement across the whole of government and alliances with media and like-minded organizations dedicated to the cause.

### Strategic Goals by 2017

By 2017 CMHA Ontario Division will have a larger footprint across government through the engagement of multiple Ministries in our policy work. We will have reinforced the importance of our partnerships, which may include extending our collaboration and integration opportunities. Our Division will also have demonstrated its value in becoming a reliable resource for media for topical issues and in-depth stories related to mental health and addictions, resulting in more outreach and coverage of our work and that of our branches.



## Promoting Mental Health

### Overview

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division and branches have a long history of advancing public policy and implementing strategies that promote good mental health. The importance of this work is evident today as much as ever. Our aging population has put significant stress on the health care system. As the need for precious health care dollars continues to rise, we must ensure that prevention is always at the forefront of all health related matters – most particularly mental health.

The strategic directions outlined in our 2010-2013 plan related to promoting mental health are still relevant. They include: advancing public policies that increase access to resources; strategies to increase social inclusion; opportunities to promote mental health in settings that will make a difference and our commitment to act as a resource for whole-of-government approached to building healthy communities.

### Strategic Direction 2014 - 2017

We will promote the importance of good mental health through our policy work and advocacy, in conjunction with our branches and partners.

### Strategic Goals by 2017

Ontario Division will renew its emphasis on health promotion throughout all aspects of our policy work; reinforce the importance of health promotion within our communications activities; engage the private and public sectors in the issue of workplace mental health and the value of investing in all employees, and expand our activities around Mental Health Week, an annual event in the first week of May.



## Advancing Equity in Mental Health

### Overview

Equity issues in mental health have a significant and negative impact on the people, communities, and health system of Ontario. For example, some communities, such as ethno-racial groups, LGBT people and people living in poverty, are more likely to experience poor mental health and may face barriers in accessing mental health services or supports. In addition, people living with mental health issues can experience discrimination in employment, housing, and many other essential and health-promotion areas of life. Equity issues in mental health are wide-ranging, complex, touch diverse regions and populations across the entire province, and require action at the level of health system policy, planning and practice.

CMHA Ontario has identified three key dynamics that shape the relationships between equity and mental health in Ontario.

1. *Equity matters for mental health* - Due to decreased access to the social determinants of health, inequities negatively impact on the mental health of Ontarians.
2. *Mental health matters for equity* - Poor mental health and mental health conditions have a negative impact on equity. And while mental health is a key resource for accessing the social determinants of health, historical and ongoing stigma has resulted in discrimination and social exclusion of people with lived experience of mental health issues or conditions.
3. *Equity and mental health intersect* - People often experience both mental health issues and additional inequities (such as poverty, racialization, or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation) simultaneously. Intersectionality creates unique experiences of inequity and mental health that poses added challenges at the individual, community and health systems level.

### Strategic Direction 2014 - 2017

We will become a provincial leader in matters involving equity in mental health. Our specific focus will include accessibility and reduction of mental health inequities. We will continue to develop and support partnerships that address equity issues in mental health across Ontario. We will apply our policy work to our board governance to ensure our entire organization is engaged in the importance of this work.



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## Strategic Goals by 2017

Ontario Division will increase awareness of and action on equity and mental health issues impacting Ontario's people, communities and health system. At the same time we will participate in, support and sustain partnerships with our branches and other provincial stakeholders that address provincial equity issues in mental health. At the Board level, we will take steps to ensure that the importance of diversity is recognized throughout the entire organization, including governance.



## Branch Partnerships

### Overview

The work of CMHA Ontario's 31 branches across the province is at the heart of what we stand for as an organization. They offer a wide array of services and customize programs based on local need. Our history as the oldest not for profit mental health charity in the country speaks for itself. However, Ontario Division has much to do to ensure our branches have the ability to continue to provide the highest quality care available to those in need.

We must ensure that our communications infrastructure, the way we relay information between Division and Branch, is modernized. We will reduce the number of Provincial Branch Forums to allow for just one in June of each year. The savings in resources, (both monetary and human) will re-focus on hosting an annual conference which will bring together the board leaders from our branches, executive directors and front line staff. Bringing our front line staff together for professional development, and to learn what is happening elsewhere across the province is critical in these changing times. We will increase the number of Executive Director Network meetings to four, from the current three, so that the leadership of our branches can meet each quarter and share important information. We will also introduce CMHA Connects to both the provincial board and our branches. This intranet site will allow easy access to information across the organization.

In addition, we will work with our branches as they continue to look for opportunities to partner with local organizations, to ensure that we continue to have a strong voice – and to support those branches that have grown in size due to amalgamation.

### Strategic Direction 2014 - 2017

We will increase support to our branches to include professional development for staff; additional opportunities to meet and share information; communications infrastructure including web-based, print and social media, and professional support as it relates to integration.

### Strategic Goals by 2017

Ontario Division will ensure we have a strong and effective network of branches, reinforced through a better system of communications. Support will be provided to those branches undergoing a transition in service delivery. We will focus increased attention to the engagement of branch volunteers and staff through all aspects of the work of Ontario Division.