



Canadian Mental Health Association

TALK TODAY

Program Manual



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Introduction

Thank you for participating in *Talk Today*, a program designed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). *Talk Today* is one of the most comprehensive mental health/sport-related programs in Canada. Its aim is to promote the mental health of young athletes and to spread awareness about the benefits of positive mental health throughout communities across the country. Originally launched in 2014, interest in *Talk Today* has grown steadily both within and outside the realm of sports.

CMHA has created this manual to help sports organizations and CMHA branches implement *Talk Today*. This manual contains useful information about the contents of the program as well as practical tips to help you deliver *Talk Today* successfully.

Why Talk Today?

In a given year, one in five people in Canada experiences a mental health problem or illness. There are no limitations to those who may be affected. Only one in three people who experience a mental health problem or illness — and as few as one in four children or youth — report that they have sought and received services and treatment. Suicide, meanwhile, remains the second-leading cause of death of young people between the ages 10 and 24.

High-performance athletes in their teenage and early adult years often face significant stress and life's challenges can seem immense. Not only are they facing the pressures of excelling and reaching the next level in their sport, but they're also doing so during critical educational and social periods in their lives. *Talk Today* was designed to provide support to these young people and to destigmatize the negative connotations associated with seeking help.

This guide will explain the key components of *Talk Today*:

- 1. Mental Health/Suicide Prevention Workshops** – At its core, *Talk Today* offers participants standardized, certified and evidence-based mental health and suicide-awareness workshops.
- 2. CMHA Mental Health Coaches** – A CMHA Mental Health Coach acts as a direct link to a team/organization participating in *Talk Today*. This relationship allows for greater knowledge of and access to community mental health and addictions resources.
- 3. Mental Health Champions** – *Talk Today* actively encourages at least one person, and hopefully more, within a participating sports organization to become a Mental Health Champion. This person is a positive force for mental health within their team/organization.
- 4. Talk Today events** – Elite athletes and sports organizations are positive role models within their communities and can help destigmatize mental health issues. Participating clubs and CMHA branches will host a *Talk Today* game-day event to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention.
- 5. Evaluation** – Players who receive training must complete mandatory evaluation forms provided by CMHA Mental Health Coaches. The feedback from the evaluation forms will be collected to help gauge the effectiveness of *Talk Today* and identify areas of improvement for the program.

1. Mental Health/ Suicide Prevention Workshops

Two accredited and evidence-based mental health and suicide awareness workshops are the foundation of *Talk Today*. The accredited training protocols have been developed by [LivingWorks](#), a world leader in suicide intervention. The trainings are delivered by CMHA staff or other mental health professionals in partnership with CMHA. Like first aid or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training, participants taking these mental health and suicide awareness workshops learn valuable life skills.

safeTALK (Suicide Alertness For Everyone) teaches individuals the importance of mental health and how to recognize persons with thoughts of suicide. safeTALK, three hours in duration, is training that prepares anyone older than 15 to identify persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources. Most people with thoughts of suicide invite help to stay safe. Alert helpers know how to use these opportunities to support that desire for safety.

While available to anyone associated with the team such as coaches, trainers, parents and billet families, safeTALK training is mandatory for all athletes.

In 2016, the cost of safeTALK is \$35 per person and service providers bill the teams directly. CMHA is seeking sponsorship to offset these costs.

TIPS

- Conduct safeTALK training early in a season so that team members can use what they've learned to support each other throughout the year.
- Elite sports clubs often have busy schedules. safeTALK should be provided at times convenient for the athletes (e.g. after practice; within a suitable location at the sports venue).
- The CMHA Mental Health Coach and the club Mental Health Champion should be present during the training session so athletes are familiar with these appropriate contacts.
- Offer safeTALK each year to ensure new and returning players have access to the training.
- Facilitate safeTALK training for other people associated with the team (e.g. coaches, trainers, billet families, parents, etc.).
- To help track the success of Talk Today, CMHA Mental Health Coaches use this participation form to monitor how many players, coaches, parents, etc., are taking safeTALK.

ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) teaches people older than 16 how to recognize individuals who are at risk and intervene to keep them safe. The ASIST workshop is for individuals who want to feel more comfortable, confident and competent in helping to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. More than one million caregivers worldwide have participated in this two-day, highly interactive, practical, practice-oriented workshop. ASIST

participants learn a model of care teaching them how to connect with a “person at risk” and how to develop a plan to keep them safe.

While available to anyone associated with the team, the recommendation is that at least one adult complete ASIST.

In 2016, the cost of ASIST is \$130 per person and service providers bill the teams directly. CMHA is seeking sponsorship to offset these costs.

TIPS

- While open to anyone over 16, ensure at least one adult closely associated with a team receives ASIST.
- Offer ASIST each year to all adults associated with the team in order to create an expanded “suicide safer” community.
- The team’s Mental Health Champion is encouraged to take safeTALK and ASIST.
- Ensure players, team staff and others associated with the club know which adult has taken ASIST.
- To help track the success of *Talk Today*, CMHA Mental Health Coaches use this participation form to monitor how many players, coaches, parents, etc., are taking ASIST.



The Ontario Hockey League’s Mississauga Steelheads after their safeTALK session in 2014-2015.

2. CMHA Mental Health Coaches

A key component of *Talk Today* is the relationship that develops between athletes/organizations and their local CMHA branch. A CMHA branch will designate a Mental Health Coach who will be connected to each team and be available as a main point of contact should a player or anyone associated with the team be in distress.

A CMHA Mental Health Coach is trained to provide resources and supports for the players as well as the people that surround the players. The Mental Health Coach provides referrals to local mental health, addictions and crisis services, as necessary.

TIPS

- CMHA Mental Health Coaches are driving forces in *Talk Today*.
- CMHA Mental Health Coaches should be present at safeTALK and ASIST workshops to foster relationships with training participants.
- CMHA Mental Health Coaches should maintain contact with the team/organization at intervals throughout the year (e.g. when scheduling safeTALK/ASIST training sessions; during breaks in the season; to help coordinate *Talk Today* game day events).
- CMHA Mental Health Coaches should provide players a list of community resources that offer services during business hours and 24/7.



3.

Mental Health Champions

Each club must appoint a Mental Health Champion, an adult associated with the team that has good rapport with the players and whom the players should feel comfortable going to if they need support. The club Mental Health Champion is also the team's connection to the CMHA Mental Health Coach. In this role, the Mental Health Champion can help coordinate training or relay information to others in the organization who can help with components of *Talk Today*.

We encourage training staff, physiotherapists, parents, billeting parents and others to consider the role of a club Mental Health Champion. The Champion can also work with local CMHA branches and act as an advocate on mental health issues within the community.

TIPS

- Mental Health Champions are a crucial contact point for CMHA Mental Health Coaches. The champion should be quickly accessible, especially during the first year of the program.
- Like CMHA Mental Health Coaches, Mental Health Champions should be well known to the team members and organization.
- A Mental Health Champion should be someone who has regular contact with the players. For example, a team physiotherapist or athletic trainer may be well suited for the role.
- A Mental Health Champion should be someone who has contact with team personnel (e.g. those responsible for game day events) who can support the program.
- There is no limit to the number of Mental Health Champions per team/organization. More is better.
- A coach or GM can play the role, however, they may not have the time to be a Mental Health Champion.
- Players may not feel comfortable divulging mental health issues to an adult responsible for dictating playing time.

4.

Talk Today Awareness Games

Teams/organizations will dedicate one home game to raise awareness about suicide prevention and promote mental health. Teams and their local CMHA branch will work together to coordinate these *Talk Today* events. CMHA staff, CMHA Mental Health Coaches, and Mental Health Champions and the players/individuals can all play a role in these events.

CMHA has created a *Talk Today Game-Day Guide* to help branches and teams carry out game-day events. The guide outlines requirements for each event, including:

- Hosting an information booth/kiosk staffed by the local CMHA branch staff.
- Broadcasting video announcements on scoreboard screens.
- Broadcasting public address announcements.
- Incorporating *Talk Today* placards with support from the players.
- A ceremonial puck drop with CMHA staff.
- Using social and traditional media to promote the event.

Other suggested elements for the games include:

- Incorporating CMHA green. (See the colour palate in the Game-Day Guide).



TIPS

- CMHA has created a *Talk Today Game-Day Guide* which outlines requirements and tips for hosting game-day events.
- *Talk Today* game-day events should be held in February to maximize media and social media coverage.
- Many elite sports organizations have game-day operations staff to help conduct these types of events.
- CMHA Mental Health Coaches should reach out to teams/organizations and start planning early in the season.
- Players, coaches or other individuals associated with the club/organizations may wish to participate (e.g. recording video messages; using social media; acting as media spokespeople).
- Use social media to promote the game-day events and during the events themselves, using the hashtag #TalkToday.



5.

Evaluation

In order to evaluate and enhance the program, everyone participating in safeTALK and ASIST must complete a survey from LivingWorks, creators of safeTALK and ASIST.

Furthermore, all players participating in safeTALK must also complete this *Talk Today* questionnaire developed by CMHA.

TIPS

- LivingWorks dictates that its surveys must be completed immediately after workshops.
- *Talk Today* questionnaires should be delivered in the months after the training (e.g. during the holiday break mid-season or before game-day events in February). This gives participants an opportunity to potentially use the training they received.
- Individual CMHA branches and their corresponding clubs/organizations are responsible for ensuring questionnaires are completed.
- *Talk Today* questionnaires must be returned to the local CMHA branch.

Summary

Talk Today continues to make advancements in an effort to become the gold standard of mental health programs for sports in Canada.

In order to attain this goal, the following requirements are essential:

- Ensuring all athletes are safeTALK trained so they have the skills to identify when a peer, colleague, family member or teammate may be struggling.
- Having ASIST and safeTALK-trained adults available to players gives them an appropriate contact person to connect with in times of crisis.
- Engaging CMHA Mental Health Coaches and Mental Health Champions gives players access to a reliable person they can speak with within their team environment.
- Hosting a game-day event in partnership with CMHA branches promotes suicide prevention and positive mental health.
- Receiving constructive feedback/evaluation from *Talk Today* workshop participants allows for future improvements to the program and insight into program effectiveness.

Following the program's structure as outlined in this manual helps ensure that *Talk Today* is delivered consistently across teams, organizations and leagues across Canada.

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