

Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act

An opportunity to strengthen community-based mental health and addictions care

Recommendations to the Ontario government

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Addictions &
Mental Health
Ontario

Dépendances &
santé mentale
d'Ontario



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario



Community-based mental health and addictions care is the care that is provided outside of the hospital setting. It includes services and supports provided across the continuum of care, including health promotion, illness prevention, crisis response, treatment and recovery. Community-based mental health and addictions care also includes outreach, case management and related services such as housing and employment supports and court diversion programs.

Local community-based mental health and addictions agencies have served prominent roles in communities across Ontario for decades. These agencies are integrated into communities and the local service provider often lives in the community they serve and understands the needs of their local community. This philosophy is supported by the fact that individuals receiving care generally prefer to do so within their community, and that for most individuals, formal mental health and addictions services are just one piece of the puzzle. These local agencies and their local leadership teams need to continue to play a prominent role in the future health care state to ensure continuity of high-quality, local mental health and addictions services across the province.

As the leaders in community-based mental health and addictions service provision in Ontario, Addictions & Mental Health Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, and Children's Mental Health Ontario look forward to continuing to work closely with the provincial government towards health system transformation across the province. Our organizations appreciate the government's ongoing commitment to consultation with our sector.

In reviewing the *People's Health Care Act*, we offer the following key recommendations:

- 1. Community-based mental health and addictions providers must play a central role in the delivery of mental health and addictions care through Ontario Health Teams.** Mental health care must be delivered in collaboration with addictions care within Ontario Health Teams while maintaining specialties for service provision by health care providers. There must be no silos as mental health and addictions-related issues are often intertwined and co-occurring. Evidence based, integrated care for concurrent disorders should be provided.
- 2. Ontario Health Teams must focus on providing Ontarians with continuity of mental health and addictions care across the lifespan, from children and youth to adults and seniors.** When planning services, Ontario Health Teams should also focus on closing critical service gaps for youth at key transition points (including transitioning into adult services). Special consideration is required for child and youth services as they were previously governed as a discrete sector and were just recently moved within the purview of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.



3. **Ontario Health must identify, adopt, and implement a standardized set of core services for addictions and mental health care across the province.** Further, Ontario Health must identify services that should be available at the local, regional or provincial level. Consideration should be given to specialized services such as residential treatment services, specific services for children and youth, and services for people involved in the justice system, that should be available at the provincial level and can be managed regionally.
4. **Ontario Health must focus on the implementation of a strong data strategy for community-based mental health and addictions care, so that the level of care provided through Ontario Health Teams can be measured and maximized.** A strong data strategy is the foundation of continuous quality improvement that ensures high quality services are provided to Ontarians with mental health and addictions issues.
5. **Ontario Health must establish a baseline of funding to community mental health and addictions service providers and must commit to both protecting and growing those funding levels to support capacity building within the community mental health and addictions sector.** As system transformation takes place through the creation of Ontario Health and Ontario Health Teams, it must be ensured that the capacity for front-line community-based mental health and addictions care is bolstered, so that providers can immediately start diverting patients from hospitals to appropriate care in the community.

Addictions & Mental Health Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, and Children's Mental Health Ontario – and our collective branches and member agencies – are integral partners for the formation of Ontario Health Teams that can help end hallway medicine and relieve the pressures on hospital emergency departments and the criminal justice and social services systems.

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