

A new resource to help family physicians support individuals with mental health and substance use problems

News Release

From the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) and the [College of Family Physicians of Canada](#)

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Today, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) launched the Best Advice guide: [Recovery-Oriented Mental Health and Addiction Care in the Patient's Medical Home](#) at the Canadian Mental Health Association's 3rd annual Mental Health for All (MH4A) Conference.

Family physicians deliver almost two-thirds of mental health services in Canada, yet some describe mental health and addiction as an area in which they would like further development. At the same time, people living with mental health or substance use problems often report that their needs are not being met. The new Best Advice guide represents a small step toward bridging that gap.

Developed in consultation with family physicians, mental health experts and people with lived experience, the guide offers a compendium of practical and easy-to-implement strategies and recommendations. It includes simple yet powerful tips for health care providers on how to open the door to important conversations on mental health and addiction issues — from using non-stigmatizing language and displaying signage in support of mental wellness to incorporating at least one question per visit that elicits a response about emotional health.

Family physicians are invited to learn more about the recovery-oriented approach — a concept in which the caregiver supports and engages the individual as an active participant in their own treatment and recovery. All primary care providers should find this guide useful in their daily practice. Similarly, people with lived experience are encouraged to share the guide with their physician to promote dialogue on how to break down barriers to receiving quality mental health care.

For more details please refer to the [Best Advice guide: Quick Reference fact sheet](#).

Quotes

"I am proud that the MHCC has partnered with the CFPC to bring home the need for better mental health care in primary care. The Best Advice guide does two important things: it gives providers a fresh perspective — along with the tools to put what they've learned into practice — and gives family physicians a fresh perspective in helping patients with mental health problems and illness feel at ease in their medical home."

—Louise Bradley, President and CEO, Mental Health Commission of Canada

“Good mental health is key to a person’s overall health and wellbeing. The CFPC underscores the importance of a recovery-based approach, which includes family physicians caring for and supporting individuals with mental health and addiction issues. This Best Advice guide provides valuable strategies on how doctors can approach individuals who are experiencing mental health and addiction issues and facilitate positive patient-doctor interaction, ensuring patients receive the treatments, resources, and supports they need.”

—Francine Lemire MD CM, CCFP, FCFP, CAE

Executive Director and CEO, College of Family Physicians of Canada

“The Best Advice guide emphasizes hope as the cornerstone of communication between doctor and patient. When I was first diagnosed, I had no hope because no one led me to believe recovery was possible. Recovery shouldn't just be possible ... it should be expected, especially by physicians. As someone who has walked this road, my advice to doctors is to first take seriously and rule out physical conditions prior to making a mental health diagnosis. Then, give the same time, attention, and consideration to mental health conditions.”

—Debbie Sesula, a person with lived experience

Quick Facts

- In 2012, 1.6 million people reported an unmet need for mental health care, and 7.5 million people in Canada were living with a mental health issue.
- It is estimated that about one in five Canadian youths are affected by a mental illness at any given time and, by age 40, half of all Canadians will have experienced a mental health issue.
- Almost 40 per cent of parents say they wouldn't tell anyone, including their family doctor, if their child was experiencing a mental health problem.
- Patients who receive recovery-oriented, comprehensive mental health and addiction care in primary care settings experience greater satisfaction and better health outcomes.
- The Patient's Medical Home is the CFPC's vision for the future of family practice in Canada. In this vision, every family practice offers care that is centred on individual patients' needs, within their community, throughout every stage of life, and integrated with other health services.

About the College of Family Physicians of Canada

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) is the professional organization that represents more than 37,000 members across the country. The College establishes the standards for and accredits postgraduate family medicine training in Canada's 17 medical schools. It reviews and certifies continuing professional development programs and materials that enable family physicians to meet certification and licensing requirements. The CFPC provides high-quality services, supports family medicine teaching and research, and advocates on behalf of family physicians and the specialty of family medicine.

About the Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is a catalyst for improving the mental health system and changing the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians around mental health issues. Through its unique mandate from Health Canada, the MHCC brings together leaders and organizations from across the country to accelerate these changes. Each of its initiatives and projects is led by experts who bring a variety of perspectives and

experience to the table. The MHCC's staff, Board, Advisory Council and Network of Ambassadors all share the same goal — creating a better system for all Canadians.

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