



# Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative

[www.ccmhi.ca](http://www.ccmhi.ca)

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## Collaborating to improve mental health care for Canadians

Launched in 2003, the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative (CCMHI) is a consortium of twelve national health organizations committed to improving mental health care for Canadians by integrating mental health care into primary care settings.

Funded in two phases by Health Canada's Primary Health Care Transition Fund (PHCTF), Phase 1 of the CCMHI saw the development of a unique national asset – evidence-based resources and tools that can help improve mental health care in primary care settings through structured collaboration among health care providers, consumers and caregivers. Phase 2, ending in March 2008, is focused on dissemination – raising awareness and promoting collaborative care and the CCMHI resources, and engaging key stakeholders into the uptake of this promising model of care.

Whether you are a health care policy planner, service provider, consumer/family member, or educator, your help is needed to champion collaborative mental health care, and to help plan and implement dissemination and knowledge transfer strategies of the CCMHI research papers and toolkits across Canada.

## Commitments

The CCMHI Steering Committee organizations developed a Charter through extensive dialogue with consumers, families, caregivers, health providers, policy makers, educators and funders across Canada. The signatories to the Charter agree to advocate for, facilitate and/or undertake the following commitments:

### CCMHI Principles\*

- All Canadian residents have the right to live in a society that promotes health and provides for the prevention and early detection of mental health problems.
- All Canadian residents have the right to health services that promote a healthy mind, body and spirit.
- All Canadian residents have the right to collaborative, effective and timely mental health services
- Consumers, along with their social supports, have the right and responsibility to be full partners in their recovery.
- All Canadian residents have the right to receive mental health services and supports in a manner that respects their diverse needs.
- All Canadian residents have the right to be informed about the range of mental health services and supports that can meet their needs.
- Mental health services must be supported by policy and provided with adequate financial and human resources.

\* Excerpt from the CCMHI Charter  
([www.ccmhi.ca/en/products/charter.html](http://www.ccmhi.ca/en/products/charter.html))

## Commitments

- Advocate (federal, provincial, territorial governments) for the development of pan-Canadian mental health policies and implementation strategies that support the Charter Principles;
- Provide leadership and guidance, and encourage practices that support collaborative mental health care;
- Advocate for a pan-Canadian education and public awareness campaign to better educate people about mental health and mental illness;
- Develop and implement strategies for reducing stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness that can be applied across various settings (e.g., health, community, workplace, school);
- Promote formal inclusion and involvement of consumers, families and caregivers and/or their associations in mental health service planning, policy development and evaluation;
- Establish common guidelines for the delivery of mental health services that respect individual differences and the context of culture in mental health and mental illness;
- Promote interprofessional education to increase the collaborative skills of consumers and health care providers and to build knowledge about the expertise and potential contributions of other partners;
- Promote interprofessional competencies in collaborative mental health care within each health care provider profession through regulatory and accreditation standards;
- Work together as health care and consumer associations to inform, advise and support primary health care reform initiatives to include mental health and mental illness;
- Continue to work together as health care associations to advocate for, build and sustain the policy, program and resource infrastructure to support collaborative mental health provider education and practice;
- Continue to support research, evaluation and the implementation of effective practices in collaborative mental health care;
- Continue to work together as health care associations to advise and inform funding bodies about the financial and human resources needed to deliver effective and timely collaborative mental health care.

## The mental health care challenge

Canadians bring their health and mental health problems to their family physician, nurse-practitioner, or other primary health care provider. However, primary health care providers don't always have the expertise or time to detect and undertake treatment for mental health problems, particularly since many people with mental illness often experience more than one health condition requiring treatment. Additionally, in many communities, access to specialized mental health care providers (e.g. psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers) may be limited by insufficient funding for necessary services, a shortage of specialized resources, and system barriers that can lead to longer waiting times, or make it harder for individuals to reach the services they need.

*Nearly one in five Canadians experience a mental illness each year. Despite this, 70% of these individuals do not receive any professional mental health care.*

A lack of co-ordination among service providers and between different sectors increases the difficulties consumers face in accessing the social and health services they need. There is also insufficient knowledge, expertise and formal support for effectively involving consumers in the development and management of services. As well, the stigma associated with mental illness is manifested in many ways, including a lack of attention to the burden of these illnesses and the services required to support individuals coping with their consequences.

## Consumer-focused collaboration is the solution

Better collaboration among mental health and primary care services and consumers has been shown to increase the capability of primary care to meet the needs of consumers and improve access to needed services and programs.

An increasing body of evidence accumulated over the last 10 years indicates that improved collaboration and strengthened links between mental health and primary care services provides consumers with readier access to more comprehensive and better coordinated care. Increased collaboration puts consumers at the centre of care as partners in planning, decision-making, service coordination, training and evaluation.

Consumers and families bring an important perspective to collaborative care and have a vital role to play in informing health and social system design, and shaping and evaluating the services targeted at meeting their needs. Involvement of consumers and family members in collaborative initiatives can improve communication, relevance, transparency and accountability.

By supporting individuals in managing their own care, having an optimistic belief in their ability to recover, and involving consumers as stakeholders, collaborative mental health care can counter some of the harmful dynamics of stigma. It can also improve continuity of care, increase communication and mutual understanding, facilitate the planning of more effective, responsive services and enable consumers to access prevention, health promotion, treatment/intervention and rehabilitation services from the most appropriate and accessible provider. These benefits help to explain why there is a significant policy trend toward formal involvement of consumers as stakeholders at the program development and governance levels.



### Barriers to Collaborative Mental Health Care

- Time constraints on providers;
- Poor co-ordination of services;
- Lack of funding and lack of funding models that facilitate collaboration;
- Problems with the availability of human resources, access to services and co-ordination of services;
- Existing professional cultures that do not actively support collaborative care or a commitment to recovery as a goal;
- Lack of inter-professional and collaborative education initiatives – including a consumer voice – to prepare future providers to work in collaborative models;
- Lack of knowledge, expertise and formal support for effectively involving consumers, both as individuals in care settings and as stakeholder organizations in the development and management of services;
- Persistence of discrimination and stigma relative to mental illness.

*The toolkits are a first step in opening a dialogue about how collaborative care models can and do work.*

## CCMHI's role as national facilitator

Since its launch, the CCMHI has served as a national focal point to help individuals and organizations adapt or implement collaborative mental health care principles and approaches.

During Phase I, the CCMHI has developed some extremely valuable and practical resources, including a series of papers that enhance understanding of the state of collaborative care in Canada and 12 toolkits tailored to key stakeholder groups, to assist in implementation of collaborative mental health care approaches. These resources are all available on the CCMHI web site ([www.ccmhi.ca/en/products](http://www.ccmhi.ca/en/products)). The toolkits are a first step in opening a dialogue about how collaborative care models can and do work. They provide guidance and tips that can be adapted to local or regional contexts. The toolkits also offer implementation advice to primary and mental health providers who wish to start a collaborative initiative to respond to their community health needs. They can orient consumers, families and caregivers to collaborative care and explain the active role they can play in prevention and care. **As part of Phase II, we encourage you to use these resources as you start to consider how the collaborative care model can work to improve mental health care in your region.**

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## Collaborative care: a work in progress

The CCMHI anticipates that the concept of collaborative mental health care will spread through a “ripple” effect, as successful projects and enthusiastic champions help to convince an increasing number of providers and planners to consider these ideas in their practice and planning. Early successes will in turn inform policy makers and resource directors, who can then implement strategic system changes that will facilitate the rapid and widespread uptake of this model of care.

As part of our focus in Phase II to disseminate, raise awareness and engage stakeholders in the uptake of collaborative care, we invite feedback from all mental health stakeholders. We are interested in hearing about the usefulness, relevance and general quality of the tools developed, so that these products can be further improved. We also invite suggestions of new references or experiences that could contribute to advancing knowledge and practice.

For more information visit [www.ccmhi.ca](http://www.ccmhi.ca), contact any one of the CCMHI Steering Committee member organizations or e-mail us at: [info@ccmhi.ca](mailto:info@ccmhi.ca).

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