

*Brief presented to the*  
**Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)**

*from*  
**The Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse (OPC)**  
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[OPC](#) is Ontario's leading bilingual health promotion organization. OPC works with health promoters, health professionals, volunteers, organizations, and policy-makers to transform good ideas into action.

We have five main programs:

- [Best Start Resource Centre](#)
- [Health Promotion Resource Centre](#)
- [OHPRS Secretariat](#)
- [Prevent Stroke](#)
- [Canadian Health Network- Health Promotion Affiliate.](#)

OPC builds the capacity of health promoters to implement health promotion strategies, based on the [Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion](#), that address the [determinants of health](#). We offer [consultations](#), [workshops/ conferences](#) and [print and electronic resources](#) on health promotion priorities such as [inclusion](#), [early childhood development](#) and [chronic disease prevention](#).

Two years ago OPC undertook work in the area of mental health promotion. We have conducted key stakeholder interviews and carried out literature reviews in French and English. It is our intention to be more deliberate about a holistic health approach and include the concepts of mental health promotion in all the work we do with health promoters across the province.

As Ontario's leading bilingual health promotion resource centre, we are very excited about the work of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. In particular we would like to comment on the following early priorities, and outline how our organization could support this important work over the next three years.

### **National Anti-Stigma Program**

Foundational activities to support an anti-stigma program would include developing and piloting a definitional framework of mental health: The program would need to:

- Employ a national community engagement process to develop and promote a common understanding of mental health, mental illness, mental health promotion, stigma, etc.
- Identify provincial and local partners to accomplish this and create a national network of mental health stakeholders (consumers/survivors, mental health workers/practitioners)
- Develop a vision that emphasizes a holistic approach to health and includes the complete mental health continuum, not just mental illness. This population health approach would highlight how mental health status is often dependent on the complex interrelationship and interdependency of the social determinants of health, i.e., poverty, housing, biology, employment, etc. Mental health promotion must be included in the vision and key stakeholders must be part of its development
- Have more people with and affected by mental illness speak for themselves and value their knowledge and experience as much as we do that from the scientific and academic communities

### **National Mental Health Strategy**

The National Mental Health Strategy would need to:

- Be developed, adopted and supported by the federal government and be adequately resourced to ensure its success. This would enable all sectors/partners in the mental health field to participate
- Strongly reflect *upstream thinking* and that the strategies promote wellness for everyone, including people who experience severe mental illness.
- Include increased education at under and post-graduate levels on mental health issues including peri-natal mood disorders.
- Include universal guidelines for screening and treatment
- Include increased support for programs that promote inclusion and social support and non-directive counseling (support groups, nursing home visits, telephone support, community programs)
- Ensure increased publicly funded treatment programs and that therapies such as CBT or IPT be included
- Prioritize programs that include mental health **promotion** and the prevention of adverse outcomes in family members (i.e. children).
- Encourage and facilitate both quantitative and qualitative research that focuses on mental health promotion and the prevention of mental illness.
- Develop comprehensive public policies that link the social determinants of health with mental health status and integrate solutions that adopt a comprehensive, integrated approach across various federal government departments.
- Make explicit the relationship between the social determinants of health and mental and physical health status of individuals, and the costs that this brings to bear in society
- Ensure that partnerships are strategic and aligned with federal, provincial, and territorial priorities.

### **Knowledge Exchange Centre**

Using electronic and print tools a network of interested practitioners should be established to exchange knowledge, resources and stimulate research. OPC has been using its technical expertise to harness/ exploit technology optimally to better disseminate resources and information. Our new website along with other program websites, blog, e-bulletins, online events like webinars, online event registrations and management and searchable on-line databases and resources are just some examples of how technology could be used to reach a wider audience at minimal costs.

### **HOW OPC CAN HELP**

#### **An Anti-Stigma Program**

OPC has the following experience and expertise related to anti-stigma campaigns:

- We conducted a provincial public awareness campaign on postpartum mood disorders. We could build on this to increase awareness in vulnerable populations and/or expand the awareness to other mental health issues. Increased awareness and education will decrease stigma.
- We conducted a literature review on mental health promotion and the links between the broader determinants of health and inclusion
- We have e-health expertise to support planned knowledge exchange centre. OPC has access to networks of health promoters across Ontario through Ontario Health Promotion E-Bulletin, Canadian Health Network -Health Promotion Affiliate / plus links to the Mental Health Affiliate, and Ontario Health Promotion Resource System

- Ontario partners have already identified OPC for mental health promotion work –This could easily be leveraged to create a national network
- We have expertise in developing and launching HP campaigns to support anti-stigma.
- OPC offers to act in an advisory capacity to assist with an Anti-Stigma Program.

### **A National Mental Health Strategy**

OPC can bring together key organizations to develop and implement a mental health strategy. We are already working with those organizations and have a good provincial awareness of whom and how to connect to achieve these goals.

OPC can use its skills and resources to build individual, organizational, and community capacity to undertake work in various parts of the strategy.

OPC, as a leader in the NGO sector can support the ideas in the strategy and be a strong ally to carry it forth to various and numerous stakeholders and networks.

### **A Knowledge Exchange Centre**

Using our experience with e-bulletins and list-servs, we could develop and oversee a network of interested health promotion practitioners facilitating networking, knowledge exchange, resource sharing and stimulating research.

We have used a wide variety of formats for dissemination of information - print publications, videos, teleconference, websites, online databases, listservs (Click4HP, MNCHP), and e-bulletins (OHPE, Bloc-Notes); and equally diverse approaches to exchanging knowledge - phone, mail, email, online, face-to-face in dialogues, roundtables, consultations, focus groups, workshops and learning events such as webinars, conferences, and seminars. OPC uses five websites as a means of informing and involving our communities. To add to the interactive aspects of our online communications, OPC has started a weblog called OPC Today <http://www.blogs.opc.on.ca/>, expanded its e-bulletins (OHPE and Bloc-Notes), and websites (Prevent Stroke) with online databases of resources, and is collaborating on podcasts with the Canadian Health Network, and with other partners.

- We can disseminate [or share widely] news, evidence-based information on mental health promotion, resources through our own knowledge exchange activities (email lists, e-bulletins, blogs, on our websites)

- We can engage in dialogues and consultations with our users and networks on the issues of mental health [promotion] and mental illness [prevention], and share the results with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)

OPC is willing and able to contribute towards the development of a Knowledge Centre to ensure easy and timely access to resources and information related to Mental Health. The proposed Knowledge Centre could have customized interfaces for Mental Health Promotion professionals on one hand and people actually dealing with mental health issues, general public on the other to help them better understand the issues and get timely help.