

A child in a colorful shirt and blue pants is climbing a large rocket ship drawn on a dark, textured wall with white chalk. The child is standing on a small white step ladder. A black dog is sitting on the ground to the left of the ladder. Chalk and a small blue cup are scattered on the ground to the right of the ladder.

#b4stage4



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

He's ready to take off.
Mental illness and addiction
shouldn't hold him back.

Early intervention is the key.

A declaration for better mental health and addiction care in British Columbia

There is a clear opportunity sitting in front of all of us. If, together, we take the bold steps needed to improve mental health in our province, we can improve the lives of thousands of people across British Columbia.

It is time to focus on prevention, early identification and early intervention. We currently pay for a system of care in the most expensive ways possible. People wait too long for care and too many people get their care from emergency departments and from police.

We can offer proven choices and supports to help people recover—clinical services, medications, peer supports, counselling, family supports, and other therapies—and keep people connected to their families and their community. Intervening as early as possible preserves a person's education, employment, social supports, housing—and it also costs less than the tragic revolving door of incarceration, hospitalization, and homelessness.

The Canadian Mental Health Association is calling for community organizations, academic institutions, professional associations, labour organizations, elected officials and business leaders to value mental health and addiction care equally to physical health care.

GET LOUD. TAKE ACTION. b4stage4.ca

We believe action in these five areas will lead to better mental health in British Columbia

1. Focus on prevention and early intervention

Actions we could take:

- Spend smart and invest wisely in effective community-based services and supports designed to prevent mental illness and intervene quickly with the early signs of mental health and addictions problems.
- Reduce wait times for basic level of mental health and/or addictions help. People should be able to “ask once and get help fast.”

2. Build an accessible addictions health care system

Actions we could take:

- Focus on building a standardized, compassionate, and evidence-based system of care for people living with addictions problems.
- Level the playing field and ensure people have just as much access to mental health and addictions health care as physical health care.

3. Strengthen recovery closer to home, in community

Actions we could take:

- Strengthen the safety net for the most vulnerable members of our community living with mental health and/or addiction problems.
- Build and implement a provincial housing strategy to ensure more people living with mental health and/or addictions problems have a safe place to call home.

4. Improve crisis care

Actions we could take:

- Implement a suicide prevention strategy collaboratively with health, education, justice and community-based organizations
- Reduce the use of police, emergency departments, and the justice system as treatment for people living with mental health and/or addiction problems.

5. Lead change in mental health and addictions

Actions we could take:

- Develop and implement a province-wide plan for mental health and addictions, for both young people and adults that extends beyond two political terms.
- Establish leadership and accountability through the appointment of a dedicated cabinet Minister of Mental Health and Addictions with a dedicated budget.

Do you stand with the Canadian Mental Health Association in calling for a system of care that addresses mental health, addiction, and physical health equally?