

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2017-OPH-HPDP-0005

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH'S PLAN TO FOSTER
 MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR COMMUNITY**

**OBJET: MISE À JOUR CONCERNANT LE PLAN DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE
 OTTAWA POUR PROMOUVOIR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DANS NOTRE
 COLLECTIVITÉ**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2016, the Board of Health approved Ottawa Public Health's Plan to *Foster Mental Health in Our Community*. OPH has worked with partners over the past few years in order to be well positioned to enhance its implementation of the multi-faceted, whole-of-community mental health promotion plan. To effectively address the root causes of poor mental health and problematic substance use, OPH has focused 'upstream'; specifically seeking to reduce stigma and increase awareness of the impacts of poor mental health and problematic substance use while also helping schools, workplaces and communities in becoming supportive environments for those with mental illnesses and those who live with poor mental health.

In the past year, to continue its 'upstream' work, OPH has continued to work closely with many community partners, people with lived experience, and residents in Ottawa to contribute to a mentally healthy community by focusing on mental health awareness and stigma reduction, creating a more resilient community and suicide prevention.

This report provides an update on these strategic initiatives, focusing on activities and outcomes achieved since June 2016, such as:

- The development and launch of eighteen videos and accompanying activity guides focused on mental health awareness and stigma reduction, entitled "How to Talk about Your Mental Health", "Reducing Stigma", "Building Resilience", "Caring for yourself, the Caregiver", and "Building Social Connections" as well as focused on the thirteen psychosocial factors of the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.
- Addressing mental health in the workplace by responding to local needs and focusing on helping workplace intermediaries implement the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.
- Contributing to suicide prevention by working with over 55 partner agencies and those with lived and living experience, and contributing to evidence based education, training and awareness workshops in schools and workplaces, with community partners, and with media on safe and responsible reporting of suicide.

RÉSUMÉ

En juin 2016, le Conseil de santé a approuvé le plan de Santé publique Ottawa (SPO) pour *favoriser la santé mentale dans la collectivité*. Au cours des dernières années, SPO a travaillé avec des partenaires afin de bien se positionner pour améliorer la mise

en œuvre de son plan de promotion de la santé à volets multiples destiné à l'ensemble de la collectivité. Pour s'attaquer efficacement aux causes profondes des problèmes de santé mentale et de consommation d'alcool et de drogues, elle a travaillé en amont, cherchant principalement à réduire la stigmatisation et à sensibiliser la population à leurs conséquences, tout en favorisant la tolérance dans les écoles, les milieux de travail et les collectivités à l'égard des personnes ayant une maladie mentale ou une mauvaise santé mentale.

La dernière année, toujours dans l'optique de travailler en amont, SPO a collaboré étroitement avec bon nombre de partenaires communautaires, de personnes qui possèdent une expérience personnelle en la matière et de résidents d'Ottawa pour favoriser la santé mentale dans la collectivité en axant ses interventions sur la sensibilisation, la réduction de la stigmatisation, la création d'une collectivité plus résiliente et la prévention du suicide.

Le présent rapport rend compte de ces initiatives stratégiques, et principalement des activités et des résultats depuis juin 2016, par exemple :

- l'élaboration et le lancement de 18 vidéos et guides d'activités connexes sur la sensibilisation en santé mentale et la réduction de la stigmatisation, intitulés notamment « Comment parler de votre santé mentale », « Réduire la stigmatisation », « Améliorer sa résilience personnelle », « Proche aidant, prenez soin de VOUS » et « Améliorer ses liens sociaux », dont treize sont axés sur les facteurs psychologiques énumérés dans la norme nationale du Canada sur la santé et la sécurité psychologiques en milieu de travail;
- la gestion de la santé mentale au travail en répondant aux besoins locaux et en aidant les intervenants en milieu de travail à mettre en œuvre la norme nationale du Canada sur la santé et la sécurité psychologiques en milieu de travail;
- la prévention du suicide, de concert avec plus de 55 organismes partenaires et des personnes ayant une expérience personnelle en la matière; et, en collaboration avec des partenaires communautaires et les médias, l'éducation, la formation et la sensibilisation dans les écoles et les milieux de travail, fondées sur des données probantes en matière de pratiques pour rapporter un suicide de façon sécuritaire et responsable.

BACKGROUND

In June 2016, the Board of Health approved Ottawa Public Health's Plan to *Foster Mental Health in Our Community* with three long-term objectives:

1. Promoting mental health across the lifespan to improve the well-being of the population;
2. Fostering supportive environments that enhance mental health where residents live, learn, play and work; and
3. Influencing various sectors to improve the quality and accessibility of services for individuals with mental health issues and their caregivers.

To meet these objectives, three areas of focus and six *Strategic Initiatives* (SI) were identified:

- **Mental Health Awareness and Stigma Reduction**
 - SI: *have THAT talk: Optimal mental health and stigma reduction campaign*
 - SI: *Status of Mental Health in Ottawa Report*
- **Towards a More Resilient Community**
 - SI: *Mentally Healthy Workplaces*
 - SI: *Reducing the Harms from Prescription Medications*
 - SI: *Towards a Culture of Alcohol Moderation*
- **Suicide Prevention**
 - SI: *Suicide Safer Ottawa*

This report provides an update on these strategic initiatives, focusing on activities and outcomes achieved since June 2016.

Local Context

Since OPH presented its plan for Fostering Mental Health in our Community, there has been a significant increase in the number of overdose deaths in Canada, coupled with recent overdose deaths locally, which have led to greater public discourse in our community about mental health and problematic substance use. As noted in previous updates to the Board, OPH and partners' work to address the opioid crisis in our

community will require programs and services that address the root causes of problematic substance use and poor mental health.

OPH's work with partners over the past few years has contributed to ensuring OPH was well positioned to enhance its multi-faceted, whole-of-community mental health promotion plan. To effectively address the root causes of poor mental health and problematic substance use, OPH has focused 'upstream'; specifically seeking to reduce stigma and increase awareness of the impacts of poor mental health and problematic substance use. OPH has also focused on schools, workplaces and communities in becoming supportive environments for those with mental health illnesses and those who live with poor mental health.

Evidence shows that promoting mental health, especially early in life, has significant economic and societal return on investment^{i, ii}. Research shows that there is a lifetime savings of \$140,000 when a child's mental health is improved from moderate to highⁱⁱⁱ. As well, youth who report higher ratings of positive mental health have lower incidences of problematic substance use than their peers^{iv}. Further, OPH provides evidence-informed interventions such as parent education, early childhood and school-based education in resiliency and coping skills, anti-stigma programs, and suicide awareness and prevention, all of which have been shown to provide societal benefits as well as yield return on investment ratios ranging from \$1.80 to \$17.07 for every dollar invested in these initiatives^v. OPH also reaches adults in workplaces through education and skill building activities to create mentally safe and healthy workplaces.

While the opioid crisis sparked a conversation in our community about problematic substance use and poor mental health – specifically within our youth population - there are many others in our community who live with poor mental health and mental illness, which continue to be significant public health issues:

- There are approximately 79 deaths by suicide every year (2011-2015 average) with approximately 10% of suicides (per year) occurring among youth aged 15-24 years^{vi}.
- 14% (n=1,374) of postpartum mothers report a mental health concern during pregnancy, including anxiety and depression.^{vii}
- Seventeen percent of grade 7 to 12 students in Ottawa reported poor mental health and one in four students reported visiting a mental health professional at least once in the previous year.^{viii}

- 10% of residents age 19 and over report having been diagnosed with a mood disorder such as depression, dysthymia, bipolar disorder or mania and 8% report an anxiety disorder such as a phobia, obsessive-compulsive or panic disorder.^{ix}
- 21% of Canadians (aged 18 years and older) with a mental health problem report being affected by negative opinions or unfair treatment due to their mental health problem.^x
- 73% of Canadians aged 15 years and older with an unmet mental health care need cited personal circumstances as a barrier to meeting their care. Personal circumstances included: didn't know how or where to get this kind of help; haven't gotten around to it yet; job interfered; didn't have confidence in health care system or social services; couldn't afford to pay; insurance didn't cover; afraid of what others would think; and other.^{xi}
- Alcohol costs at least \$24.5 million per year in direct healthcare costs related to paramedic responses, ED visits, hospitalizations and community or residential treatment programs.^{xii}
- In 2015, 48 Ottawa residents died from unintentional drug overdose; 60% (29) of these were due to opioids and fentanyl was involved in 14 deaths.^{xiii}
- Approximately 1/3 of Ottawa residents (29.2% \pm 3.5%) over the age of 18 who had worked in the past 6 months report that most days at work were quite a bit or extremely stressful.^{xiv}

Provincial Context

While the stigma of mental health continues to decrease, the provincial government has sought to implement a population health approach to addressing mental health. This is demonstrated in the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care's recently released modernized Public Health Standards. As an indication that mental health is a critical area of focus for public health, extending beyond an issue for our health care system, the new Ontario Public Health Standards include, for the first time, program standards with respect to Mental Health Promotion and suicide prevention. This population health approach to mental health can help contribute to better mental health outcomes in our community and aligns well with the provincial government's *Bill 41, Patient's First Act 2016*. This will contribute to collaborations across the health care system in areas of surveillance, monitoring, reporting, as well as promotion and protection, which can contribute to addressing mental health and problematic substance use in our

community. While it is important to note that mental health promotion interventions are not expected to cure or treat serious mental illness^{xv}, they can contribute towards raised awareness, increased acceptance, stigma reduction, increased help-seeking (the earlier we get help for any health issue the better), and prevent and reduce harms from problematic substance use and suicide. Public health focuses on monitoring community mental health, influencing the determinants of mental health and strengthening partnerships in order to contribute to positive mental health in Ottawa.

To further advance public health's role and contribution to mental health promotion, Ottawa Public Health co-developed and is co-chairing the Ontario Community of Practice of Mental Health in Public Health. This Community of Practice, which is coordinated by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, will provide knowledge exchange to support the expansion of mental health promotion in public health across the province. This work will allow public health units to coordinate efforts across the Province, to share and exchange best practices, and to collaborate in monitoring and surveillance of mental health data and trends. Public health units can also respond to emerging issues related to mental health and problematic substance use in a timely and coordinated manner.

DISCUSSION

In the past year, to continue its 'upstream' work, OPH has continued to work closely with many community partners, people with lived experience, and residents in Ottawa to contribute to a mentally healthy community by focusing on mental health awareness and stigma reduction, creating a more resilient community and suicide prevention. An update on progress from each Strategic Initiative is included in Supporting Document 1.

Mental Health Awareness and Stigma Reduction

Research shows that early identification and intervention significantly increases positive mental health outcomes and reduces hospitalization^{xvi}. However, stigma and discrimination are barriers that keep people from seeking help when they are experiencing poor mental health, mental illness or addictions.

OPH, in partnership with Bell Let's Talk, developed and disseminated five videos focused on mental health awareness and stigma reduction. These videos and accompanying activity guide, entitled "How to Talk about Your Mental Health", "Reducing Stigma", "Building Resilience", "Caring for Yourself, the Caregiver", and "Building Social Connections", seek to help community partners, workplaces and teachers initiate discussions and take action to promote positive mental health. The

activity guides include practical and tangible activities focused on helping people support themselves and others, and where to get support when needed. Getting people professional support as early as possible, regardless of the issue, is an important objective. With 13% of Ottawa high school students experiencing thoughts of suicide^{xvii}, and 70% of these students unaware of where to turn for support, these new resources will contribute to youth's knowledge of where, why and how to connect with a trusted peer, adult or health professional for further support.

Focusing on specific populations that may face additional barriers in accessing mental health services, OPH has strengthened partnerships with settlement agencies, organizations and community groups working with immigrant, refugee and ethno-cultural populations in relation to mental health promotion. In partnership with these groups, OPH has developed and implemented workshops to reach the city's diverse and often vulnerable population. These workshops foster a dialogue about mental health, how to access services, combat stigma, challenge taboos and build coping strategies. In Ottawa, immigration has been responsible for 80% of the city's population growth^{xviii}. Settling into a new country, adapting to a new culture, dealing with the loss of social networks, underemployment and discrimination are just a few factors that increase their risk of developing poor mental health and problematic substance use. OPH seeks to work in partnership with these agencies to address some of the root causes of developing poor mental health in these populations.

Creating a More Resilient Community

The second area of focus addresses the environment in which we live. OPH has sought to create a more resilient community by addressing social norms relating to alcohol, a safe approach to prescription medication, and to support mentally healthy workplaces.

Building Mentally Healthy Workplaces

In Ottawa, there are more than half a million people in the workplace, and employees spend the majority of their waking hours at work. Literature has shown there is an economic return on investment when comprehensive workplace health promotion programs and stress management projects are implemented at the individual and organizational levels^{xix}. For every dollar spent on mental health and wellness, \$9 is saved in decreased absenteeism^{xx}. As a result, the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard) was developed and launched in 2013. The standard aims to put the importance of mental health and safety in the workplace at the same level as physical health and safety. To address mental health in the workplace and to respond to local needs, OPH completed a situational assessment

of workplaces. Local workplaces identified mental health, specifically stress, work-life balance, and depression as the top health issues. Accordingly, OPH focused on helping workplace intermediaries implement the Standard.

In collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, OPH expanded the have THAT talk video series by developing thirteen additional videos, and a facilitator's guide to support the workplaces in addressing the thirteen psychosocial factors of the Standard. With the support of Bell Let's Talk, OPH has engaged numerous Ottawa workplaces to incorporate the videos into their workplace training and on their websites, promote mentally healthy coping strategies and refer their employees for timely access to appropriate community support services.

Reducing Harms from Prescription Medications

In June 2016, OPH highlighted that prescription-type opioid pain relievers are misused more than most illegal drugs in Ottawa as they relate to inappropriate prescribing, dispensing and misuse of opioids.^{xxi} Since June, OPH has sought to reduce harms from prescription opioids, with a specific focus on supporting medical professionals and parents by: making recommendations on prescription guidelines; initiating discussions with partners on opportunities for local collaboration; and launching the "Secure Your Meds" awareness campaign.

Working Towards a Culture of Alcohol Moderation

OPH has also sought to reduce harms associated with excessive alcohol consumption through the dissemination of the Status of Alcohol in Ottawa [report](#), which highlighted the effects of alcohol's reach beyond the individual. Since November, OPH has engaged community partners to build momentum in support of evidence based policy options on this topic.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide can affect people of all ages and backgrounds. Unfortunately, stigma continues to surround this subject. This prevents people from seeking support when experiencing thoughts of suicide, and it keeps people from supporting others when warning signs are present. The provision of suicide prevention training is one of the ways in which OPH is working to prevent suicides and connect people with support. Such training includes: identification of risk factors; offering support in a safe and caring way; and connecting friends/family to further support.

Working with over 55 partner agencies and those with lived and living experience, OPH contributes to suicide prevention through evidence based education, training and awareness workshops in schools and workplaces, with community partners, and with media on safe and responsible reporting of suicide. OPH also provides post-suicide supports in the community, and supports an evidence based clinical program for children, youth and families. Through this multifaceted approach, OPH works with partners at the Community Suicide Prevention Network and the Ottawa Suicide Prevention Coalition to make Ottawa a City safer from suicides.

Next steps

Over the next year, OPH will continue to work on all six strategic initiatives, with an increased focus on stigma reduction and reducing problematic substance use, by:

- Building capacity among teachers and other school staff to discuss mental health with youth by adapting the have THAT talk activity guide to be used in schools;
- Enhancing outreach, using a health equity lens, to specifically target priority sectors and workplaces that employ vulnerable workers and providing safeTALK sessions to non-profit organizations; and
- Developing and releasing a local report highlighting the state of Ottawa residents' mental health and well-being and identifying potential recommendations for improving mental health in our community.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

The purpose of this report is administrative in nature therefore no public consultation is required.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risks have been considered in the writing of this report and are being managed by OPH through appropriate mitigation strategies.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

Accessibility impacts were considered in the writing of this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Ottawa Public Health Progress on Fostering Mental Health in our
Community

DISPOSITION

Staff will continue to update the Board on strategic initiatives, as appropriate.

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- ⁱⁱ Knapp, M., McDaid, D., & Parsonage, M. (2011). Mental health promotion and prevention: the economic case. London, U.K: Department of Health. Retrieved from <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/LSEEnterprise/pdf/PSSRUfeb2011.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Smith, J.P., & Smith, G.C. (2010). Long-term economic costs of psychological problems during childhood. *Social Science & Medicine*, 71 (1), 110–115
- ^{iv} Ottawa School-based Substance Abuse Program-Evaluation Report. 2013. Ottawa Network for Education.
- ^v Roberts, G., & Grimes, K. (2011). Return on investment: Mental health promotion and mental illness prevention. Canadian Policy Network at the University of Western Ontario and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Retrieved from https://secure.cihi.ca/free_products/roi_mental_health_report_en.pdf
- ^{vi} Deaths by suicide in Ottawa, 2003-2015. Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, data extracted November 16, 2016.
- ^{vii} Ottawa Public Health. (2017). Mental health concerns during pregnancy among Ottawa postpartum women, 2015. BORN Ontario. Date extracted: April 26, 2017.
- ^{viii} Ottawa Public Health. (2014). Ottawa student drug use and health report, 2014.
- ^{ix} Ottawa Public Health. (2017). Prevalence of mood and anxiety disorders. Canadian Community Health Survey 2013-14. Statistics Canada.
- ^x Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention. Positive mental health surveillance indicator framework: Quick statistics, adults (18 years of age and older), Canada, 2016 Edition. Ottawa (ON): Public Health Agency of Canada; 2016.
- ^{xi} Sunderland, A., & Findlay, L. C. (2013). Perceived need for mental health care in Canada: Results from the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health. *Health Rep*, 24(9), 3-9. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2013009/article/11863-eng.pdf>
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- ^{xiii} Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, extracted December 2, 2016. Analyzed by Epidemiology Team, Ottawa Public Health.
- ^{xiv} Ottawa Public Health. (2015). 2015 Ottawa Population Health Survey - Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System. Retrieved from <http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/public-health/health-statistics-and-reports#rapid-risk-factor-surveillance-system-rrfss>
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