

**Mood Disorders** Society of Canada  
Société pour les **troubles de l'humeur** du Canada

# IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CANADIANS AFFECTED BY MOOD DISORDERS



# ABOUT THE MOOD DISORDERS SOCIETY OF CANADA

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) has evolved to become one of Canada's best-connected mental health NGOs with a demonstrated track record for forging and maintaining meaningful, trusted and sustained partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors throughout Canada.

At MDSC, we are very proud that our work includes allyship and direct leadership involvement of persons with lived experience (PWLE) in all that we do.

MDSC strives to improve access to treatment, inform research, shape program development and government policies, and to improve the quality of life for people affected by mood disorders.

MDSC's public educational resources, workplace programs, anti-stigma campaign and activities, peer and trauma supports and services, health care and professional educational development, and our extensive military, first responders and Veterans programs have a direct positive impact on the lives of Canadians, their families, caregivers and our communities.



# THE LEADING CAUSE OF DISABILITY IN CANADA: MENTAL ILLNESS.

# ACT OUR NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS



## ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGN

When you see the little blue elephant, you know it's a safe place to speak about any mental health issues you or your family may be going through.



## MDSC NATIONAL DEFEAT DEPRESSION CAMPAIGN

MDSC's Defeat Depression campaign helps Canadians support their local mental health organizations, and national resources, such as MIRA.

To date, over 25,000 dedicated participants and donors have donated over \$3 million to mental health resources nationally.

This funding provides direct financial aid to a variety of mental health organizations and initiatives, supporting programs and resources for the increasing number of Canadians impacted by mental illness.

**25,000+**  
SUPPORTERS ACROSS CANADA

MORE THAN  
**\$3 MILLION**

DONATED TO LOCAL MENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES NATIONALLY

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN'S IMPACT AT [DEFEATDEPRESSION.CA](https://defeatdepression.ca)

## ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM ANTI-STIGMA PROGRAM AND RESOURCES

Elephant in the Room (EITR) is a national anti-stigma campaign designed to address the stigma associated with mental illness.

When you display your blue elephant, you show that you care about the wellness of others and demonstrate a safe place to talk about mental illness, without anyone having fear of being stigmatized.

AN EASY-TO IMPLEMENT ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGN THAT IS CHANGING PERCEPTIONS, INCREASING COMPASSION AND ALTERING ACTIONS.

When you see the little blue elephant, you know it's a safe place for you to speak about mental health issues you or your family may be going through. You will be treated with respect and dignity and find the support and understanding from a person who cares. Together, the right steps forward will be found.

EITR is now being used by tens of thousands of Canadians in many hundreds of organizations, government departments, police forces, school boards, Universities, Colleges, first responders, hospitals, and businesses. Use EITR to change the culture of your office and make mental health a priority.



# EDUCATE

As part of our public education resource series, we are proud to offer a variety of resource booklets and websites that have a combined distribution of well over 3.7 million copies.



## DEPRESSIONHURTS.CA

The MDSC depressionhurts.ca website is a significant resource for persons impacted by depression including their families, caregivers and health care providers. It contains in-depth information, tools and supports and is available in four languages - English, French, Chinese and Punjabi. With 500 visitors each day we will soon be seeing 4 million visitors.



## OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES (OSI) AND OTHER TRAUMATIC STRESS: THERAPIES AND TREATMENT FOR VETERANS

This educational resource describes how OSIs are comprised of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders and it also briefly describes other potential sources of OSIs. In delivering this resource to Canadians, our goal is to offer an easy-to-read resource that provides knowledge and links to assist Veterans and their families.



## WHAT IS BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Now in its third edition, this resource looks at the moods and emotions that can become a roller coaster ride of wild highs and devastating lows for someone with Bipolar. It provides insight into this medical condition that involves changes in brain function leading to dramatic mood swings.



## CANNABIS AND YOU

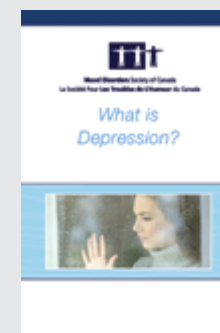
MDSC strives to provide up to date information on subjects that affect our mental health. As recreational cannabis is now legal in Canada, there are risks and benefits that we all need to be aware of. MDSC does not take any position on cannabis, that is your individual choice to make

VISIT MDSC.CA TO ACCESS THESE MATERIALS



## QUICK FACTS ON MENTAL ILLNESS AND ADDICTIONS IN CANADA

Now in its fourth edition, this comprehensive, evidence-based document contains important statistics relating to mental illnesses and addictions.



## WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Through this book, we provide easy-to-understand information on the different types of depression, its symptoms/causes and treatment options. Depression is a serious illness and affects millions of Canadians.



## MEDICATIONS AND YOU

When you or a family member/friend experience mental health issues, often medications are part of the recovery process. Through this book, it is our hope we can assist by providing you with easy to understand information on medications.



## WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE BOOK

Our *Workplace Mental Health Guide* continues to be an incredibly valuable resource for Canadians and is becoming a staple for business, organizations and government departments across the country.

## OTHER MDSC MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Videos, guides and infographics are also available on: What better Sleep feels like, Depression in the Workplace, What Better Feels Like with many more topics.



# CONTINUING EDUCATION

MDSC and our stakeholder partners have developed a wide array of professional continuing education programs for Physicians, Nurses, Health Care providers, Lawyers, Judges, and Law Students as well as Research Training for Persons with Lived Experience of Mental Illness.



## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

This program was developed in a partnership between MDSC, the Canadian Bar Association and Bell Let’s Talk.

This national program focuses on training lawyers, judges and law students across Canada to increase knowledge of mood disorders, PTSD/trauma, causes, symptoms and treatment options; how to foster positive prevention strategies and recovery strategies of depression, anxiety and stress; how to address and reduce stigmatizing behaviours and attitudes, and offer support and resources for maintaining wellness within the legal profession.

## TRAINING ON RESEARCH PROCESSES FOR PWLE

People with lived experience (PWLE) of depression can be invaluable allies in all aspects of research - from the development of the proposal, to collecting and analyzing data, to knowledge translation and dissemination phases.

The objective of this education is to prepare people with lived experience participants with the knowledge to actively participate in a research team and work effectively with depression researchers and other mental health professionals.

Under the management of the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, this education curriculum was developed by MDSC and adapted for online delivery by Memorial University.

## NATIONAL ANTI-STIGMA TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CANADIAN NURSES AND OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

MDSC and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) collaborated to develop an e-learning program for Canadian nurses aimed at confronting stigma and discrimination in the profession through the provision of a national training initiative dealing specifically with stigma and discrimination.

Through this national awareness and training anti-stigma program, MDSC and its partners, including the CNA along with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), are making a significant and positive impact on the delivery of health services leading to the increased well-being of Canadian communities.

## PTSD TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

MDSC is proud to work with the four Health Authorities of Newfoundland and Labrador, and project co-sponsor MHCC in creating a program for the province which focuses on the occurrence of PTSD linked to trauma encountered by health care providers such as Nurses, Doctors, Paramedics, and emergency room staff.

The innovative program explains the existence of, and prevention for, PTSD and will assist all staff working within health care settings reduce risks of trauma and will support wellness maintenance. Becoming knowledgeable about the illness and recognizing signs to take appropriate steps to mitigate the risks through this program will benefit all health care providers in the province. Working together, for better healthcare.

**85%** OF CANADIANS DEALING WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS APPROACH THEIR FAMILY PHYSICIAN FIRST



# SUPPORT

Mood Disorders Society of Canada recognizes the vital importance of caring for and supporting persons experiencing mental illness. We recognize that these illnesses have a significant effect on the individual directly living with it, and that it also directly impacts family members, caregivers and friends as well.

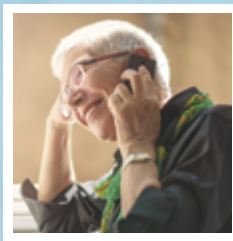


## MIRA THE MENTAL HEALTH VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

MIRA the Mental Health Virtual Assistant uses an AI-enhanced chatbot, to assist those impacted by mental illness & their families to navigate mental health programs & resources. It provides this assistance through an empathic conversational interaction with users enabling MIRA to provide resources that match their individualized needs & preferences.

This collaborative project, led by MDSC, brings together the University of Alberta, Dalhousie University, APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health, University of Saskatchewan, Western University, AMII, AI4Society, Mental Health Research Canada, the Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions, and International Indigenous Health Research and Training Centre.

Visit: [MyMIRA.ca](https://MyMIRA.ca)



## IMPROVING VETERANS WELLNESS – SUPPORTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

It is well known that social engagement and connecting to others improves our sense of overall well-being. Throughout our lives we may go through a time of not feeling connected. This program has three options to help Veterans and Family Members of Veterans if they experience this issue:

1. One-on-One companionship phone calls offer a safe, private and trust-based social conversation
2. Peer Support Training – is a two-day course that is delivered virtually by MDSC's Peer and Trauma Support Services (PATSS) team.
3. Mental Health Resources – are available in a variety of formats on various topics.

Visit: [improvingveteranswellness.ca](https://improvingveteranswellness.ca)



## FORUM

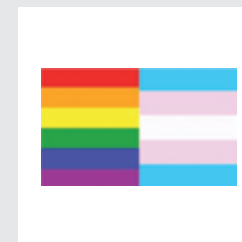
MDSC provides an online discussion forum for people who are experiencing mental health issues and their families to obtain support and information. This provides a safe place for people to share their experiences and concerns. With over 2,900 discussion threads and 36,200 posts, our forum is one of the most widely accessed in Canada.

Visit: [mdsc.ca/forum](https://mdsc.ca/forum)



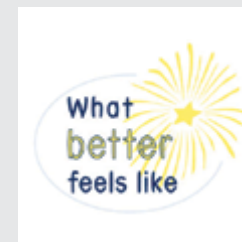
## MDSC PEER AND TRAUMA SUPPORT SYSTEMS (PATSS)

MDSC has an exceptional team of Special Advisors with years of lived experience, peer support and mental health professionals experienced in addressing trauma. The PATSS team provides professional Peer Support presentations, training and guidance in the development of Peer Support programs, Peer selection, and ongoing support for peer teams for Canadians. With guidance and advice from the Peer and Trauma Support Systems Team, organizations can meet their needs for Trauma Support, Peer Selection, Training and Development within their organizations and workplaces.



## WORKSHOPS AND PEER TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF THE LGBTQ2S COMMUNITIES

Peer and Trauma Support Services expanded to provide peer support training for the LGBTQ2S community based on the successful MDSC Peer and Trauma Support Services model. There is no substitute for being among people who are going through the same things as you are. Peer support is intended to complement clinical care that may already be provided to community members. It is well documented that peer support group members can offer greater feelings of empathy and connectedness than what occurs in a typical patient-therapist relationship.



## WHAT BETTER FEELS LIKE

Just as recognizing the signs and symptoms of depression is important to enable people to seek out treatment, it is equally key to recognize the signs of recovery or 'what better feels like.' MDSC embarked on a project to learn from others who have "been there," to understand what better feels like to them. Here, ten people who had experienced depression were interviewed to answer questions like: What is depression like? What are the signs of getting better? What helped and what didn't? And what does better feel like? The results... two documents and several videos in the words of those who have lived experience.



# ADVOCATE

MDSC advocates for policy improvements to address mental illness and, in its national advocacy role, presents formal briefs and positions before Parliamentary Committees, and other bodies and initiatives.

We work collaboratively with all health care organizations and stakeholders in our mutual quest to improve the lives of people who experience mental health issues. We support initiatives which address gaps in services and resources.



## NATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NYAC)

The MDSC National Youth Advisory Committee is a network of students from colleges and universities across the country, aimed at engaging young adults in mental health issues facing their demographic. As the future leaders of society, MDSC seeks to hear from young adults, to identify where there are potential gaps in supports and to assist them in acquiring the resources they need. The mission is to engage about mental health issues & consult on current MDSC initiatives, to formulate resources. Member activities will include policy discussion, promoting peer-based mental health resources and programs and to promote and share peer-based mental health resources and programs within their networks.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

After in-depth consultations with 48 regional organizations from all parts of the country, MDSC released a roundtable report which provides a clear view of what organizations are experiencing as they serve Canadians.

The roundtables aimed to learn from all regions which mental health programs and services they are delivering are seeing the biggest positive impact, what challenges their groups are experiencing in providing ongoing services, and their strategies for system service improvements to alleviate barriers to care provision and increase access to treatments and therapies.

# RESEARCH

Our partnerships bring together extensive experiences and knowledge, while working collaboratively on effective research to improve the lives of persons with lived experience, their families, caregivers and communities.

## ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

MDSC works on a continual basis with a wide variety of Research Institutes and organizations. We prioritize research activities that will lead to improvements to the lives of persons impacted by mental illness and mental health issues. Brain health research is a core focus of our organization.

We have strong affiliations with research organizations such as Research Canada and a close working partnership with Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC), working together to advance brain health research and promote mental wellness in Canada. We have ongoing multi-year research initiatives with a collaboration of Universities, and support the efforts of the Canadian Brain Research Strategy. As an organization that embraces collaborations, MDSC often acts as a conduit for new working partnerships.

These collaborations focus on advancing evidence-based mental health research that is problem-solving and usable in the real world. We promote allyship and innovative opportunities for joint projects that include persons with lived experience, their families, and caregivers in Canada.

## PAN-CANADIAN HEALTHCARE SURVEYS

The Canadian healthcare system continues to critically under perform for individuals with mental illness, according to MDSC's pan-Canadian surveys of the country's mental health community.

Results of the national surveys clearly illustrate that Canadians are calling for increased focused actions and change on systemic issues identified in Canada's mental healthcare system.

The issues highlighted in these report are considered critical areas for government focus, with particular emphasis on increasing access to mental healthcare professionals across Canada.

# OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Collaboration is a core foundational MDSC operational principle. The following national initiatives are examples of collaborative partnerships.



### WORK WITH US

MDSC collaborated with the Arthritis Society on a ground breaking three-year project that addressed depression and arthritis in the workplace. The project provides information to both employers and employees on how they can support workplace inclusion.

The initiative tackled the co-morbidity of mood disorders and chronic diseases nationally. This initiative supports Canadians living with depression and/or arthritis by giving them the tools they need to actively self- manage, lead healthier lives and fully engage in work.



### CANADIAN DEPRESSION RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION NETWORK (CDRIN)

MDSC partnered with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and The Royal's Research Institute, the University of Ottawa Institute Of Mental Health Research (IMHR), and other partners to develop a national research network of 53 academic institutions with a national network of Lived Experienced organizations and leaders.

CDRIN was a collaborative cross-Canada network with the mission to create and share knowledge that leads to more effective prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment of depression and depression-linked illnesses and leading ultimately to a reduction in stigma.

The network supported more than 80 research institute clinicians in research of depression. In collaboration with other research agencies and governments, these professionals worked towards developing a comprehensive research plan with a special focus on suicide prevention and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) early detection and intervention.

### TRANSITIONS TO COMMUNITIES

#### TRANSITIONS TO COMMUNITIES NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

MDSC developed and delivered a three-year project to support Veterans transitioning into civilian employment, it also included support of their mental wellness. Through providing skills training and the support needed to obtain and retain employment, this project had a direct impact on the lives of our citizens.

Participants developed their personal and professional skills gradually, through seven week-long workshops. As a result of this program, participants obtained employment or returned to school.

MDSC worked with mental health organizations, stakeholder groups, and employers to deliver 48 programs, over a three-year period, in Calgary, Montréal and Toronto.



#### MDSC WORKING INTERNATIONALLY WITH APEC

The APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health is the coordinating centre for APEC's work in mental health, bringing together government, public, and private sectors to share, develop, scale up and evaluate innovative evidence- and practice-based programs for mental health.

The APEC Digital Hub is hosted in Canada at the University of British Columbia (UBC), in collaboration with the University of Alberta (UA). MDSC was a proud founding core partner in this endeavour. The APEC Digital Hub has grown extensively and has expanded to a great many partners across the Asia-Pacific region that collaborate and contribute to its activities and resources.

The APEC Digital Hub serves as a digital center to advance APEC's goal of strengthening mental health and mitigating the impact of mental illness in the APEC-Pacific region.

### PARTNERS

MDSC is a proud member of the Mental Health Research Canada, and is also a member of Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery. MDSC is the only Canadian Associate Member of GAMIAN (Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks).

Mental Health  
Research Canada



Research Canada:  
An Alliance for Health Discovery



Global Alliance of Mental Illness  
Advocacy Networks





MDSC STRIVES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO TREATMENT, INFORM RESEARCH,  
SHAPE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES, TO IMPROVE  
THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MOOD DISORDERS.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

At the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, we strive to support the needs of Canadians impacted by mental illness. Without ongoing core funding, we rely on generous donations from sponsors, private industry and the general public to assist us in this work.

If you would like to support our efforts, you can make a donation on our website.



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