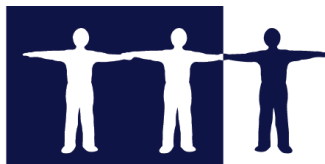


**Written Pre-Budget Submission Consultation
Prepared for the Department of Finance for Budget 2025-2026**

By: Mood Disorders Society of Canada
March 10, 2025



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

Summary of Recommendations

1. That the government invest in targeted support for community-focused mental health organizations by allocating funding for solutions-based programs and services to address the serious issue of mental illness and substance use disorders.
2. That the federal government invest \$5 million over the next four years to support capacity building of community mental health organizations by providing funding to the Canadian Community Mental Health Network (CCMHN), which is a pan-Canadian network of community mental health organizations.

Summary

That the government invest in targeted support for community-focused mental health organizations by allocating funding for solutions-based programs and services to address the serious issue of mental illness and substance use disorders.

Introduction

Mental health is integral to our overall well-being, touching every aspect of life, including physical, financial, and social aspects. Mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, substance use disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), affect millions of Canadians directly and have far-reaching socioeconomic impacts on families, social groups, workplaces, healthcare systems, and the economy.

By understanding the critical role community mental health organizations play in providing mental health care services and supports to millions of Canadians, the federal government can help alleviate health system burdens in Canada. The following sections outline the key recommendations urging the federal government to provide support to Canadians in their local communities.

Recommendation: That the government invest in targeted support for community-focused mental health organizations by allocating funding for solutions-based programs and services to address the serious issue of mental illness and substance use disorders.

Federal spending must be designed to make a measurable difference in the lives of Canadians through local solutions. This includes:

- Reallocating federal funding, from other resources such as the Public Health Agency of Canada, to better support the capacity of mental health organizations nationally.
- Mental health care urgently requires transformation with technological advances that support access to timely, accurate, and effective mental health care. Using innovative system tools to improve diagnosis and treatment pathways, such as those from Rapids Health, can benefit the mental health community as a whole. The RAPIDS tool is a Decision Support System that facilitates early diagnosis and provides effective treatment planning for mental health disorders.
- Increased opportunities for collaboration between organizations on a pan-Canadian level

Mental illness and substance use disorders are not adequately addressed and continue to rise in Canada, and our healthcare systems are not equipped to handle the current level of demand. This has led to significant strains on both service entryways and the people that work there, which means that more and more Canadians are looking elsewhere for help. As a result, community mental health organizations have seen a flood of new patients or clients utilizing their services. These community-based organizations are stepping in to deliver resources, programs, services and coping tools to those seeking mental health support.

A designated, flexible segment of government funding for mental health organizations to access is essential to support their work. The government must support these organizations, recognizing the crucial role they provide in mental health care, and enabling organizations to strengthen their capacity.

What Canadians think:

- 76% of Canadians ranked access to community health services and supports as important or critically important. (MDSC 2022 Survey)
- 60% DO NOT believe that governments have made access to mental health care services in the community a priority since the beginning of the pandemic. (MDSC 2022 Survey)

How Community Mental Health Care Organizations Help

Community mental health groups are critically underfunded, leaving them unable to meet the growing demand for services, particularly for conditions like anxiety and depression. These organizations are also siloed and need to have a connecting network of similar groups throughout our country. A 2021 report highlights that over one-third of Canadians report unmet mental health needs, often due to funding and accessibility barriers. By better supporting and connecting these organizations, we can ensure all Canadians have timely and equitable access to essential mental health care.

Community mental health care encompasses a wide variety of programs, supports, and services designed to meet local mental health needs, delivered by local organizations. Community mental health programs and services provide:

- Mental health care and support;
- Psychological services
- Education and mental health training
- Distress and crisis response teams
- Peer supports and services
- Housing supports
- Workplace mental health training and supports

These services help to alleviate pressure on our overburdened health care systems.

- They not only help individuals avoid crises but also reduce the number of trips to emergency departments, helping to alleviate pressure on acute care services.
- By providing earlier access to publicly funded services, these programs can prevent the need for more costly and time-consuming interventions later.
- With wait times to see psychiatrists and psychologists that can be upwards of a year, these organizations fill the gaps in care and help get Canadians the support they need, when they need it.
- It helps prevent mental health problems from becoming more serious mental illnesses.

Recommendation: That the federal government invest \$5 million over the next four years to support capacity building of community mental health organizations by providing funding to the Canadian Community Mental Health Network (CCMHN), which is a pan-Canadian network of community mental health organizations.

The Canadian Community Mental Health Network CCMHN is a pan-Canadian collaboration of regional community mental health organizations dedicated to delivering high-quality and impactful mental health services. Members are Community Mental Health Organizations not currently affiliated with a national organization or entity, who have grown from the grassroots with an emphasis on serving their region while leveraging the leadership, knowledge, and its leadership includes People with Lived/Living Experience.

The CCMHN looks to empower mental health organizations to collaborate with health service providers, bridge gaps in care, support early or proactive mental health treatment, and assist Canadians while they wait for additional services. Furthermore, it strengthens the capacity of individual member organizations and the broader mental health sector by promoting the sharing of programs, resources, and knowledge to drive system-wide improvements. They do this through the following activities:

- 1. Facilitating a more unified and pan-Canadian approach** by bringing together many regional organizations under one collaborating umbrella network.
- 2. Strengthening and building strong community working collaborations** between mental health organizations and health care clinicians.
- 3. Supporting capacity building** in areas such as governance, operations, staff recruitment, retention, and training. This includes fostering research partnerships, offering research training for people with lived experience, and enhancing volunteer recruitment, training, and support.
- 4. Advancing research to enable evidence-based decision-making**, enhance service delivery, and bolster advocacy efforts to secure funding from a variety of sources, including public, private, and philanthropic sectors.
- 5. Knowledge and educational exchange** (including the establishment of a CCMHN Knowledge Hub, best practices sharing and evidence development, cross training, research advancement and promotion, and hosting an Annual CCMHN Conference)
- 6. Sustainability**, succession planning and funding security.

Capacity-building, sharing knowledge, experiences, and programs strengthen members' ability to serve their clients. CCMHN unifies stand-alone community-based organizations, fostering collaboration to address resource gaps and enhance mental health support across Canada. Community mental health organizations within our local communities and ridings often serve as the backbone of an overburdened mental health system. They provide essential, patient-centered care and support to individuals who face barriers to accessing mental health services due to:

- Prolonged Wait Times
- Financial Barriers
- Scarce Resources

Despite facing funding limitations, staffing shortages, and restricted access to essential resources, these organizations are profoundly dedicated to serving their communities. By providing funding support for CCMHN, the Network can better achieve its goals in directly addressing these challenges. By consolidating resources, offering training assets, and creating platforms for knowledge exchange, CCMHN not only alleviates the pressure on our mental healthcare system but also guarantees comprehensive support for those in need.

Despite facing challenges, such as financial constraints, staffing shortages, and limited access to vital resources such as medication, therapy spaces, and community support programs, community organizations remain steadfast in their dedication to serving their communities. By providing funding support for CCMHN, the Network can more effectively achieve its goals in directly addressing system challenges, alleviate the pressure on our already strained mental healthcare system and guarantee comprehensive, accessible, and culturally-sensitive support for those in need.

About Mood Disorders Society of Canada

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) aims to improve access to treatment, inform research, and shape program development and government policies to improve the quality of life for people affected by mood disorders. Formally incorporated in 2001, MDSC is one of Canada's best-connected mental health charities and has a demonstrated track record of forging meaningful and sustained partnerships and collaborations with the public, private, voluntary, and non-profit sectors throughout Canada. MDSC has led and managed many national projects in partnership with the Government of Canada and other partners.

Representing and led by people with lived experiences, MDSC is engaged in a wide range of initiatives and has taken a lead proactive role in public policy and program development in many capacities on the national stage.

References

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (2022). Mental Health Care System Survey Report Results. <https://mdsc.ca/research/2022-mental-health-care-system-study-report/#:~:text=The%20Mood%20Disorders%20Society%20of,Narrative%20Research%2C%20an%20independent%20firm.>