



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



Organization Overview

Improving the Quality of Life
for Canadians Impacted
by Mental Illness





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About MDSC

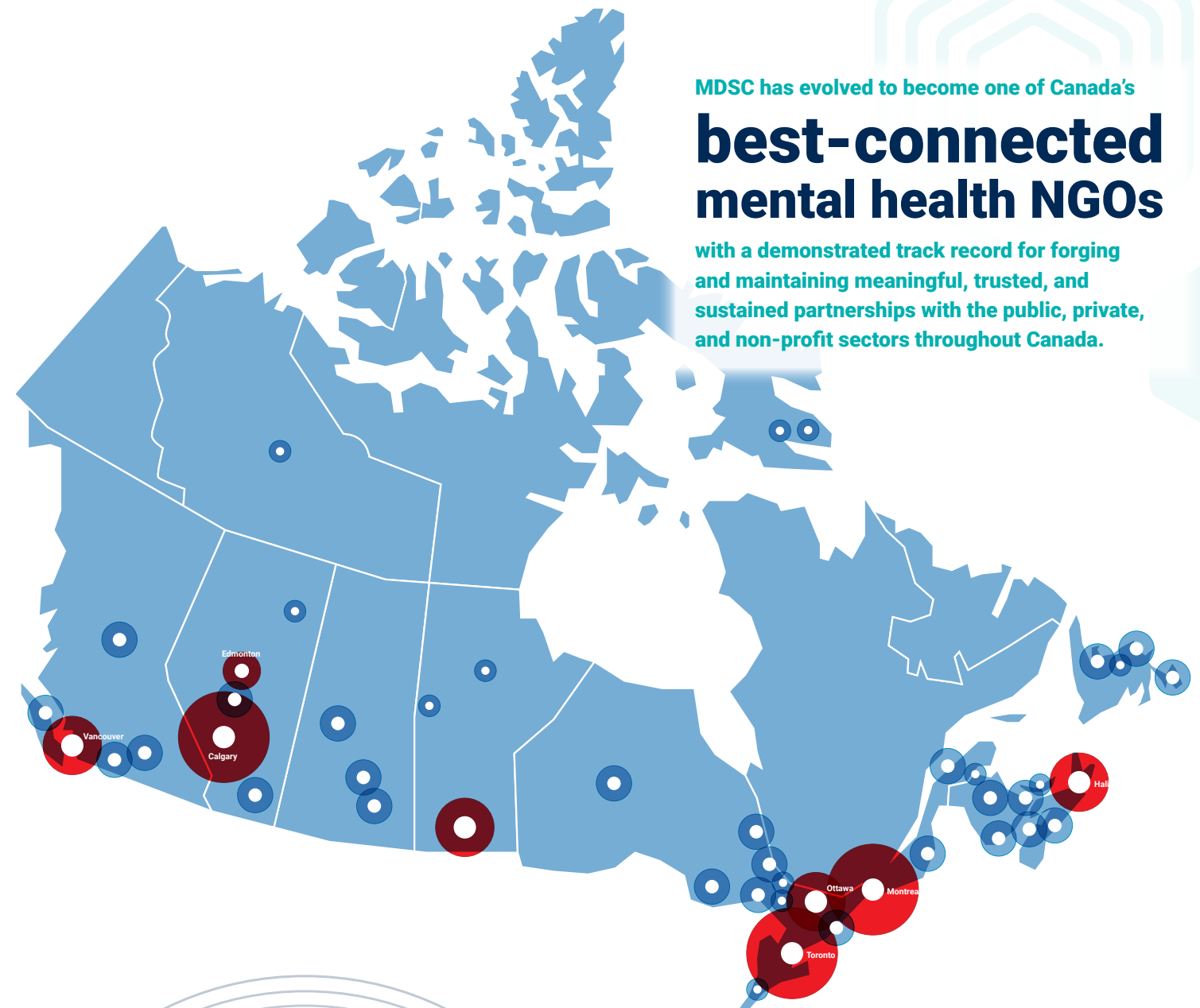
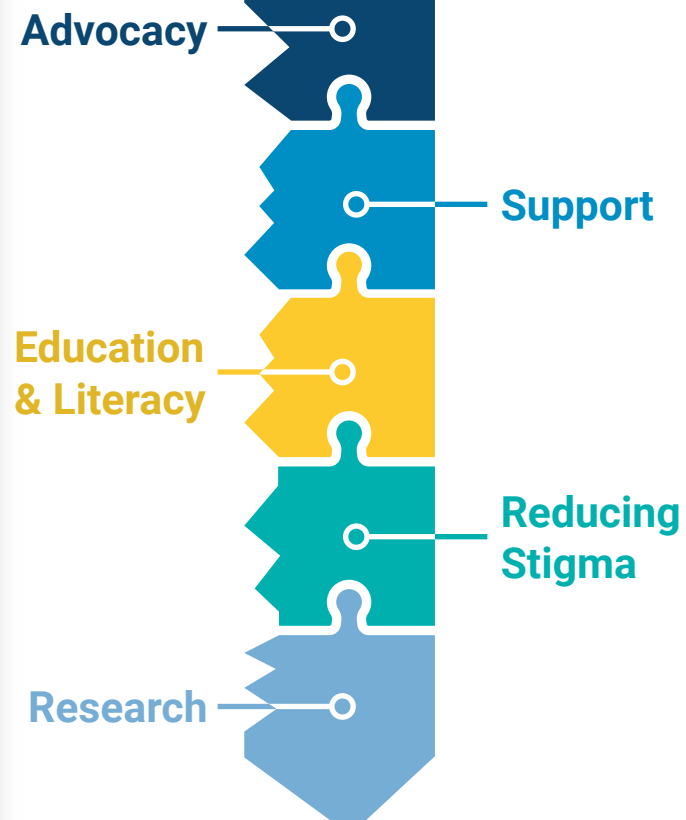
Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) was formally launched and incorporated in 2001 with the overall objective of providing people with mood disorders a strong, cohesive voice at the national level.

Mission

To improve the quality of life of Canadians impacted by mental illness so they can live the most fulfilling life possible.

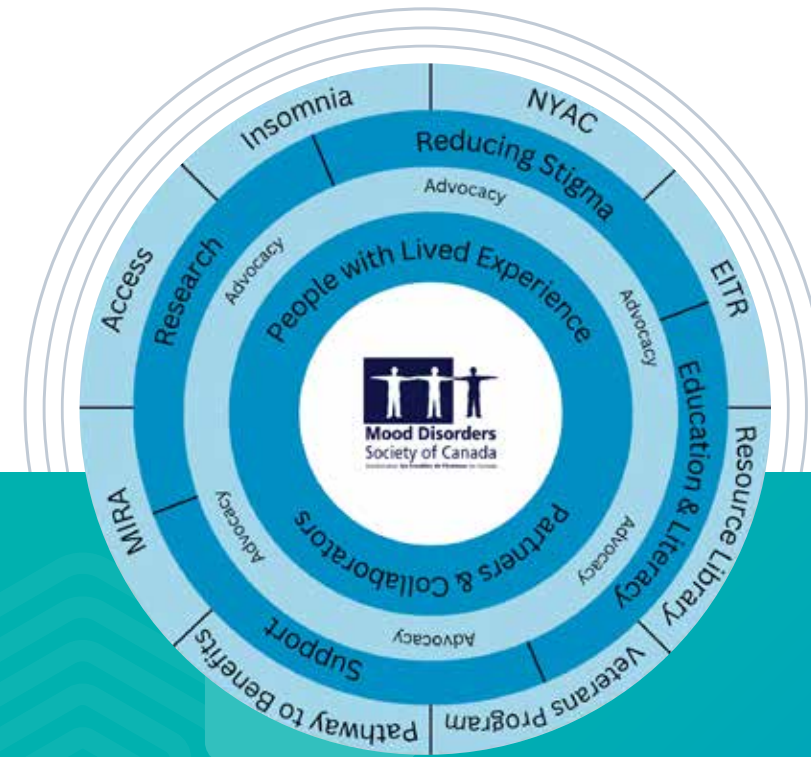


MDSC's **COMMITMENT TO MENTAL WELLNESS** is grounded in our mission driven mandates:



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.



We have developed over **390 National Partnerships** and provide services in every Province and Territory of Canada.

In collaboration with our community partners and grass-roots service providers – and always with the inclusion of Persons with Lived/Living Experience (PWLE) - MDSC identifies gaps in mental health services across Canada, and takes the lead in establishing new, innovative programs to help Canadians achieve mental wellness.



Mental Health Advocacy

Speak and Be Heard

MDSC believes that through greater collaboration, we can improve the mental healthcare system so that all Canadians can access the supports and programs that they need, when they need it, in the communities where they live. MDSC collaborates with government departments, healthcare providers, research institutes, and community mental health organizations to advance this effort.

We aim to create a unified voice for change, advocating for improved mental health care access and quality, and promoting mental wellness across the lifespan through:



Policy Improvement

To ensure that Canadians have access to the mental health care, supports and services they need, it is essential that governments make policy decisions that provide health care and programs that address the needs of their constituents. Oftentimes, rather than proactive policy decisions, these come about as a result of successful advocacy efforts by organizations such as MDSC. Each year, MDSC conducts extensive research on national priorities which involve community discussions, roundtables, and meetings with stakeholders, partners and our government relations team. This guides our deep understanding of the issues, and we mobilize this knowledge into action directly with decision makers and policy developers.

In addition to advocating for improved policy, MDSC also conducts targeted advocacy in areas such as better access to mental health medications, increased support for community mental healthcare organizations, and improved classroom and workplace mental health programming.

Access to Medications for Mental Illness

ADVOCACY | RESEARCH

MDSC leads a working group of industry leaders to make evidence-based recommendations for increased access to mental health medications and improved review processes to address blind spots and biases in psychiatric drug reviews. Following extensive research and consultation led by MDSC, our groundbreaking report *System Broken: How Public Drug Coverage is Failing Canadians with Mental Illness* was released in September 2024. Since that time, a groundswell of support for the initiative has led to a comprehensive Working Group of industry leaders who continue to consult, present and push the needle for better access to mental health medications. Notable accomplishments include working with Canada's Drug Agency (CDA-AMC) for the inclusion of PWLE and a Psychiatrist on the drug review committee, and presentation at the national CDA-AMC symposium which highlighted persistent blind spots and biases in psychiatric drug reviews, their real-world impact on people with lived experience, and the often underrecognized societal and caregiver burden.

The System Broken Report has had over 52 million reads, views and listens by Canadians from 46 different pieces of media coverage.

Canadian Community Mental Health Network (CCMHN)

ADVOCACY | RESEARCH

After in-depth consultations with 48 community mental health organizations from every province and territory in Canada in 2022, Mood Disorders Society of Canada developed a Roundtable Report with findings and recommendations. This report provided a clear view of what organizations are experiencing as they serve Canadians, and it shows that changes are needed. Based on the recommendations from report MDSC began to build the foundation of CCMHN.

In collaboration with CCMHN partners, MDSC continues to advocate for dedicated funding and resources to increase capacity and improve efficiency of community mental health organizations across Canada through shared resources, redundancy reduction and collaborative visions.



72% of community health organizations do not receive adequate funding to meet the needs of their community.



Support

In collaboration with our community partners and grass-roots service providers – and always with the inclusion of Persons with Lived/Living Experience (PWLE) - MDSC identifies gaps in mental health services across Canada, and takes the lead in establishing new, innovative programs to help Canadians achieve mental wellness.



Veterans Program

SUPPORT | EDUCATION & LITERACY

Since 2012, MDSC has been offering services and support to Canadian Veterans and their Family Members. MDSC Veteran Programs are offered at no cost to Canadian Veterans and Family Members Veterans and Family Members who wish to participate. The goal of our Veterans Program is to support participants' wellness, resiliency and post-traumatic growth, which will lead to improved mental health, community engagement and quality of life.

Our program is always evolving - with feedback from participants, MDSC continues to improve and enhance our services to Veterans and their Family Members for short and long-term support.

The core of our Veterans Program is our Peer & Trauma Support Systems (PATSS) workshops. Our PATSS workshops enable Veterans and their Family Members to better understand their traumatic experiences and provide them with knowledge and skills to assist other Veteran Community Members to develop coping skills and build resiliency. MDSC also offers additional self-paced educational courses and online seminars in Veterans Mental Health, as well as Companionship Calls to reduce isolation. MDSC also manages the Veteran Volunteer Hub, which matches Veterans with volunteer opportunities at participating like-minded organizations across Canada.



Pathway to Benefits

SUPPORT

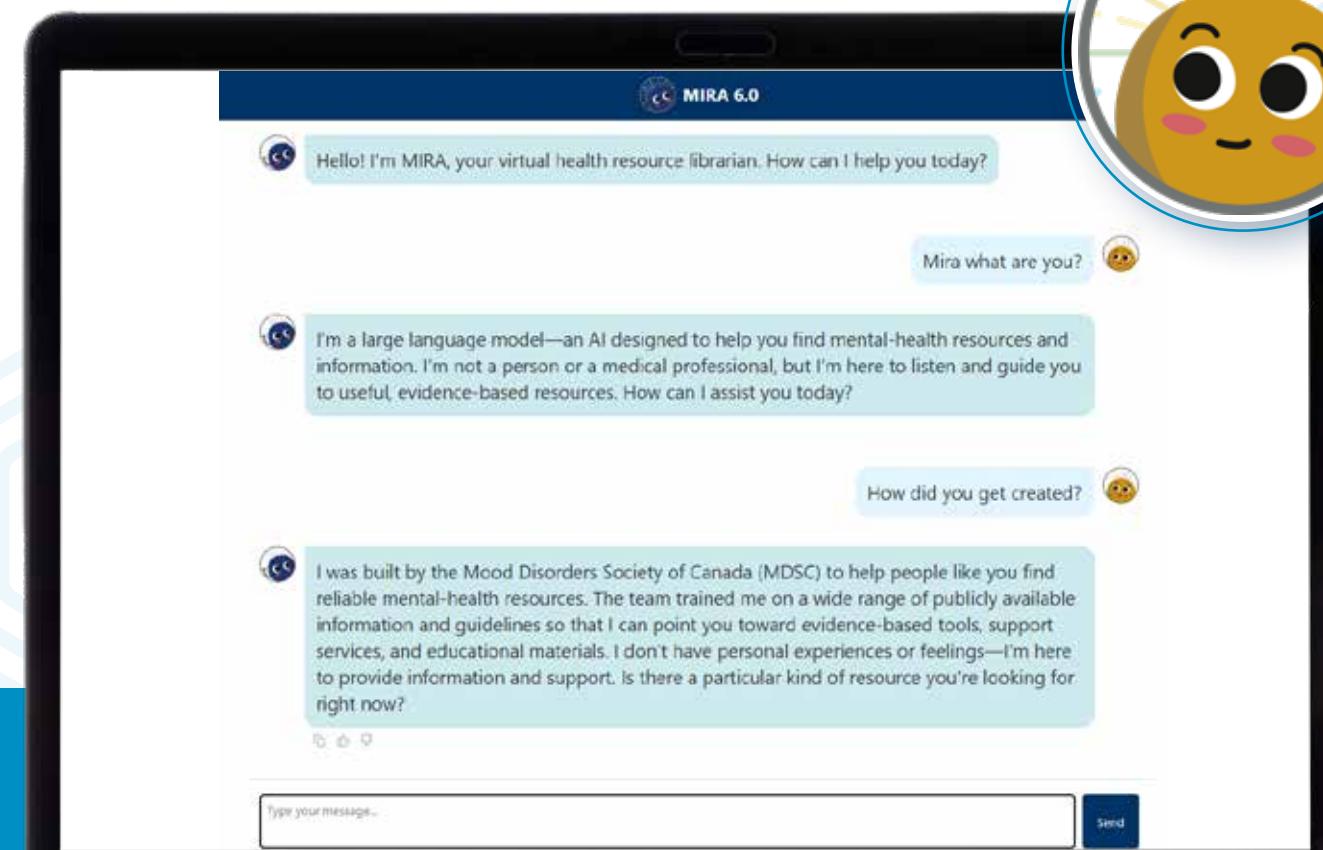
Pathway to Benefits is a free, national initiative led by Mood Disorders Society of Canada to help Canadians with disabilities and their families access the financial supports they are entitled to – but too often miss out on. Through a combination of one-on-one support, online resources, and peer guidance, the program simplifies the complex process of applying for disability benefits.



MIRA – Mental Health Information Resource Assistant

SUPPORT | RESEARCH

MIRA is an award-winning, free and anonymous AI navigational assistant that makes mental health support simple and accessible across Canada. MIRA was successfully launched thanks to vital partners such as the University of Alberta, Dalhousie University, University of Saskatchewan, and Western University, whose expertise in AI, psychiatry, Indigenous studies, and youth wellbeing ensures MIRA meets diverse needs with cultural sensitivity and real impact.





Education and Mental Health Literacy

Learning about mental health helps people understand, manage, and support emotional and psychological well-being, both for themselves and others. Having knowledge about mental health issues makes it easier for individuals to speak openly and seek help without fear of being labeled or excluded, and helps people know what to look for, so they can seek help sooner.

Mental health education teaches coping skills and resilience. People learn practical strategies like stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving that help them handle challenges in healthier ways.

MDSC offers a variety of educational programs and resources that empower people with knowledge, reduce fear and stigma, and improve overall well-being across society.

Insomnia

EDUCATION & LITERACY |

RESEARCH |

REDUCING STIGMA

Insomnia affects nearly 20% of Canadians, yet it is often overlooked, normalized, or left untreated. People living with insomnia often face barriers to timely diagnosis, appropriate care, and effective treatment, despite the condition's high prevalence and significant impact on quality of life. In response, in 2025 MDSC launched its Insomnia Awareness and Advocacy initiative, focused on education, awareness, and systems-level change to treatment and recognition.

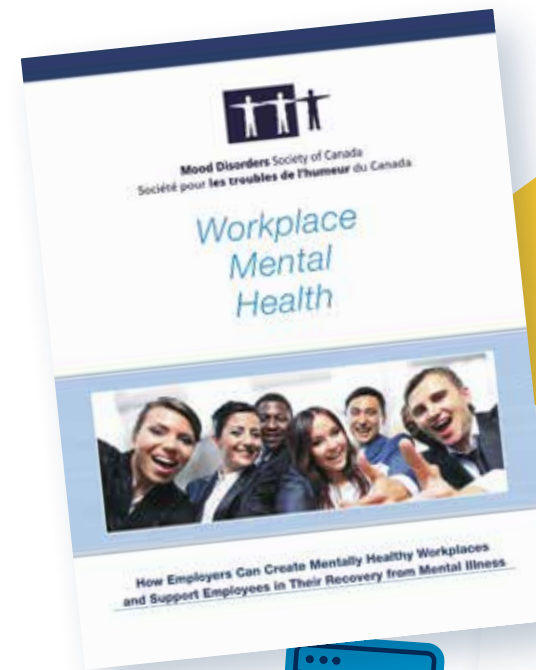
50% of Canadians will have had a mental illness before age 40¹.



Of all disability types, mental health related disabilities are the second most prevalent in Canada, and the number one disability type for youth.³

Educational Resources

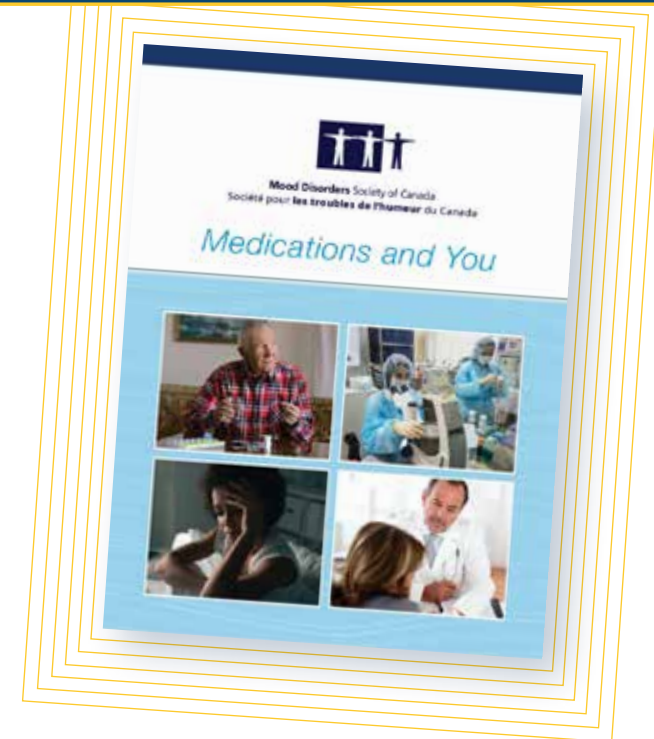
MDSC has an extensive library of educational resources. These materials are available in a variety of different formats that cover many areas, including anxiety, bipolar disorder, medications, depression, Operational Stress Injuries (OSI's), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sleep, plus the MDSC (Moderated) Chat Forum. All our reference materials are written in 'everyday language' and can be viewed online or downloaded



WRITTEN IN 'EVERYDAY LANGUAGE'



VIEW ONLINE OR DOWNLOAD!



In Canada, the individual economic burden of insomnia is estimated at \$5,010 per person per year, with nearly 90% of this amount attributed to indirect costs, such as work absenteeism and reduced productivity.²

First Nations youth aged 15 to 24 die by suicide about 6 times more often than non-Indigenous youth. Suicide rates for Inuit youth are about 24 times the national average.⁴

References:

- 1) Smetanin et al., 2011
- 2) <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/1653-cant-sleep-count-sheep>
- 3) <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/5980-disability-rate-canada-increased-2022>
- 4) Kumar & Tjepkema (2019). Suicide among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit (2011-2016). Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2019001



Reducing Stigma

Mental illness stigma refers to negative attitudes, beliefs, or stereotypes that people have about individuals with mental health conditions. It often leads to unfair judgment, discrimination, or treating someone differently because of their mental health.

Reducing stigma so that people seek and receive the care they need involves education, open conversations, and normalizing the idea that mental health is part of overall health.

Elephant in the Room is our signature anti-stigma and education campaign.

Elephant in the Room (EITR)

REDUCING STIGMA | EDUCATION & LITERACY

Mental health support is increasingly recognized as a “foundational element for student learning” and promoting mental health in the workplace can benefit both employers and employees by improving productivity, mood, staff retention and teamwork. Now more than ever, organizations, companies, high schools, colleges and universities are seeking mental health resources and programs to reduce stigma in their spaces and support their employees and students.

EITR provides out-of-the-box, easy to use educational materials and resources for teachers and workplace leaders to use, cultivating more supportive and empathetic work and learning spaces.

EITR Resources have been accessed by **over 500,000 people.**

“No one chooses mental illness, it chooses us.”

- Michael Landsberg

#SICKNOTWEAK

#SickNotWeak

REDUCING STIGMA | EDUCATION & LITERACY

This year, MDSC welcomed the #SickNotWeak Campaign to our organization! The campaign was initially developed by Michael Landsberg. This union amplifies a national effort to challenge stigma, encourage open and honest conversations, and empower people to seek help. We are excited to offer the newly revamped #SickNotWeak under our MDSC suite of programs.



National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC)

REDUCING STIGMA | ADVOCACY | RESEARCH

The NYAC of MDSC is a group of passionate youth from across Canada (coast-to-coast-to-coast) who work with MDSC to break down the barriers associated with poor mental health and mood disorders, while working to pave the way forward in research and policy from a Lived-Experience, youth-led perspective. NYAC benefits from an independent, youth-led governing council and has youth volunteers in every province.

The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is now estimated at up to **\$220 Billion annually** in direct and indirect costs.⁵



References:

5) <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2023/workplace-burnout-costing-canadian-companies-billions>



In partnership with academia, healthcare, government and private sector, MDSC advances knowledge on mental health challenges and solutions, and ensures that PWLE have a seat at the table for discussions surrounding research, care and health outcomes.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Participation: Investigator
Project: TRAUMIRA – MIRA PTSD. Interdisciplinary AI Development and Evaluation of a Personalized Conversational Agent for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Care
Description: This project will adapt MIRA (www.mymira.ca), an AI-powered virtual mental health assistant co-developed with the Mood Disorders Society of Canada into MIRA-PTSD.
Lead Investigator: Dr. Venkat Baht, University of Toronto
Partners: University of Toronto, Unity Health, University of Alberta

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Participation: Investigator
Project: Clinical Trial: Treating Treatment Resistant Depression (TRD)
Description: A randomized clinical trial (RCT) exploring the efficacy of psilocybin in patients with treatment resistant depression.
Lead Investigator: Dr. Joshua Rosenblat, University of Toronto
Partners: University of Toronto, University Health Network

In 2025 MDSC participated in 19 academic and health system research submissions across Canada – reinforcing the importance of Lived-Experience in all stages of the research cycle.

HIGHLIGHT: FUTURE PROJECT

Participation: Principal Investigator
Project: Incorporating People with Lived and Living Experience, and their Caregivers in the Research Process.
Description: Reviewing the current practices of incorporating People With Lived/Living Experience across all stages of health systems research processes and refining the framework for future inclusion.
Lead Investigator: Mood Disorders Society of Canada

Research

At MDSC, we passionately believe in advancing our understanding of the causes, impact, and treatments of mental illness, through rigorous research that is both relevant and outcomes-based. We are firm advocates for the inclusion of Persons with Lived/Living Experience (PWLE) at every stage of research. Our research priorities are driven by a deep commitment to address the pressing challenges of improving our collective mental health, and to ensure that our findings lead to tangible and meaningful benefits for those affected.

In addition to leading national research initiatives such as MIRA, CCMHN, Access to Medications and Mental Health Care System Surveys, each year MDSC also participates as an Investigator or Collaborator on additional research initiatives across Canada, and assists partner organizations access Lived-Experience perspectives for their research.



Defeat Depression

For over 15 years, the Defeat Depression Campaign has empowered Canadians to take action against mental illness, dismantle stigma, and support mental health programs through engaging activities like walks, personal challenges and community events.

The Defeat Depression Campaign funds broad mental health initiatives and has supported over 130 community health care organizations across Canada.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is a national, non-profit health charity committed to ensuring that the voices of persons impacted by mental illness are heard on issues relating to mental health and mental illness. Doing so requires ongoing understanding and action related to persistent health inequities and injustices.

MDSC is headquartered on the traditional territory of the Anishnabek, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee, covered by the Williams and Upper Canada Treaties. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work in the community and on this important traditional territory. We acknowledge our shared obligation to respect, honour, and sustain these lands and the natural resources contained within. MDSC staff, volunteers, and partners live and work from many territories across Turtle Island.

Through ongoing learning and education we can help challenge and dismantle systemic barriers that persist in our society and which are intimately linked to the central mission of our organization in mental health and wellbeing. We commit ourselves to the path of justice, healing, and reconciliation to create a brighter future and mental health landscape for all Indigenous individuals and communities.

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