



Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and
Mental Health Strategy **HIGHLIGHTS**
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Alberta Health
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Every one of us can be affected by addiction, mental health problems or mental illness at any stage of our life.

Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy

One in five Canadians (and Albertans) will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and the remaining four will be affected by the mental health issues of a loved one. An additional one in 10 people over age 15 may become dependent on alcohol or drugs at any given time in their life.

Who are they?

They are our children: We now know that early experiences literally shape how the brain gets built. Just like building a house, it happens step by step, beginning with a strong foundation that includes supportive and resilient families and communities. Exposure to chronic and serious stressors, over time, may erode the foundation upon which a child's mental health develops.

They are our parents and grandparents: Just as the population of seniors is expected to double between 2008 and 2038, the prevalence of dementia will double, from 1.1 per cent to 2.2 per cent of the total population.

They are our youth and our families:

The youth might be our niece or nephew, or a friend from school. They might be immigrants or refugees newly arrived to Alberta, or neighbours we have known for years.

They are the homeless, or those already accessing addiction and mental health services:

They may be youth, adults or seniors who are in care and need help reintegrating into the community. They may be people in need of housing and supports to live to their fullest capacity.

THEY are US. Every one of us can be affected by addiction, mental health problems or mental illness at any stage of our life.

What is the Alberta Addiction and Mental Health Strategy?

Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services have developed *Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy* (the *Strategy*) to guide actions to improve the health and mental well-being of Albertans in all areas of the province. We will implement the *Strategy* from 2011 to 2016, and it will position individuals and families at the centre of high-quality, effective and integrated services and supports. Here are 5 highlights from the *Strategy*:

1.0 Build healthy and resilient communities

Healthy and resilient families and communities are the building blocks to health and well-being. Community includes schools, work, cultural and faith groups, and the places where people live and play.

OUR COMMITMENT: We will focus more on health promotion to prevent illness from developing in the first place. For those needing help, we will improve access to quality addiction and mental health services within the primary health care environment (a person's first contact with the health care system).

2.0 Foster the development of healthy children, youth and families

Fostering the development of healthy children, youth and families can help support good mental health. To give our children the best possible start in life we need to act early.

OUR COMMITMENT: We will promote maternal, early childhood and family health, including delivery of early intervention programs and screening for mental health issues. We will provide more support and information to those who care for children and youth with addiction and mental health needs.

3.0 Enhance community-based services, capacity and supports

Community-based services support those with addiction, mental health problems and mental illness to live and thrive in the community.

OUR COMMITMENT: We will enhance community based-services and supports. Outreach teams, made up of a variety of health care professionals, will work together to support people where they live and address their addiction and mental health needs.

Albertans living in rural and remote communities will have improved access to addiction and mental health services and all Albertans will have access to a range of housing options and community supports.

4.0 Address complex needs

People with complex needs require many services from more than one service provider. It is important that professionals such as doctors, nurses, social workers, addiction counsellors and mental health therapists and communities work together to meet their needs.

OUR COMMITMENT: We will make sure appropriate services are available to support those with complex needs, regardless of what the complexity relates to, what the issue is, or the number of services required.

5.0 Enhance assurance

Quality and safety are the fundamental building blocks of *Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy*.

OUR COMMITMENT: The public will have access to safe, effective and responsive services, programs and practices.

What does the future hold?

The *Strategy* will transform the addiction and mental health system. It will help to reduce the prevalence of addiction, mental health problems and mental illness by promoting good mental health, identifying problems and intervening early, and delivering high quality and timely supports for those in need.

The *Strategy* shifts the system to one more focused on wellness, through enhanced promotion and illness prevention. It also represents a shift to more care in the community, when appropriate, by better supporting those in need of care and those who care for them.

Together we can act to address issues related to addiction, mental health problems and mental illness. We all have a part to play in promoting the importance of good mental health. If we can challenge the negative attitudes in society, if we can reduce the stigma and discrimination often associated with these issues, we will encourage people to seek the help they need.

By working together, sharing our resources, and better understanding addiction and mental health issues, we will build a healthy, supportive Alberta where people live, thrive and reach their full potential.

What do I do if I need help right now?

There are many programs and services that Albertans with addiction, mental health problems and mental illness can access today. Talk to your family physician or call toll-free HEALTHLink at 1-866-408-5465 (Link) for more information.


For more information on addiction and mental health visit:

MyHealthAlberta.ca


Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
(<http://www.ccsa.ca>)

Mental Health Commission of Canada
(<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>)

For the complete *Strategy* and *Action Plan*, visit: <http://health.alberta.ca/newsroom/pub-mental-health.html>



The *Strategy* creates a system that focuses more on wellness and provides more care in the community.



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