

WINNIPEG REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (WRHA)

<p>Position Statement on Mental Health Promotion and Prevention March 2004</p>
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The WRHA will encourage, support and facilitate the efforts of individuals, families, communities, volunteers, schools, and workplaces to promote positive mental health.

Promoting Health

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority promotes health by:

- Helping to make people more aware of good health practices
- Helping people to make changes in their lifestyle to improve their health
- Helping to create an environment that supports good health practices

Mission

The mission of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is to deliver and administer health services to Winnipeg Region and to promote and protect health. The WRHA will improve health and well-being by leading Winnipeg's health services and building partnerships with the community.

Vision

The WRHA's vision is to lead with innovative and cost effective health education and injury prevention programs. The WRHA will have a holistic approach that embraces all the factors that influence health and well-being. The WRHA will work with people and communities and will lead effective partnerships with other health care providers, the government and the public.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Health is more than merely the absence of disease. It includes a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

Mental health is the capacity of each of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It involves finding balance in all aspects of your life: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Positive mental health is resilience: the capacity to meet the challenges of life, to bounce back when things get tough, and to begin a process of recovery from serious emotional distress.

Mental Health Promotion

It is any action taken to enhance the capacity of individuals, families, organizations or communities to take control over their lives and improve their mental health and well-being by using strategies to create and enhance supportive environments and individual resilience.

Mental Health Literacy

Mental Health Literacy refers to knowledge, beliefs, and abilities that enable the recognition, management or prevention of mental health problems, including attitudes that promote recognition and appropriate help seeking.

Mental Health Literacy addresses stigma in a proactive manner by focusing on the need to change language and labels used to describe mental health and individuals with mental health conditions.

WRHA POSITION

The WRHA will encourage, support and facilitate the efforts of individuals, families, communities, volunteers, schools, and workplaces to promote positive mental health.

- Mental health promotion and prevention involves the population as a whole.
- Positive mental health and emotional well-being is an essential determinant of health and wellness.
- Collaboration is needed to achieve conditions that improve social, physical and economic environments that support positive mental health for all people.
- The promotion of mental health and development of resilience helps to reduce mental disorders and their impact.
- The prevention of mental disorders also requires specific efforts directed at populations “at risk” to eliminate those factors that contribute to the incidence of mental illness.
- Many mental health problems have their onset in childhood and adolescence. Prevention and promotion efforts directed at children and youth have the greatest potential for impact.
- Stigma, discrimination and misunderstanding that surround mental health and mental illness are pervasive, including how mental health is portrayed in the media and the language used in every day life. Improving public understanding and challenging prejudicial attitudes and behaviours is an important component of mental health promotion.

The WRHA is committed to:

- Develop and expand partnerships that contribute to mental health promotion and prevention efforts.
- Take a leadership role in the development of Suicide Prevention Strategy and activities.
- Participate in the identification of environments and activities that will promote mental health for children and youth.
- Support mental health promotion and prevention within workplaces.
- Develop a Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Strategy Document and Action Plan that outlines the activities of the WRHA to encourage, support and facilitate the efforts to promote positive mental health.
- Create a Mental Health Literacy and Information Plan
 - a) To improve mental health literacy in the general population, ensuring that information on mental health and mental disorders is accessible and accurate, and
 - b) To address stigma and discrimination.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO WRHA POSITION STATEMENT

Mental health problems are experienced by approximately 20% of the Canadian population sometime during their lifetime.

- As many Canadians suffer from major depression as from other leading chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes or a thyroid condition. (Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) on Mental Health and Well-being, 2003)
- One in five children aged 9 to 17 has a diagnosable mental disorder.
- Professional mental health resources reach no more than 1 out of 6 children and adolescents in Canada.
- 1 out of 10 Canadians aged 15 and over (about 2.6 million people) reported symptoms consistent with either major depression, mania disorder, panic disorder, social phobia, agoraphobia or alcohol or illicit drug dependence (CCHS, 2003).
- In 2003, 180 people in Manitoba died due to suicide, 86 of these deaths were of residents of the Winnipeg Health Region.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst the adolescent population in Canada (ages 15-24).

Mental health problems are associated with increased health costs, reduced productivity in schools, workplaces, and homes and missed life opportunities.

- Mental illnesses constitute 10% of the global burden of disease.
- It is predicted that depression will be the second leading cause of disability in the world by the year 2020 (World Health Organization).

- 5 out of the 10 leading causes of disability are related to mental disorders (World Health Organization).
- The economic burden of mental health problems in Canada – both medically treated and not treated is 14.4 billion annually, at a minimum (Health Canada).
- Almost 678,000 employed Canadians accumulated more than 39,000 excess person-years of short term reduced activity associated with depression. Another 2 million had over 115,000 person-years of time off associated with distress (Health Canada , 2001).
- In 1999/2000 1.5 million hospital days in Canada were due to mental illness and suicidal behaviour.

Promotion of wellness requires increased awareness of the interdependence between mental health, physical health, spiritual health and social health.

- Scientific evidence supports the body-mind connection e.g. physiological changes that occur under stress or emotional distress and the increased risk of heart disease or increased difficulty controlling diabetes.
- Many illnesses can be prevented if people have improved personal health practices, including taking care of their mental health. For example, over 90% of type II diabetes and 80% of coronary heart disease could be avoided with good nutrition, regular exercise, the elimination of smoking, and effective stress management (WHO 2002).
- 45% of people experiencing a mental illness have a concurrent physical illness (most commonly respiratory and cardio-vascular conditions).
- Social support which is defined as sense of belonging, trust, and participation was found to be the single most powerful influence on well-being and lack of distress (Canadian Report on Population Mental Health in Canada, 1998).
- Successful health promotion strategies recognize the complex interplay between mental health and behaviour change.
- Positive mental health provides individuals with vitality that supports healthy active living.