

# NAVIGATING

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN TORONTO

A Guide For  
Newcomer Communities



CRCT

Community Resource Connections of Toronto

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# Introduction

## WHY WE WROTE THIS GUIDE

We wrote this guide to help new Canadians find their way to mental health services.

Most people understand who they are based on where they grew up. When people move to another country, they can feel that what they know is no longer valued. This can make them feel sad, alone or threatened. They will face even more stress and isolation if they are dealing with serious mental health issues and do not know where to go for help.

Moving to a new country is a big event in anyone's life. Newcomers must cope with many stressful challenges. They must find a place to live, find a job, find a school for their children, make new friends, and find or set up networks of people who can support them. Newcomers also have to cope with the stress of learning a new language and of adjusting to climate change, culture shock and the racism and discrimination they encounter when they try to get the help they need. This guide will hopefully help people when they or a family member is dealing with mental health issues so that accessing and understanding mental health services will be less confusing and they will know what to expect better.

## WHAT IS IN THIS GUIDE

This guide is for anyone who has mental illness or mental health problems, and for their friends and families. It is meant to help you understand the mental health system. It includes general information about

- ▶ what is mental health;
- ▶ what are the different types of mental illnesses;
- ▶ what are the different treatment options;
- ▶ what can cause mental illness;
- ▶ what services and supports exist to help you.

Please remember that this guide is only for information purposes. It is **not** a list of the places or services we recommend and it is not legal advice. You should not use this guide to diagnose mental illness. Also, you should not use this guide instead of talking to a lawyer.

This guide is for people who live in the Toronto area. We hope that parts of this guide will also be useful to people living in other areas of Canada.

# Part 1: What is mental illness?

Being healthy is feeling good. All parts of your body are working well. You have very few aches and pains. It is good to get up in the morning and you are sleeping well.

**Mental health** is also about feeling good, but it is more about how your mind feels. When your mental health is good, you feel that life is good. You like most people you know and you feel comfortable with them. You do not feel sad all the time or worry about every little thing. You do not feel that everyone is trying to hurt you. You do not think the world is against you. Life may be hard, but most of the time you enjoy being alive.

Mental health is about how you feel, how you think and how you see the world around you. Without good mental health it is difficult to do the things you need to do each day to have a full and happy life.

When people's minds are experiencing mental health difficulties, we say they have a **mental illness** or **mental health issues**. There are many kinds of mental illnesses. Some illnesses change how people think, some change people's moods, and some change what people do. A mental illness can change the way you feel and how you get along with other people. Mental illness can be mild or serious. Usually, people who have mental illness may:

- ▶ say strange things;
- ▶ hear or see things that other people don't see;
- ▶ seem noticeably tired or have great amounts of energy;
- ▶ believe that something or someone is trying to harm them;
- ▶ lose interest in what they enjoyed in the past;
- ▶ stop taking care of their personal hygiene; or
- ▶ isolate themselves from family and friends.

## WHAT IS PSYCHOSIS?

Psychosis affects about 3% of the population. It is caused by a number of factors. Psychosis can happen to anyone, and it can be treated effectively, especially if it is detected in its early stages. People can lead full and productive lives despite having serious mental health issues.

### What are some of the early signs of psychosis?

- ▶ withdrawing from family and friends;
- ▶ trouble concentrating and thinking clearly;

- ▶ confusion about what is real or imaginary;
- ▶ hallucinations, such as hearing voices or seeing things that are not really there;
- ▶ having unusual ideas or beliefs;
- ▶ feeling suspicious of other people.

### **WHO GETS MENTAL ILLNESS?**

Anyone can develop a mental illness. It does not matter what position you hold in society, whether you are rich or poor, well-educated or do not read or write. It does not matter what ethnic group, culture or religion you belong to or how religious you are. Mental illness can affect anyone.

The experts all agree that people do **not** get mental illness when they stop believing in a religion or stop practicing a religion. Spirituality can give you strength and help you cope with difficulties but not being religious does **not** cause mental illness.

There is nothing shameful about having a mental illness. But sometimes you may feel ashamed and may not ask for help. This can cause more problems. If you do not ask for help, advice or treatment, your mental health problems will get worse.

### **WHAT CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESS?**

Like physical illness, mental illness can be caused by a combination of our environment and our biology.

Our biology is everything in our body. Sometimes people get the same mental illness that their parents had. For some mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, people whose parents had a mental illness are more likely than other people to have the same illness. This does not mean that if one of your parents had schizophrenia, you will get the illness. It means you are more at risk than someone else who does not have a family history of schizophrenia. Early intervention and paying attention to risk factors are important.

The environment includes everything around us in our daily lives. It includes the work we do, how much money we earn and how much stress we are under. It also includes our experiences of loss, abuse, neglect or trauma.

With some kinds of mental illness, the structure of our brain can change and the chemicals in our body and brain can change. How the different parts of our brain work with each other can also change.

Most people believe mental health is affected by our environment and our biology. Something may happen in your environment that triggers a change in how your brain works. Or a change in your brain's chemicals may make you see your environment differently.

Stress is a good example of how environment and biology both affect mental health. All stress affects our body because we have physical reactions to stress. For example, if we are stressed our heart may beat faster than normal or we may feel knots in our stomach. We may not get enough sleep, or not eat well if we are facing difficulties or going through hard times.

Stress connected to traumatic events, such as war, racism, discrimination and abuse, can have a huge impact on our mind. If we do not deal with stress caused by trauma, the feelings can come back as physical and emotional problems.

### **HOW IS MENTAL ILLNESS DIAGNOSED?**

Psychiatrists have classified mental illnesses into different categories, or diagnoses. Making a diagnosis helps a doctor to assess what treatment is needed and to predict what is likely to happen. The person who has mental health problems can also be relieved to be able to put a name to what is wrong. But there are limits to diagnosis. Each person's experience of mental illness is unique and it can be misread, especially if there are cultural, social or religious differences between doctor and patient. Different doctors may give one person completely different diagnoses. Simply focusing on the symptoms can mean that not enough attention is paid to the person as a whole, and to their situation. Their experience may hold a meaning for them, which no medical diagnosis can do justice to.

### **HOW STIGMA CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE**

Stigma is negative ideas about something. It is a sign of shame, disgrace or disapproval, and often leads people to shun or reject other people. A stigma emerges when people feel uneasy or embarrassed to talk about something. The stigma of mental illness is so strong that it places a wall of silence around this issue. People are discriminated against, mistreated and labelled because of mental illness. The stigma means that many people are too embarrassed to talk

about their illness or the illness of a family member. Also, people avoid seeking help because of this stigma.

If a diagnosis becomes a label, it can be very damaging. For example, you are no longer seen as a parent, spouse, teacher, doctor, mechanic, son or daughter or a student who has schizophrenia; instead you are seen as ‘a schizophrenic’.

However, a diagnosis does not have to determine the whole course of a person’s life. It can be a relatively minor part of their identity or history. Learning you have a mental illness is the same as being diagnosed with diabetes, heart disease or asthma. You learn to live with and manage your illness but you are not labelled with the illness.

### **IS IT POSSIBLE TO RECOVER FROM MENTAL ILLNESS?**

It is possible to recover completely from mental health problems. Some people do. Sometimes people even emerge from the experience feeling stronger and wiser. Others get over the worst, but remain vulnerable and relapse from time to time. Some do not respond as well, and will continue to receive treatment in the long term. Psychiatrists cannot predict exactly what will happen to each person.

Unfortunately, people are sometimes told that they will not recover. Hearing this adds to a person’s feelings of hopelessness, which can slow their recovery.

Never give up, no matter what you are told. Recovery is possible with all types of mental illnesses. This means that people are able to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities despite their mental illness. If you believe you can recover, and if you get the support you need – including people who believe you will get better and who nurture your hope – you are very likely to recover.

Environment contributes a lot to mental illness. It is also a major part of your recovery. Supportive family, friends or mental health workers who believe in you and build your hope can aid your recovery process. Other things that can help include safe and affordable housing and living in an environment free from stigma and discrimination.

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### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY OWN RECOVERY?

- ▶ Understand your own strengths and needs.
- ▶ Believe that recovery is possible.
- ▶ Learn as much as you can about your illness, including how to monitor and control your symptoms.
- ▶ Accept the limitations of your illness.
- ▶ Know when you are not doing well and ask for support.
- ▶ Believe in yourself and your recovery and learn to overcome negative attitudes.
- ▶ Work with your service providers and tell them what you want and need from them.
- ▶ Build hope and believe that you can manage your life and reach your goals and dreams.

### WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MENTAL ILLNESSES?

Here is some general information about the most common mental illnesses. A person with mental illness does not have to have all the symptoms listed here. Some symptoms can be a sign of a physical illness. If you think you have a mental illness, talk to a trained professional, such as your family doctor. You should not use this information to diagnose yourself or someone else; it is only for information purposes. **Only a psychiatrist can make a diagnosis.**

What is it called?	What does it feel like?
Depression	<p>You may be <b>depressed</b> if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you are very sad and cry a lot without a reason;</li> <li>▶ you have lost interest in things that you used to enjoy and have become withdrawn;</li> <li>▶ you can only see bad things in yourself;</li> <li>▶ you feel very tired;</li> <li>▶ you cannot concentrate;</li> <li>▶ you feel that life is not worth living;</li> <li>▶ you eat a very different amount than usual.</li> </ul>
Schizophrenia	<p>You may have <b>schizophrenia</b> if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you hear voices that tell you to do things you would not usually do;</li> <li>▶ you think that people want to harm you;</li> <li>▶ your thinking is muddled;</li> <li>▶ you cannot speak clearly;</li> <li>▶ you have lost interest in things that you used to enjoy.</li> </ul>
Bipolar disorder	<p>You may have <b>bipolar disorder</b> if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ your moods change a lot, and you never feel calm;</li> <li>▶ you either feel very confident and happy or very very sad;</li> <li>▶ when you feel good, you do not sleep well and you talk a lot;</li> <li>▶ when you feel bad, you feel like crying all the time and you feel worthless.</li> </ul>
Impulse control problems	<p>You may have an <b>impulse control problem</b> if you cannot stop yourself from doing something that you know is wrong. Before you do it, you feel very tense. After, you feel happy and relaxed. One example is <b>kleptomania</b>, which means that you cannot stop yourself from stealing.</p>

What is it called?	What does it feel like?
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	<p><b>Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)</b> is a natural emotional reaction to traumatic experiences such as rape, bombings, torture, the death or disappearance of family or friends or witnessing another person being tortured or killed. Natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods or earthquakes can also lead to PTSD. It can affect anyone, including children.</p> <p>If you experienced any of these events you may not be able to keep the memory of what happened out of your mind. You may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ have nightmares about what happened that keep coming back;</li> <li>▶ feel afraid all the time;</li> <li>▶ have a hard time concentrating;</li> <li>▶ feel that you are never safe;</li> <li>▶ act or feel as if the event is happening again;</li> <li>▶ avoid places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic experience.</li> </ul> <p>People who were treated badly as political prisoners or were forced to flee their homeland may develop post-traumatic stress disorder.</p>
Obsessive compulsive disorder	<p>You may have an <b>obsessive compulsive disorder</b> if you worry about the same things over and over, and you do the same thing over and over to try to stop worrying. For example, you may worry that your hands are dirty, and you will wash your hands again and again to try to get them clean.</p>
Borderline personality disorder	<p>You may have a <b>borderline personality disorder</b> if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you worry that people are going to disappoint or leave you;</li> <li>▶ your moods change a lot within a short time;</li> <li>▶ you get angry with the people closest to you and you do not know why;</li> <li>▶ you are very happy sometimes, but you are mostly sad, angry and bitter.</li> </ul>

What is it called?	What does it feel like?
Anxiety disorders	<p>You may have an <b>anxiety disorder</b> if you feel nervous and afraid when you are not in any danger. This means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you think you are losing control;</li> <li>▶ you feel that you cannot breathe;</li> <li>▶ you feel that you are choking;</li> <li>▶ you have pains in your chest;</li> <li>▶ you feel dizzy;</li> <li>▶ you feel chilly or very hot;</li> <li>▶ you feel tingling in your hands or mouth.</li> </ul> <p>Two common kinds of anxiety disorders are panic disorders and phobias. If you have a <b>panic disorder</b> you will feel panic and your heart will start beating very fast for no reason. If you have a <b>phobia</b>, you feel very afraid of something that is not dangerous.</p>
Eating disorders	<p>You may have an <b>eating disorder</b> if you eat a lot more than you need or a lot less than you need, and it makes you sick.</p> <p>Two common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. If you have <b>anorexia nervosa</b>, you are very afraid of being fat but you are underweight and you keep losing weight. If you have <b>bulimia nervosa</b> you eat a lot and then get rid of the food by making yourself vomit. Mostly young women get these two disorders. Some people say that these two disorders exist because of all the pressures on women to be thin. Young people feel that pressure and in order to fit the model for beauty that they see in the media, some develop eating disorders.</p>
Adjustment disorder	<p>You may have an <b>adjustment disorder</b> if you are doing things or feeling things because of stress. What you do or feel makes it hard for you to lead a normal life. You could get an adjustment disorder if you are under too much stress. Adjustment disorder does not usually last longer than six months.</p>

# Part 2: Newcomers and mental illness

## WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is our response to a situation that we feel is beyond our ability and resources to manage. It is feeling under pressure because of all the things you have to do or worry about. Stress can be physical or psychological. If you do not get enough sleep or have a poor diet you can feel physically stressed. Stress can also be mental, if we worry too much and feel uneasy. If it is not dealt with properly, stress can cause health problems and can affect your mental health.

Here are some things that can cause a lot of stress:

- ▶ your spouse or another member of your family dies;
- ▶ your marriage breaks down;
- ▶ you are separated from your family;
- ▶ a child is born;
- ▶ you lose your income;
- ▶ you are the only person in your family who has a job, and your family is scattered over several continents;
- ▶ you take care of family members who live in a war-torn area;
- ▶ you lose your job.

Different people deal with stress in different ways. Some people can stay calm and well-balanced in even the most stressful situations. But it is natural to react to stress. Stress and tension are normal reactions to major events in your life.

How you deal with stress can affect your mental health. It is important to know how to deal with stress. Are you affected a little? Are you bothered a lot? If you are easily affected by stress, you must seek help and support when the stress gets to be too much. Ask your family and friends for help and support. If that is not working, ask your doctor for help.

## HOW NEWCOMERS COMPARE TO CANADIAN-BORN PEOPLE

Statistics Canada did research for a study called *Mental Health of Canada's Immigrants* (2002). It found that immigrants to Canada were less depressed and used less alcohol than people born in Canada.

Another study by the Canadian Mental Health Association in 2003 found that immigrants and refugees in Canada are under more stress than people born in Canada. Here are some of the things that cause stress for immigrants and refugees:

- ▶ not being able to do the work they used to do;
- ▶ feeling that they are not welcome in Canada;
- ▶ experiencing racism and discrimination;
- ▶ learning that Canada does not value their skills and education;
- ▶ not being able to speak English;
- ▶ having to take on a different role in their family or community;
- ▶ being separated from their family and friends;
- ▶ not having the support of people from their community;
- ▶ not being respected within the family and community, or not being given the status that is usual in their culture;
- ▶ having post-traumatic stress because of something that happened before they arrived in Canada.

They also found that it is hard for immigrants and refugees to get help for mental health problems. Some people are ashamed of mental illness and do not ask for help. Other people want to treat their mental illness but have trouble getting help because there are few available services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

### **THE STRESS OF RESETTLEMENT**

Many newcomers lived through very stressful situations before they came to Canada. They may have experienced extreme events such as natural disasters, accidents, war or torture. When they come to Canada, they must adjust to a new society and culture, they might face racism and discrimination and they do not have the support they had in their home country. This means that newcomers face a lot of stress.

Three kinds of stresses are unique to settling in a new country: migration stress, the stress of adapting to a new culture, and traumatic stress. All of these stresses can lead to mental illness.

These kinds of stresses are most difficult in the first two years after newcomers arrive in Canada. For most people, resettlement is much less stressful after three to five years.

### **Migration stress**

People feel migration stress when they have to rebuild their lives. In a new country they have to find a place to live, find and keep a job, make sure their family has a home, food and clothing, get to know new people, and struggle with a new language. They may have to live on a very low income or their qualifications may not be recognized. They may have a lower social and economic position than they had in their home country and they may be separated from their family and friends.

### **Acculturative stress**

Acculturative stress is the tension caused by having to learn about a whole new culture. For example, newcomers may experience racism and discrimination, may not be able to find work that uses their knowledge and skills, and may not be treated as well as they were in their home country. They may not be able to find mental health services that understand their experience and culture.

### **Traumatic stress**

Traumatic stress is caused by distressful events. Some newcomers have survived the traumas of war, forced migration, disasters and torture. Traumatic stress can also affect anyone who has faced a traumatic experience, such as fire or violence.

### **HELP FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE**

If you were a victim of torture you might need counselling to heal the physical and psychological abuse you survived.

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) helps victims of torture to integrate successfully into Canadian society. It is a non-profit organization of doctors, lawyers, social workers and community groups. If you were a victim of torture, call the CCVT.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT)	194 Jarvis Street, 2nd Floor Toronto, ON M5B 2B7 phone: 416-363-1066 <a href="http://www.ccvt.org">www.ccvt.org</a>

### **OLDER ADULTS FEEL EXTRA STRESS**

Migration can be especially hard for elderly people. They must start everything over in Canada when they are no longer young. They must form new relationships and rely on others for everything. They must make major adjustments, like losing status in their family and their community, and learn to speak a new language and understand a new culture.

### **RESETTLEMENT IS VERY STRESSFUL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Being a teenager is not easy. They feel the challenges of growing up at the same time as they must adjust to changes in their body and mind. Migration is difficult for teenagers because it adds settlement stress to the stressors of growing up. They face many pressures. All of these issues can cause stress.

Here are some of the issues that young newcomers might face:

- ▶ being excluded from groups of their peers;
- ▶ wanting to belong but feeling that they do not fit in;
- ▶ living in unsafe environments or neighbourhoods;
- ▶ being separated from family and friends;
- ▶ wondering how long their family members will be in a refugee camp or a third country;
- ▶ feeling grief or guilt about family members who have died;
- ▶ re-uniting with family members they have been separated from for a long period of time;
- ▶ all kinds of discrimination, including discrimination because of their race, culture, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, language, ability, immigration status, or sexual orientation;
- ▶ negative media images about their religion or culture, or about their racial or ethnic group;
- ▶ not being fluent in English;
- ▶ taking on adult roles, such as interpreting or translating English for their parents;
- ▶ having difficulty at school because their education was interrupted;
- ▶ not having enough money;
- ▶ remembering war, violence or disaster.

If their stress is not managed properly and they do not receive the support they need, young people can feel anxious, can withdraw, become aggressive or develop physical illness. They may also make a poor choice, like joining a gang or using drugs or alcohol.

### **What parents or guardians can do to help teens reduce stress**

- ▶ Check if the stress is affecting the teen’s health, behaviour, thoughts or feelings.
- ▶ Listen carefully. Watch for signs of stress.
- ▶ Learn how to manage stress yourself. You can be a good example for your teenaged child.
- ▶ Talk to them about their experiences.
- ▶ Encourage them to be involved in sports and other social activities. Support them when they get involved.
- ▶ Talk to them about their views. Be open. Tell them about your own views.
- ▶ Give them a safe place to discuss issues. Find out what they think about news stories. Ask them about their spiritual and political beliefs.
- ▶ Help them find ways to get involved in their community. Suggest they volunteer at a homeless shelter or a seniors’ home or become a mentor to a new Canadian youth.
- ▶ Talk to them about their experiences before they came to Canada and about their family members left behind.

If you feel overwhelmed, ask for help. Talk to their teacher, doctor or any other professional.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO LOWER STRESS**

Some people deal with stress more easily than others. They may have a strong group of people supporting them or they may not feel stress the way other people do. Most people must remember to do things to lower stress. Here are some things you can do:

- ▶ Take care of your body. The body and mind are connected. You can:
  - ▷ Get moving! Walking, bowling and playing soccer all lower your stress. Find something you enjoy. Try to find other people who like to do the same thing. For example, join or start a poetry or cultural club or start a walking group.
  - ▷ If you are a professional and you cannot get a job in your field, start a support group for professionals with similar backgrounds or join a network.

- ▷ Eat healthy.
- ▷ Get enough sleep. Get to know your own rhythms. Sleep when you need to sleep and be active when you have energy.
- ▶ Pace yourself. This means:
  - ▷ Do not try to do too much. Take your time. Remember you can only do one thing at a time.
  - ▷ Make a plan for each day.
  - ▷ Allow time for yourself.
- ▶ If you do not speak English, enroll in ESL or LINC classes. LINC means Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, and ESL means English as a Second Language. In addition to learning English, this can help you:
  - ▷ Meet new friends and people with similar experience.
  - ▷ Learn about the Canadian customs and systems, such as schools, health, employment and resources.
- ▶ Stay connected with other people. You can:
  - ▷ Get involved with your community. Find a way to get involved in a social group. Or find a mosque, temple, church or other spiritual group you can join.
  - ▷ Find a support group. Look for a group that includes people who share your concerns or background.
  - ▷ Visit your local settlement agency. Look for one that works specifically with your language or cultural group.
  - ▷ Talk to friends and family about the things that bother you.
- ▶ Have a healthy attitude. This means:
  - ▷ Do not blame yourself for things that go wrong.
  - ▷ Remember that you do not have control over every problem. Let go of problems that you cannot control.
  - ▷ Remember failure is an important part of life. Learn from it. Remind yourself that this condition you are in does *not* mean that you are weak or a failure.
  - ▷ Try to have at least one positive thought everyday.

## HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS IF YOU HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM

Here are some other things you can do to lower stress:

- ▶ Remember that you are the best person to manage your illness. You can develop inner strength that will help you get better and keep you healthy.
- ▶ Try to sort out some of the problems that came up because of the illness.
- ▶ Make a plan for getting better. Think about what you can do to stay healthy.
- ▶ If you are getting treatment, be patient. You may not feel better right away. Wait a few weeks.
- ▶ Learn to watch for signs that you might be getting ill again.

## WHEN STRESS TURNS TO CRISIS

Sometimes we are under so much stress that we feel overwhelmed, out of control and unable to cope. This is a **crisis**. A crisis can build up over time, as problems pile up higher and higher. A crisis can also happen suddenly, when a person faces a frightening situation which they can't see any way to resolve. This kind of crisis is called a “psychosocial” crisis because it is usually triggered by situations, events or problems in a person's social environment. Psychosocial crises can be triggered by anything in a person's life. Some examples of things that can cause crises are: when a person does not feel safe; when they lose their housing; when they have problems at work or in a relationship and when they have money worries.

Another kind of crisis is a “psychiatric” crisis. This means the symptoms of mental illness are causing serious problems in a person's life. Psychiatric crisis happens when someone is going through psychosis. Psychosis is being in a state of extreme distress. You could be hearing voices that are telling you to do harmful things to yourself or others. Typically, psychosis includes delusions (false ideas about what is happening or who you are) and hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there). Psychosis prevents a person from functioning in his/her normal way and can cause extreme pain and confusion.

If you feel that you, or someone else, is losing touch with reality, you need to **seek help immediately** to prevent psychiatric crisis.

### **How do you know when you are in crisis?**

Usually you know when you need extra help and support. When you feel that things are only going to get worse until you just cannot cope, it is time to reach out for help. Of course, you do not need to wait until things get out of control before you ask for help.

When you are in crisis it is difficult to live from day to day. You might find it hard to sleep or eat, you may not be able to get along with other people, and you may not be able to concentrate on things at home, work or school.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP

### WILL MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECT MY APPLICATION FOR CITIZENSHIP?

**No.** A person with a mental illness can apply for citizenship. They can get Canadian citizenship, if they meet all of the other requirements.

Some people with mental illness cannot learn a new language or study and remember information. In these cases, they might not be asked to show that they know enough English or French, or to prove what they know about Canada and what it means to be a citizen.

You can ask to be exempt from the citizenship test if you feel that you cannot memorize information because of your illness. When you fill out the Application for Citizenship form, answer “Yes” to question 2 (“I have Special Needs”). The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration will send you a Medical Opinion Form. Your psychiatrist must fill out this form.

Your local Community Legal Clinic or your worker can assist you in filing the form. To find a Community Legal Clinic, you can call 211 Toronto 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 211 Toronto is free and confidential, and they offer help in different languages. To contact 211 Toronto:

Organization	Contact Information
211 Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Go to <b>www.211toronto.ca</b></li><li>▶ From the 416 or 647 area codes, dial <b>211</b></li><li>▶ Outside Toronto or from a pay phone, dial <b>416-397-4636</b></li></ul> <p>When you ask for someone who speaks your own language, say your language in a clear voice.</p>

### If you are a refugee...

Convention refugees **must** file the application for permanent residence within six months of arriving in Canada. Family members and community workers should really work hard to help the refugee meet the deadline.

**If you have a criminal record...**

If you are charged with a crime, get help immediately. Criminal charges can affect our lives, no matter how minor the charge is. If you are a refugee claimant, talk to an immigration lawyer immediately. Get advice on what you should do. Also, ask for help from your mental health worker and explain your immigration status. There are also Mental Health Court Support Workers who can help you with the court process. For more information about Mental Health Court Support Workers, look on page 60.

Here are things that might affect your citizenship application:

You **cannot apply for Canadian citizenship** if you:

- ▶ have been told you will be deported;
- ▶ have recently been charged with a crime;
- ▶ are in prison or are on parole or probation;
- ▶ were in prison, on probation or on parole any time in the past four years;
- ▶ were found guilty in the past three years of a crime that can be punished with a prison sentence.

You **cannot get Canadian citizenship** if you:

- ▶ are in prison, on parole, or on probation;
- ▶ are charged with a crime that can be punished with a prison sentence;
- ▶ are on trial for a crime that can be punished with a prison sentence;
- ▶ are waiting for an appeal of what the trial decided.

For all of these reasons, you should contact the **Mental Health Court Support program** if you have mental health problems and are charged with a crime. More information about the program is included in Part 7 of this guide.

## Part 3: Getting help

Mental illness should be treated as soon as possible. Research shows that getting help soon will help your treatment. If you can recognize the signs of different kinds of mental illness, you can get help before it gets much worse. Learn to recognize the symptoms when they recur. Ask for help if you feel you are not healthy. If you ask for help, you can find out whether you have a mental illness or not.

Remember that some of the symptoms of mental illness may be normal ways of dealing with the stresses of life. Or they could be caused by a physical illness that you have. If you have the symptoms for a long time and they do not seem to go away, you may have a problem that needs to be treated in some way. You should get advice. Talk to your doctor.

### **GET HELP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

Mental illnesses can be treated. You are more likely to get better if you start treatment early. Many times, if a mental illness is treated in the early stages, it may not get worse.

Early treatment is especially important for young people who are experiencing early psychosis.

### **HELP! WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY**

Do you need help right now?

Are you feeling like you might hurt yourself or other people?

Are you afraid that someone you know might hurt themselves or other people?

### Here is what you can do.

- ▶ Go to the **Emergency** Department of your local **hospital**.
- ▶ Call your **psychiatrist** if you have one, or your **family doctor**. Ask if they can see you now. Your doctor could help you get into a hospital.
- ▶ Call your **mental health worker**. Tell them you need help.
- ▶ Call the **Mobile Crisis Line**. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you. They can come to where you are, if you need them. They can also tell you about other supports.

In **downtown Toronto**, call 416-929-5200

In **Etobicoke** or **North York**, call 416-498-0043

In **Scarborough** or **East York**, call 416-289-2434

- ▶ **Phone 911** if someone’s life is in danger. Ask for an ambulance or police to help you get to the hospital. Explain the situation as clearly as you can. When you call 9-1-1, the operator will say, “Emergency. Do you require Police, Fire or Ambulance?” If you do not speak English, try to have a family member or friend help you. If this is not possible, try to explain calmly that you do not speak English. **Say your language** in a clear voice. If the 9-1-1 operator does not understand the language you are speaking, they will try to find out what language you speak. If they ask you questions, repeat your language only. For example, say “Tamil”.

### WHO CAN HELP ME?

When you want advice about mental health, talk to someone you trust. You can talk to your family doctor, a counsellor, or a nurse at the local Community Health Centre. They may be able to help you.

If they cannot help, they will refer you to a psychiatrist who can diagnose and treat your mental illness.

You may want to talk to someone who speaks your language and understands your culture. Community Resource Connections of Toronto can help you find them. Also look at the *Resources* section of this guide.

## PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

Who	What they can do	Where they work
Family Doctor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ diagnose your illness</li> <li>▶ prescribe medication</li> <li>▶ tell if you have a physical illness that seems like a mental illness</li> </ul>	<p>Most doctors have their own office. This is called <b>private practice</b>. Some work in community health centres or hospitals.</p> <p>If you do not have a family doctor, go to your local Community Health Centre or to a Community Mental Health Agency.</p>
Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ diagnose your illness</li> <li>▶ treat your emotions and your actions</li> <li>▶ <b>cannot</b> prescribe medication to treat you</li> <li>▶ they do talk therapy</li> </ul>	<p>Some psychologists have their own offices, and some work in hospitals or Community Health Centres.</p>
Psychiatrist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ diagnose your illness</li> <li>▶ treat your illness in different ways, including by prescribing medication</li> </ul>	<p>Some psychiatrists have their own office, some work in general hospitals, and some work in psychiatric hospitals.</p>
Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ identify your condition</li> <li>▶ tell you about the condition</li> <li>▶ <b>cannot</b> give a diagnosis or treat your illness</li> </ul>	<p>Nurses work in all kinds of hospitals and in Community Health Centres.</p>
Social Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ identify your condition</li> <li>▶ tell you about the condition</li> <li>▶ <b>cannot</b> give a diagnosis or treat your illness</li> </ul>	<p>Social workers work in all kinds of hospitals, in Community Health Centres and other social service agencies.</p>
Case Manager Or Individual Support Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ identify your condition</li> <li>▶ tell you about the condition, can give you information about resources</li> <li>▶ <b>cannot</b> give a diagnosis or treat your illness</li> </ul>	<p>Case managers or individual support workers work in the community in mental health agencies or Community Health Centres.</p>

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

When you find someone to talk to, make good use of the time you have with them. Here are some things you can do to prepare.

### Before you meet with the mental health professional:

- ▶ Educate yourself about mental health issues. There are many sources of information. Look in the *Resources* section of this guide for other places to find out about mental health.
- ▶ Understand how mental illness is viewed in your particular culture. Try to choose a mental health expert who understands your culture.
- ▶ If you prefer, look for someone who understands your language and culture. If they do not, ask them to get an interpreter who knows your language and culture. Make sure they understand your immigration and cultural issues.
- ▶ Notice what you are thinking and feeling. Many people are ashamed to have a mental illness. Shame can affect what you say and what you do.
- ▶ Before each visit, make a list of what you want to talk about and what questions you have. Take the list with you to the appointment.

### When you meet with a psychiatrist or psychologist:

Make sure you can talk about your symptoms. Mental health experts will decide what illness you have based on how you answer their questions. They will also give you the support you need to cope with the problems you are experiencing.

- ▶ Listen to how they talk to you. Notice if they seem to think that there is only one thing you can do. Remember that there is often more than one way to treat mental illness.
- ▶ When you go, take someone who can support you. They can be a friend or someone who is trained as an advocate.
- ▶ Remember that you have the right to be treated well.
- ▶ If you do not feel comfortable or have more questions after a visit, remember that you can get a second opinion, or a third.

Remember these things the whole time you are being treated for mental illness. No matter who you are talking to, remember that their job is to help **you**.

You have the right to be treated well. You have the right to expect people to be open, helpful and honest with you.

## HOW TO FIND SERVICES IN TORONTO

Many organizations provide mental health services or can help connect you with mental health services. They include:

- ▶ Hospital and community agencies that provide mental health services to the general public.
- ▶ Agencies that provide mental health services for particular ethnic or cultural communities, or in specific languages.
- ▶ Settlement agencies that provide programs and services for newcomers to Canada. They can also connect you to mental health and other services. There are more than 150 settlement agencies in Toronto.
- ▶ Community Health Centres, or CHCs, provide health care to people who have difficulty getting the help they need. Many newcomers find it difficult to find health care because they do not speak English, they do not have much money, or because health is treated differently in their culture than in Canada. Other people cannot get health care because they do not have legal status in Canada. CHCs work with all of these people.

There are more than 20 Community Health Centres in Toronto. You should know that many people need their services but they have limited funding. This means that many CHCs have long waiting lists or are not able to take new clients.

To find any of these services, contact 211 Toronto by calling 211 from your home phone. From a pay phone, dial 416-397-4636. You can look at their website online at [www.211toronto.ca](http://www.211toronto.ca).

You can also find an agency in the *Resources* section of this guide.

## HOW TO FIND HELP IN YOUR LANGUAGE

To get help with mental health, it is important to find a service that speaks your language and understands your culture. This can be very difficult.

Some agencies in Toronto offer services in different languages. Getting the service in your language sometimes depends on whether someone who speaks your language works at the agency. If you prefer to be served in your language, ask the agency if they have a worker who speaks your language or if they can connect you to another service that speaks your language.

When you call, you will have to be patient. You may have to wait for help, because many people are waiting for service in their language. Once you call, you may be put on a waiting list to see a mental health professional. The agency may make an appointment for you to meet with someone. You may meet with a staff member who will ask you what kind of help you need, and tell you what the agency can offer. This is called an **intake**.

To find information about mental health services in your language, call:

Organization	Contact Information
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA):	416-789-7957 extension 282
Community Resource Connections of Toronto (CRCT):	416-482-4103 extension 316
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):	416-595-6111
Mental Health Service Information	1-866-531-2600
211 Toronto	Dial 211 from your home phone or 416-397-4636 from a pay phone  Go to <a href="http://www.211toronto.ca">www.211toronto.ca</a>

## WHERE CAN I GET HELP WITH DAILY LIVING?

Some people who have had mental illness for a long time often get by on very little money. They may have lost their job or may have trouble getting a job that pays well. This means that they will have trouble paying for a place to live, food and clothing. There are services and organizations to help. This section includes information about some of them. You can also look in CRCT's book, *Making Choices Guide* or CRCT's website at [www.crct.org](http://www.crct.org).

### GETTING ENOUGH FOOD

If you do not have food, you can get some from a food bank. There are many food banks in Toronto. Each one is open on different days and at different times. To find a food bank near you, **call 211**. From a pay phone, dial **416-397-4636**.

If you require **halal** food, call the Muslim Welfare Centre of Toronto. The centre provides **halal** food for individuals or families, including refugees and new immigrants who are unemployed

or receiving social assistance or employment insurance. Call **416-335-9994** or to find out when the food bank is open call the administration at **416-754-8116**.

## **GETTING ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE**

It is difficult for many people with mental illness to get a full-time job. Sometimes people with mental illness cannot work. Here are some other things you can do if you cannot work full-time.

- ▶ Get a job that is part-time. Work as many hours as you can manage. Also look for jobs that are flexible so that you can work hours that suit you.
- ▶ Get a job in mental health services. Some mental health agencies, especially agencies run by people who have had a mental illness, provide employment opportunities for people with mental health issues. See the list in the *Resources* section of this guide.
- ▶ Get a job in a business run by people who have had a mental illness. These are called consumer/survivor businesses.
- ▶ Get a job in an organization that has created jobs for people who have had a mental illness. These are listed on the website for the Ontario office of the Canadian Mental Health Association at [www.mentalhealthworks.ca](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca).
- ▶ Apply for income from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). This is long-term government financial assistance for people who cannot work. To find out more about applying for ODSP, look in the *Resources* section of this guide or go to their website at <http://www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/programs/social/odsp/index.aspx>. Look under “Programs and Services”.
- ▶ Apply for Ontario Works. This is short-term financial assistance for people who are unemployed and who do not have other income. You can apply if you are waiting for ODSP, if you cannot work temporarily or if you are a young person in school who has left home. To find out more, call Ontario Works at 416-392-2956. You can read about Ontario Works online at [http://www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/programs/social/odsp/income\\_support/apply\\_Income.aspx](http://www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/programs/social/odsp/income_support/apply_Income.aspx) under “Programs, Services and Supports”.
- ▶ Find out if you can apply for Canada Pension Plan disability benefits. You can enter their information system through the website at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/isp/cpp/disaben.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/isp/cpp/disaben.shtml).

It can take a long time to get a job or to get income support. Ask for help. If you have a case manager, ask them to help you.

### **PAYING FOR MEDICATIONS**

If you do not have a lot of money, you may not be able to afford your medications. Here are some things you can do.

- ▶ If you are on Ontario Works or ODSP, you should apply for a ‘drug card’. You may be able to get help paying for your medications.
- ▶ You can pick up an application for the Trillium Drug Program at any pharmacy or print one from their website: [www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/drugs/trillium.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/drugs/trillium.html)
- ▶ You could call the company that makes your medication and ask for help.

You can ask your case manager to help you with this. If you do not have a case manager you can call Trillium Drug Program, 1-800-575-5386. They have interpreters if you need one. You could also call CRCT, CMHA-Toronto or CAMH. (Look in the *Resources* section or on page 24 for their phone numbers.)

### **FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE**

Paying for a place to live is the most expensive thing for most people. In big cities like Toronto, housing costs a lot. If you do not have much income, you do not have a lot of choice about where to live.

However, different kinds of housing are available for people with mental health issues. Some non-profit organizations offer housing that is designed for people with mental illness. It is called **supportive housing** or **supported housing**.

#### **What is supportive housing?**

Supportive housing is non-profit, permanent living arrangements that allow tenants to be independent. It offers support workers who can help you continue to live in your home. The support can be flexible to change with your needs. Much of the supportive housing that is available is in buildings with shared living spaces, including the kitchen and bathroom. There are also self-contained apartments.

The support in supported housing is flexible and can change as your needs change. Support services are also “portable”, which means that if you decide to move, you can continue to receive support at your new location.

### **Who can live in supportive housing?**

Usually people can only apply to live in supportive housing if one or more of the following things applies to them:

- ▶ They have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness;
- ▶ They have had a minimum number of admissions to one or more psychiatric facilities;
- ▶ They have spent a minimum amount of time in one or more psychiatric facilities.

Non-profit organizations offer housing with different levels of support.

- ▶ **High support** offers staff support 24 hours a day, often in group living situations. For example, they include Homes for Special Care, which are designed for patients who are leaving one of the provincial psychiatric hospitals (like the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Queen Street Division or the Whitby Mental Health Centre); room and board (meals) are provided.
- ▶ **Medium support** has staff support every day, but not overnight.
- ▶ **Low support** provides staff support once a week.
- ▶ **On call** means that staff are available when you need them. This kind of housing expects that tenants do not need much support, or have other supports.
- ▶ **Variable support** means that support can vary from time to time, depending on your needs and preferences.

The chart on the next page includes information about what housing you can find in Toronto. Only non-profit agencies offer supportive housing.

If you want to know more about your options, look at *The Housing Guide 2004–2006: A Comprehensive Guide for People with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Concerns*. You can buy a copy from The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) for \$24.95 by calling 416-595-6059. Or you can look at the guide at [www.camh.net/housingguide](http://www.camh.net/housingguide).

## MORE ABOUT HOUSING

Who owns it?	What is it?	What does it cost?	How can I find a place to rent?
Private landlords	You can rent a room, an apartment or a house in a building that is owned by a person or a company.	Landlords charge rent based on what their property would be worth if they tried to sell it. This is called <b>market rent</b> .  If the rent is very cheap, it is usually because the property is not very nice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ look for signs outside the place for rent</li> <li>▶ read the classified ads in newspapers</li> <li>▶ check Craigslist at <a href="http://toronto.craigslist.org/">http://toronto.craigslist.org/</a></li> <li>▶ look in the Yellow Pages to find property management companies that work to help landlords find tenants.</li> </ul>
Toronto Community Housing	<p><b>Social housing</b> is owned by the government. It is for people with low income. You can apply to rent an apartment or townhouse if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ on Ontario Works or</li> <li>▶ on ODSP or</li> <li>▶ not earning enough income to cover your rent and daily living.</li> </ul>	Your rent is based on your income. You will never pay more than 30% of your income in rent.  The rent is low because government helps to pay for it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ call Housing Connections at 416-981-6111. This is an automated number. You will be put on the list of people waiting for social housing.</li> </ul> <p>You may have to wait for a few months to several years to get a place to live. If you have mental illness you might be put on a shorter waiting list.</p>
Non-profit agencies	More than 120 agencies in Toronto rent housing for people with mental illness. They also give support to people who live in their buildings. This is called <b>supportive housing</b> because it is a place to live that gives you support.	Your rent will be more affordable than market rent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ call 211 Toronto (dial 211), or 416-397-4636 or go to <a href="http://www.211toronto.ca">www.211toronto.ca</a></li> </ul>

## ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT HOUSING

### Evictions

**Q: Does my landlord have to follow any rules if he or she wants to evict me?**

**A: Yes.** You cannot be evicted unless your landlord applies to the Tribunal and receives an order allowing him or her to evict you.

Your landlord is allowed to give you notice to move out for the following reasons:

- ▶ you do not pay your rent;
- ▶ you often pay your rent late;
- ▶ your landlady or your landlord's spouse or child needs the apartment;
- ▶ you and your guests commit illegal acts on the premises;
- ▶ you or your guests damage the building;
- ▶ you or your guests make problems for the landlord or other tenants in the building.

There are other reasons your landlord may evict you. If your landlord gives you a Notice of Termination, it means they want to evict you. Get legal advice right away.

If you get a Notice of Termination, you do not have to leave on the date in the Notice. You have the right to challenge the notice. But you will have only 5 days to respond in writing. Landlord and tenant must try to come to an agreement. If you cannot afford a lawyer, a lawyer at the Tribunal will work for you. They are called duty counsel.

### Privacy

**Q: Can my landlord enter my apartment whenever he or she wants?**

**A: No.** A landlord can only enter your apartment if he or she tells you, in writing, 24 hours before they want to come in.

Landlords must give this notice to do repairs or to allow a potential purchaser, insurer, or mortgagee to view the apartment. They must also give notice to enter for any reason set out in your tenancy agreement.

However, there are some times that a landlord is allowed to enter your apartment without telling you in writing. The only times they can do this are:

- ▶ in case of emergency;
- ▶ if you consent when they come to the door;

- ▶ if your lease or agreement with the landlord says he or she can come in to clean;
- ▶ to show the apartment to a new tenant if you have told the landlord you will be moving out or if your landlord has given you a Notice of Termination.

### **Discrimination**

**Q: When I tried to rent an apartment, the superintendent told me that the building already has too many immigrants. Is this discrimination against the law?**

**A: Yes.** The Ontario Human Rights Code says that it is against the law for landlords to refuse to rent to you because of your race, sex, age, colour, nationality, religion or place of origin. They also cannot discriminate against you because you are disabled, single, married, living common-law, receiving public assistance, gay or lesbian, or because one or more of your children live with you.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, get help! Call:

- ▶ the Ontario Human Rights Commission: 416 326-9511;
- ▶ the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA): 416 944-0087;
- ▶ your local community legal clinic.

### **Disagreeing with your landlord**

Your rights as a tenant are included in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2007. It covers many issues such as withdrawal of services, parking charges, the disposal of tenants' property, subletting, or assignment of the tenancy. If you disagree with your landlord, or have a problem with harassment, rent increases, maintenance issues or other problems, talk to other tenants in your building or contact your tenants' association. You can also get help from other places:

- ▶ **Community Legal Clinics** may provide free legal help or advice to low-income tenants. You can find the community legal clinic nearest you under "Legal Aid" or "Legal Clinics" in the white pages of the phone book, or under "Lawyers" in the Yellow Pages. Or you can call 211 to ask for the legal clinic nearest you. (From a pay phone, dial 416-397-4636.)
- ▶ **Inspectors** make sure that buildings are safe. To ask for an inspection, phone your local property standards department or your city hall, municipal office or local councillor. Look under "Buildings and Inspections" in the Local Municipal Government section of the blue pages of your phone book.

- ▶ **Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (ORHT)** has lots of general information about landlord and tenant issues. It also lists the ORHT offices in Toronto.  
**www.orht.gov.on.ca**  
**(416) 645-8080 or 1 888-332-3234**
- ▶ **Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations** gives tenants information and advice, and can also help you organize tenants' associations.  
**(416) 921-9494**
- ▶ **Community Resource Connections of Toronto (CRCT)** can also help you find more information.

## HOW CAN I STAY HEALTHY?

Being healthy means that you feel good in your body. Being mentally healthy means that you feel good in your mind. It is hard to feel good in your mind when you don't feel good in your body. It is also hard to feel good in your body when you don't feel good in your mind. So when you are healthy you are taking good care of both your body and your mind. Here are some things you can do.

### To feel physically healthy:

- ▶ Eat well. If you cannot afford healthy food, ask other people where to find affordable prices. You might also look for other resources such as food banks.
- ▶ Exercise regularly. Walking is one of the best kinds of exercise. And it does not cost anything. You can even save money if you walk places instead of taking the bus or driving.
- ▶ Get enough sleep and enough rest. Sleep is important to feel good. Try to develop a sleep schedule and follow it.

### To feel mentally healthy:

- ▶ Get involved in activities that you are good at and that you enjoy. You will feel more confident and positive.
- ▶ Set goals that you can achieve and that you value. Work towards your goals.
- ▶ If you are seeing a mental health professional, ask them to help you feel more confident.
- ▶ Do fun things with other people. Enjoy some time with family and friends, or with people who share your interests.

- ▶ Ask your family and friends for support. You may be surprised at how much people enjoy helping to make your life meaningful.
- ▶ Become a volunteer. Being involved can help give you a sense of purpose. We all need to feel useful.
- ▶ Learn to lower stress. Try some ideas from “What you can do to lower stress” on page 14 of this guide.
- ▶ Learn to identify how you are feeling and to deal with your moods. Be at peace with yourself.
- ▶ Join a self-help group. Talking to other people whose situation is like yours will help. Share your problems. For a list of these groups, look in the *Resources* section of this guide.

## Part 4: Treating mental illness

Once you know what mental illness you have, you have some choice about how to treat it. The best way to choose is to learn more about your condition. This guide is a good place to start. You can also get lots of information from mental health organizations. Their websites and print materials include details about what treatments can help. Their information may also talk about some of the problems with different kinds of treatments. Some of their information has been translated into different languages. To find these organizations, look in the *Resources* section of this guide.

There are three types of treatment for mental illness: talking treatments, medication or drug therapies and holistic or complementary treatments. In this section we will tell you general information about each kind of treatment. We hope this will help you decide which treatment you would like to try.

Most mental health professionals now recommend a mix of approaches. This can include talk therapies, drug therapies and a wide range of other approaches. Many professionals also recommend that people **change their habits**, like eating healthier diets, getting enough sleep and staying active.

When you are talking to your mental health professional (e.g. psychiatrist, psychologist, your doctor, nurse), let them know if you are using any of the other treatments, then they can make sure the different approaches complement each other. And, of course, each culture uses approaches that are central to their way of coping with the stresses of day-to-day life and with mental illnesses. So try to use those traditional approaches that you are most familiar with. These are likely to be approaches that you have brought with you from your homeland to Canada.

Use a trial and error approach. Your first experience may not be satisfactory to you. Always let the mental health professional know whether you think their approach is working or not. Let him or her know whether it is making you feel better or worse.

Before you go to see a mental health professional be sure you think carefully about what you want to get from them. The best way to do this is to sit down, carefully think about it and make a list of questions. Keep the list in front of you when you meet with the professional. It will help you remember what you want to ask.

## TALKING TREATMENTS

Talking treatments heal mental illness by talking. The person who has mental illness talks to someone who guides them and helps them to change what they think and how they behave. Talk therapists can be psychiatrists, counsellors, psychotherapists or psychologists.

Talk therapy will work best if you can find someone who understands your experience, your language and culture. It also works best if they are someone you trust. Try to find a therapist who speaks your language. There are very few therapists that speak languages other than English. Therapists who work in other languages might have very long waiting lists.

<b>To find a doctor, contact:</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario	416-967-2626 www.cpso.on.ca
<b>The organizations below can direct you to where to find a doctor:</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Mental Health Service Information	1-866-531-2600
211 Toronto	Dial 211 or 416-397-4636 www.211toronto.ca

**HERE IS GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MAIN KINDS OF TALK TREATMENT.**

Name	How it works	Treatment
Cognitive therapy	Helps change what you are thinking.	The therapist helps the client see when their thoughts are not true, but are caused by their illness. For example, if you are depressed you may have unrealistic bad thoughts about yourself. The negative thoughts make you more depressed. The therapist will help you see that these thoughts are caused by your depression.
Behaviour therapy	Helps you change the things you do, and helps you stop doing things that make the situation worse.	The therapist will help you change the things you do that make your situation worse. For example, if you avoid leaving your home because you are afraid of becoming helpless in a public place, they will help you try things that make you afraid until you feel safe when you go out in public.
Psycho-dynamic therapy	Helps you understand your childhood and develop healthier ideas about yourself.	The therapist helps the client remember conflicts from their childhood. For example, you may be depressed and feel bad about yourself because your parents criticized you a lot when you were a child. The therapist will help you remember what you heard as a child and help you see who you are today.
Inter-personal psychotherapy	Helps heal relationships.	The therapist helps the client see how breakdowns in relationships are connected to depression and helps build healthier relationships.

**What is the difference between psychologists, counsellors, and psychiatrists?**

Psychologists and counsellors use similar approaches to talk therapy, but are not allowed to prescribe medication. Only psychiatrists and your family doctor are licensed to prescribe medication for mental illnesses. If you need medication, a psychologist or counsellor will work with your doctor or a psychiatrist to find the best treatment for you. While most psychiatrists concentrate on medical management of psychiatric illnesses, many also provide a blend of psychotherapy and medication.

**Choosing a counsellor or therapist**

If you decide that you want to try talk treatment, you should choose the therapist that works best for you. Talk to several therapists, then decide who you want to work with. You want to find someone who you trust and feel comfortable with. Do you feel more comfortable with a man or a woman? Does the therapist understand your language and culture? Remember, they can help you most when you have confidence in them. It is also important to ask about experience, training, education, and qualifications. Make sure that the therapist you choose is a member of a regulatory college.

When you are choosing a therapist, you also need to think about your budget. Only psychiatrists and family doctors are covered by OHIP. If you have a health insurance plan at work, find out if it will cover therapy. Make sure it will pay for the kind of therapist you need.

**What will happen on my first visit?**

At your first appointment, the psychiatrist or psychologist will ask you to describe your problem and to tell them details about your personal history. They will ask things like: when did your problem start? What makes it better or worse? How does the problem affect your work? How are your relationships? What kind of social life do you have? The questions about your personal history can focus on your experiences growing up, your education and work history, your marital status and interpersonal relationships, and whether you use medication, alcohol or drugs. The therapist may take one or more sessions to find out this information. They may also ask you to take some psychological tests.

**HERE IS MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PROFESSIONALS WHO OFFER TALK THERAPY:**

<b>Type of therapist</b>	<b>How were they trained? What do they do?</b>
Psychiatrist	<p>Psychiatrists are medically trained doctors who have chosen to specialise in identifying and treating mental disorders. They are trained to use lab tests, brain scans, and other tests to see if other medical conditions, such as low hormone levels or a brain injury, could be the cause of mental health issues. In Canada, all psychiatrists are trained in both medications and in multiple forms of psychotherapy.</p> <p>The cost of seeing a psychiatrist is covered by OHIP, whether they work in a hospital, clinic or in a private office. Many psychiatrists have long lists of patients waiting to see them. Be patient!</p>
Psychologist	<p>Psychologists study how people think, feel and behave from a scientific point of view. They apply this knowledge to help people understand, explain and change their behaviour. They are usually trained in a variety of different therapies. They can diagnose mental illness and decide what type of therapy you might need.</p> <p>In Canada, people must be licensed to practice psychology. If they are qualified to offer therapy they are usually called clinical psychologists or counselling psychologists. Psychologists are called “Doctor” because they have a PhD or a PsyD. They are not trained as medical doctors, and they cannot prescribe medications.</p> <p>You will have to pay to see a psychologist. OHIP will pay for the cost if you see a psychologist at a hospital, correctional facility, community health clinic, social agency or school. Their fees may also be partly covered by health insurance plans, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) or some other private insurance program.</p>

Type of therapist	How were they trained? What do they do?						
<p>Psychotherapist</p>	<p>Psychotherapy involves conversations with a listener who is trained to help you make sense of, and try to change things that are troubling you. These trained professionals are called psychotherapists. It is something you take an active working part in, rather than something you are just prescribed or given, such as medication.</p> <p>Any mental health professional can call themselves a psychotherapist. For this reason you should always check the credentials and education of psychotherapists. Ask if he or she belongs to a regulatory college. If he or she does not, do not seek their services.</p> <p>Some mental health professionals who offer psychotherapy include</p> <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>Psychiatrists</td> <td>Registered psychiatric nurses</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clinical social workers</td> <td>Marriage therapists</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family therapists</td> <td>Clinical psychologists</td> </tr> </table>	Psychiatrists	Registered psychiatric nurses	Clinical social workers	Marriage therapists	Family therapists	Clinical psychologists
Psychiatrists	Registered psychiatric nurses						
Clinical social workers	Marriage therapists						
Family therapists	Clinical psychologists						
<p>Counsellor</p>	<p>Counsellors are people who have training in counselling skills. They may have different backgrounds, and they usually specialize in one particular form of therapy. Counsellors may have their Masters of Social Work.</p>						
<p>Nurse Specialist</p>	<p>Nurse Specialists have trained as nurses and then gone on to further training or gained specialist experience in a particular type of mental health work. For example, Behaviour Nurse Specialists are trained in Behavioural Therapy techniques.</p>						
<p>Social Worker Specialist</p>	<p>Social Worker Specialists are fully-trained social workers who have extra training or experience in one form of psychological treatment.</p>						
<p>Occupational Therapist</p>	<p>Occupational Therapists are trained to help people learn skills that will help them recover. They can help people with practical household or work skills, or things such as how to manage anxiety or how to relax. They usually work at a hospital or as part of a community team.</p>						
<p>Speech and Language Therapist</p>	<p>Speech and language therapists concentrate on problems related to communication (e.g. talking, reading etc). They have had specialist training in this area.</p>						

## MEDICATION OR DRUG THERAPIES

Companies have created many drugs to treat mental illness. Only doctors and psychiatrists can prescribe drugs to treat mental illness.

### How do drugs work?

Drugs treat mental illness by changing the chemicals in your body and your brain.

### Are there any problems with this treatment?

Lots of times, drugs can cause other problems with your body. These are called **side effects**. For example, many drugs that treat depression cause headaches or diarrhea, and make people feel dizzy or very sweaty. Some medications for anxiety disorders make people feel tired and dizzy or put strain on their heart and lungs.

Before you start taking any medication, ask if it has any side effects. Some side effects are caused by taking different drugs at the same time. Make sure you tell your doctor, psychiatrist or pharmacist if you are taking

- ▶ any other medication;
- ▶ herbs or other traditional remedies.

### What can you do?

The best thing to do about side effects is to talk to your doctor, psychiatrist or pharmacist. Tell them about the side effects. Remember, you are the only person who knows how the drug is affecting you.

- ▶ Ask if you can do anything about the side effects.
- ▶ Ask why the drugs make you feel the way you do.
- ▶ Ask if you are taking the right dose of the drug. You may be taking too much or not enough.
- ▶ Do you drink alcohol or coffee, tea or pop? Ask if these drinks could make the side effects worse. Find out if it is safe to drink alcohol or caffeine while you are taking the drug.
- ▶ Tell them about your diet and your lifestyle. What you eat, and when, can affect how you should take the drug.
- ▶ If you are taking an illegal or street drug tell your doctor. Illegal drugs can interfere with the treatment.

You can also learn more about any medications you are taking. This guide lists some of the books that include information about drugs. The list is in the *Resources* section of this guide.

## HOLISTIC OR COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENTS

Holistic treatments are also called traditional therapies, alternative therapies or complementary treatments. They include Ayurveda, Acupuncture, traditional herbal remedies, Homeopathy and Naturopathy. People provide all of these treatments in Toronto.

### **How do holistic treatments work?**

These treatments work with the whole person and his or her environment. Some of these treatments are from specific cultures and are related to spiritual practices. Some have existed for centuries.

Some people are more comfortable with holistic treatments because they treat the whole person. In Canada, some people think these treatments are less reliable than talk therapy or drugs because they are less ‘scientific’. This is a cultural bias in Canadian society. It does not mean that these treatments do not work.

You cannot effectively treat mental illness unless you treat the whole person. Talk treatments and drug treatments work best if they are combined with other treatments. After all, we are all whole and complex people, not partial people. To be well, we need healthy bodies, minds and souls.

### **Are there any problems with these treatments?**

Unfortunately, many holistic treatments are not covered by OHIP. This means that you will have to pay for the treatment. Ask how much the treatment will cost. If you have health insurance at work, find out if it will cover the treatment.

Another problem with holistic treatment is that many types of treatment are not regulated by the government, and the quality of treatment is not consistent. Holistic, alternative or complementary treatments are helpful if they are done by an experienced and trained professional. However, in some cases, they may be harmful, if you are treated by someone who is not experienced. For this reason it is hard to choose where to go for holistic treatment. You need to make sure the person you choose has lots of experience, is well-known and has a good reputation. Make your selection carefully because there are fake healers who prey on people in need.

Some herbal remedies may interfere with drugs that are prescribed by your doctor or psychiatrist. Make sure you tell your doctor or psychiatrist about all the different treatments you are using.

**What can you do?**

- ▶ Be careful about the choice you make.
- ▶ Ask around before you decide which service to use.
- ▶ Look at their websites.
- ▶ Talk to people who have used the services.
- ▶ If you have a mental health worker, have him or her help you find a suitable service.

**HERE IS SOME GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MOST COMMON KINDS OF HOLISTIC OR COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENTS.**

	<b>What is it?</b>	<b>Treatments</b>
Ayurveda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ a system of health preservation developed several thousand years ago in what is now India.</li> </ul>	Uses different approaches including yoga, medicines, exercise and diet.
Acupuncture and other Traditional Chinese Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ ancient treatments developed in what is now China.</li> <li>▶ based on the belief that physical and mental health are connected, so both must be treated at the same time.</li> </ul>	<p>Acupuncture uses fine needles to stimulate energy points in the body. Modern acupuncture also uses electricity, magnets and lasers.</p> <p>Traditional Chinese Medicine also uses herbs and exercise.</p>
Homeopathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ based on the belief that 'like cures like'.</li> <li>▶ based on belief that illness is caused when the 'life force' is disturbed. The 'life force' is the vital energy of the body.</li> </ul>	Uses detailed information about a patient's lifestyle and history, and tries to treat the whole person rather than the disease. Homeopathic medicines are not supposed to have the unpleasant side effects that other drugs have.
Naturopathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ an approach that does not use drugs or surgery.</li> </ul>	The basic goal is to help the body to heal itself. Naturopaths use exercise, and some foods and vitamins. Some naturopaths also put magnets on the skin to make more blood flow to some parts of the body.

## Part 5: Treatment for serious mental illness

Sometimes, people with mental illness need to be in a psychiatric hospital. If you sense that you are not feeling well and that you need help, you go into a hospital. A doctor will see you and do an assessment. If the doctor says that you should be admitted and you decide to go in, you are called a **voluntary patient**. A voluntary patient **is a person who is staying in a psychiatric facility of his or her own free will**.

Sometimes, someone with a mental illness can be put in a psychiatric hospital even if they do not want to go. This is called an **involuntary patient**.

### How did I become an involuntary patient?

You became an involuntary patient once your doctor assessed you and signed a Certificate of Involuntary Admission (Form 3) or a Certificate of Renewal (Form 4).

The *Mental Health Act* sets out two reasons that a person may be held as an involuntary patient:

1. The person is a danger to themselves, other people, or may unintentionally injure themselves;
2. The person's condition is worse and they must be hospitalized.

Two kinds of hospitals in Ontario treat patients with mental illness. Most general hospitals have psychiatric departments or mental health departments. There are also a few psychiatric hospitals, such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in downtown Toronto, and the Whitby Mental Health Centre.

### WHO CAN SEND A PERSON TO HOSPITAL?

- ▶ A **doctor** can apply to send a patient to hospital for a psychiatric assessment. They must fill out an application called a **Form 1**. The form explains why the patient should be put into hospital. It is a psychiatric assessment form.
- ▶ A **police officer** can take a person to a psychiatric hospital if they believe the person is a danger to themselves or other people.
- ▶ A **Justice of the Peace** can order a person to take a psychiatric assessment if they believe that the person is a danger to themselves or other people or is unable to care for himself/herself. They must fill out an order called a **Form 2**.
- ▶ If a person is on trial for a crime and the lawyers think they have a mental illness, a **judge** can order that the person must be examined at a psychiatric hospital.

## HOW DO HOSPITALS HELP PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS?

Hospitals offer three kinds of services:

- ▶ consultation and assessment;
- ▶ hospital-based treatment; and
- ▶ community-based treatment.

To be treated in a hospital, you must have health coverage. You must bring your Ontario Health card (OHIP card) to every appointment or proof that you have some other kind of coverage. In an emergency, you can get treatment even if you don't have any coverage.

### Consultation and assessment

Hospitals can give you and your family an expert opinion about a mental health problem. Each hospital focuses on one kind of problem. For example, one may have an anxiety clinic and another will have a clinic for elderly patients. To be assessed in a hospital, you must be referred by a doctor.

At the hospital you will meet with a doctor or with a team of professionals. If the clinic is in a hospital connected to the University of Toronto, you may also meet with a student. You may be interviewed and tested. You will probably have one to three appointments.

The hospital will send the results of the assessment to the person who referred you. They will also say what they recommend for treatment. Sometimes your doctor will treat you, with support from the hospital. This is called **shared care**.

In an emergency, you can be assessed in a hospital without being referred by a doctor. If you are having a mental health crisis or emergency and cannot see your doctor or psychiatrist, you can go to the Emergency Department of your local hospital. The Emergency Department staff will assess what treatment you need. They may decide that you should be admitted to the psychiatric ward of the hospital.

### Hospital-based treatment

Every hospital offers some services for clients who live in the community. These can include clinics, individual support or therapy, group support or therapy or daytime treatment programs. The services are provided by many different professionals including nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, pharmacists, doctors and psychiatrists. At some hospitals, you may also be treated by students who are supervised by one of these professionals.

Each hospital offers programs to specific groups or needs, such as addictions groups or schizophrenia clinics. Every program has a process for letting people into the program. These can include an interview or a referral form for your doctor to fill out. You can refer yourself to some hospital programs, some need a professional to refer you, and some ask for your doctor to refer you. There are long waiting lists for many of these programs.

If English is not your first language and you are not comfortable expressing yourself in English, ask the professional who is treating you for a cultural interpreter. Most hospitals have interpretation services. If interpretation is not provided for you, ask to talk to the Rights Advisor or Advocate in the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office.

**To find the hospital nearest you, call any of these numbers:**

Organization	Contact Information
211 Toronto	Dial 211 or 416-397-4636
Mental Health Service Information	1-866-531-2600
The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health	416-595-6111

### Community-based treatments

Hospitals treat patients in the community with outreach services such as mobile teams and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT or PACT) teams. Outreach services are offered in your home or in a community setting. Sometimes, hospitals work with community agencies, like hostels, to provide the service. Some programs are informal, such as drop-ins, and some are only for people who have been referred.

Outreach services are usually for people with serious mental health problems like schizophrenia or for groups of people who have difficulty getting treatment, like people who are homeless. The services are provided by psychiatrists and other mental health professionals, and may include assessment, treatment and support or counselling.

There are very few community-based treatment programs. However, more and more hospitals are re-designing their services to include outreach.

## COMMUNITY TREATMENT ORDERS

A Community Treatment Order (“CTO”) is a doctor’s order for a person to receive treatment or care and supervision in the community. The treatment or care and supervision is based on a community treatment plan which outlines the medications, medical appointments and other aspects of care the doctor believes are necessary to allow the person to live in the community rather than in a hospital.

### How long does a CTO last?

A Community Treatment Order (CTO) can last for up to six months. At the end of that time it will expire unless a doctor renews it. If you do not agree with the CTO, you can ask the Consent and Capacity Board to review it.

### Can anyone be placed on a CTO?

**No.** CTOs are for people whose illness can be treated with medication. With a CTO, they will have support in the community so that they can leave the hospital and stay out of the hospital.

### What are the conditions for being placed on a CTO?

People can only be placed on a CTO if six rules and conditions are met. The rules and conditions are specified by law. To be put on a CTO, **all six of these conditions** must be met:

1. The person must have a serious mental illness. During the past three years they must have been a patient in a psychiatric facility two or more times, or for a total of 30 days or more, or they must have been on a CTO in the past.
2. A community treatment plan must have been developed with the person’s input, or the input of his/her Substitute Decision Maker. Other people who must have had input to the plan include the person’s doctor and any other people involved in his/her care.
3. The doctor must have examined the person in the 72 hours before the plan is entered into. They must believe:
  - ▶ that the person is suffering from a mental illness that requires continuing treatment or care and supervision while they live in the community;
  - ▶ if the person is not currently a patient in a psychiatric facility, he/she would meet the conditions for a psychiatric assessment (Form 1);
  - ▶ if the person does not receive continuing treatment or care and supervision in the community, it is likely, because of his/her mental illness, that

- he/she will seriously hurt himself or herself or someone else, or he/she will get much more ill, mentally or physically;
- ▶ the person is able to follow the plan; and
  - ▶ the treatment or care and supervision included in the plan are available in the community.
4. The doctor has talked to all the people who are named in the community treatment plan.
  5. The doctor is satisfied that the person and his/her Substitute Decision Maker have consulted with a rights advisor and been informed of the person's legal rights.
  6. The person or his/her Substitute Decision Maker have consented to the plan.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In the last 40 years, Canada has moved from an institutional approach (hospitals) to a community approach. Most Western countries have made this major change. Back in the early 1960s, thousands of people were in psychiatric hospitals across Ontario. Many were in hospital for long periods of time. Nowadays, only a few hundred people are kept in hospitals for a long time.

These days, people believe that keeping someone in the hospital for a long time harms them more than it helps them. New medications make it easier to manage mental illness outside a hospital. When people with mental health problems are in the community, they are closer to the regular day-to-day activities of the society. This helps them more than keeping them isolated in a hospital.

These changes mean that community-based supports are more important than ever. These services exist to support you and your family with all of the issues that come up because of your mental illness or mental health issues. They also help you understand more about your mental health and what choices you have for treatment.

The main types of community mental health agencies and supports are case managers (or individual support workers or community support workers), Assertive Community Treatment teams, Drop-In Centres and Self-Help Groups.

The CTO section is from the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office's *Rights Guides* (April 2003). It is available online at [www.ppao.gov.on.ca](http://www.ppao.gov.on.ca).

The first time you phone a community mental health agency, ask to speak with an **Intake Worker**. They will ask you a few questions over the phone or will ask you to come to an appointment. You should tell them as much as you can about your mental health, what supports you have and any other problems you are having. You should also tell them if you want to work with someone who speaks your language and understands your culture. The more information they have, the more they can help you. After the interview, mental health professionals will look at the information and decide what to do and how they can help meet your needs. They may refer you to other programs that are more suitable to your needs. Don't be discouraged if they do.

### **Case Managers or Community Support Workers**

Case managers or community support workers are mental health professionals who are employed at a community mental health agency, a hospital or another mental health setting. They provide support, encouragement, counselling and feedback to help you realize your goals and to cope and recover from mental illness. They can also teach you skills and help you find ways to solve problems. Case managers cannot diagnose your mental illness but they can help you understand your medication and your illness. They can also help you get mental health services and other vital supports. They work closely with people in the community. Their role is:

- ▶ to assess what you need;
- ▶ to provide ongoing support;
- ▶ to monitor your situation;
- ▶ to link you to other services depending on your individual needs and interests;
- ▶ to work with you to develop an individual service plan, which includes your goals.

The case manager spends enough time with each person to get to know them as a 'whole person' instead of as a client. Case managers often give support in informal ways, like meeting to talk at a coffee shop, at your home or any other community setting that you prefer and agree to with your case manager.

**Assertive Community Treatment Teams**

Assertive Community Treatment teams (ACTT) support individuals who need intensive help every day. The team usually includes a psychiatrist, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, mental health workers and peer counsellors. It might also include addiction workers or vocational workers. An Assertive Community Treatment team tries to give the person a wide range of supports.

**Drop-in Centres**

Drop-in Centres are places where people can get together informally. Most drop-in centres are places where people can socialize and take part in education and recreation activities. To find a drop-in centre near you, contact 211 Toronto (dial 211 or 416-397-4636) or go to their website at [www.211toronto.ca](http://www.211toronto.ca).

**Self-Help Groups**

There are many groups in Toronto that operate so people who are dealing with similar issues can help themselves and each other. These are called peer support or self-help groups. Many groups are in English, but you may be able to find a support group in your language.

One self-help group for people with mental health problems is the Peer Support Program. It is operated by people who have had a mental illness. The program does not give emotional support to people individually, but it will help you find the support you need in a group setting. To contact the Peer Support Program, call CMHA Toronto at 416-789-7957 or go to [www.toronto.cmha.ca](http://www.toronto.cmha.ca).

To find other kinds of peer support and self-help groups, call the Self-Help Resource Centre of Greater Toronto at 416-487-4355. Their website is at [www.selfhelp.on.ca](http://www.selfhelp.on.ca). You can also look in the *Resources* section in this guide.

# Part 6: Your rights

## THE RIGHT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Every professional who treats your mental health is not allowed to share any information about you. All the information they have about you is completely confidential. This means that it cannot be shared with anyone, unless you give your consent or the law says they must share your information. The only time your information will be shared without your consent is when your health or safety is at risk or if someone else's health or safety is at risk.

## THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Professionals who treat your mental health are allowed to collect information about your health and your treatment. This is called personal health information. The professional treating you can give your personal health information to other professionals who are treating you. They **cannot** give your personal health information to anybody else without your permission.

If a court has decided that you are not mentally competent to make decisions about yourself, you will have a Substitute Decision Maker. Your Substitute Decision Maker is the only person who can give permission for a professional to share your personal health information.

Your right to privacy is a very important right. The highest court in Canada – the Supreme Court of Canada – decided that people in Canada have this right. This legislation is called the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA); it governs the collection, use and disclosure of Personal Health Information in Ontario.

## THE RIGHT TO ACCESS

You have the right to see **all** of the information that any mental health professional has about you. This information is **your** property. The only time you cannot see the information about you is when there is a good chance that you or someone else can be harmed.

If you are concerned about your confidentiality or privacy, you have the right to ask any agency or professional about their privacy and confidentiality policies.

## THE RIGHT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Every mental health professional belongs to a professional college or an agency. The colleges have rules about how their members should act with patients or clients. They also have rules about what to do when patients complain about a member. Doctors, psychiatrists, social workers and psychologists all belong to professional colleges. The agencies by which they are employed also have policies to deal with client complaints.

If you feel that a mental health professional has treated you in a way that is not appropriate, you have the right to make a complaint. Contact their professional association or the manager of the program. If you do not speak English or French, the college will provide an interpreter. You can also ask your community legal clinic to help you with the complaint.

To find out where to make a complaint, call Community Resource Connections of Toronto at 416-482-4103.

### **Example: Complaints about doctors**

The college for doctors is called The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. If you have a complaint about a doctor, you must put your complaint in writing. You can use the complaint form on their website at [www.cpso.on.ca/Info\\_Public/compform.htm](http://www.cpso.on.ca/Info_Public/compform.htm).

Once they receive your complaint, the college will contact you and tell you what will happen next.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons does not have a policy about how to work with people who do not speak or read English or French, but the college will help you. What they will do depends on what the complaint is about. By law, they must take your complaint seriously and investigate it.

For more information, call The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario at 416-967-2615.

## MORE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS

Here is more information about your rights in different situations.

### **DO YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A CASE MANAGER OR COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKER?**

If you are not satisfied with the services provided by your case manager or community support worker, call the agency and ask to speak with a manager. Explain what you are concerned

about. Ask about their complaint process. If you are not satisfied, ask a family member or an advocacy agency for assistance.

### **ARE YOU SEEING A PSYCHOTHERAPIST OR COUNSELLOR?**

If you are seeing a therapist or counsellor, you have the right to make a complaint if your counsellor or therapist acts in ways that are not professional. You also have the right to privacy. Your counsellor or therapist cannot share information about you. To guard your privacy and to be protected, make sure your therapist or counsellor belongs to a regulatory college.

If you want to know more about your rights, you should read a booklet created by the Client Rights Project. The booklet talks about what you can do to help make sure that your relationship with your counsellor or therapist is healthy. It is available only in English and French.

The Client Rights Project believe that people often start therapy when they are feeling vulnerable and confused, so they do not think they can be active in the process. This means that the therapist holds all the power in the relationship and you can be directed by the therapist's needs instead of your needs.

The Client Rights Project says that there are things you can do to increase your power in the relationship with your counsellor or therapist. Here are some of the things you can do:

- ▶ Before you meet the therapist, talk to a few people who have used the therapist. Ask them what kinds of attitudes and approaches the therapist has.
- ▶ The first time you meet with the therapist, talk about the treatment. Ask if any parts of the treatment might harm you and find out what you can do about the side effects. Then you can decide if you want that treatment.
- ▶ Talk about the therapist's ideas. They may not be the best ones. Do not be scared. You have the right to decide whether his/her ideas match yours.
- ▶ If you are not comfortable with any of the things the therapist wants to do, say "no". You have the right.
- ▶ Ask the therapist not to touch you. You have the right.
- ▶ Remember that you can decide when the therapy should end.

To get a copy of the Client Rights Project booklet, email [client.rights@sympatico.ca](mailto:client.rights@sympatico.ca) or call 416-531-7182.

## **ARE YOU LESS THAN 16 YEARS OF AGE?**

If you are under 16 years of age and are in the hospital as an involuntary patient, you cannot leave unless your doctor gives permission. If you do not agree with your doctor, you can ask the Consent and Capacity Board to review your case every three months.

## **ARE YOU UNABLE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN AFFAIRS?**

The Public Guardian and Trustee supports adults who need help managing their affairs. The Public Guardian and Trustee also supports the families of people who cannot take care of their own affairs. Here is what they do:

- ▶ help adults get support;
- ▶ investigate abuse or neglect;
- ▶ help people make decisions about health care;
- ▶ help people manage their finances;
- ▶ manage personal care.

## **ARE YOU A PATIENT IN A HOSPITAL?**

Patients in hospitals have the same rights as other people. They also have some other rights.

### **The right to leave hospital**

If you made the choice to go into the hospital, you can leave at any time. If you are an involuntary client, you cannot leave until your doctor thinks you will not hurt yourself or other people. You must wait until your doctor gives you permission to leave.

### **The right to refuse treatment**

You can refuse treatment in a psychiatric hospital, if your doctor thinks you can understand what it means to have treatment and what it means to agree or disagree with treatment.

### **The right to know about the laws**

You have the right to know about the Mental Health Act. You also have the right to know how doctors make decisions about your treatment.

### **The right to practice your religion while in hospital**

You have a right to the regular, normal practices of your religion. This includes worship, diet, prayer and the other regular religious disciplines of your faith group. You also have a right to the visitation, direction and support your faith community offers. The Chaplain or Spiritual

and Religious Caregiver will help arrange for other hospital services to accommodate your needs and respect your faith practices. (PPAO *Rights Guides* 2003)

### **The right to talk to a Rights Advisor**

If anything changes in your status as a patient you have the right to talk to a Rights Advisor. Their job is to tell you about your rights and tell you what you can do if you do not agree with how the hospital is treating you. Rights Advisors work in every hospital in Ontario that treats people with mental illness. If you do not speak English or French, the Rights Advisor will have an interpreter when they talk to you.

If you want more information about Rights Advisors, call the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office (PPAO) at 416-327-7000 or outside the GTA call 1-800-578-2343 or visit their website at [www.ppa.gov.on.ca](http://www.ppa.gov.on.ca). You can also access PPAO's Infoguide and *Rights Guides*. These guides provide general information about a person's rights.

## **WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS?**

In Ontario, decisions about mental health are controlled by a law called the Mental Health Act of Ontario. The law is long and written in legal language. The Mental Health Act says:

- ▶ how mental health patients in Ontario should be cared for and treated;
- ▶ the rights and responsibilities of mental health patients in Ontario;
- ▶ the rights and responsibilities of people who work in mental health in Ontario;
- ▶ what health providers must do when someone is a patient in a psychiatric facility or a hospital;
- ▶ who is allowed to decide that a person must stay in hospital because of their mental illness.

If you want a copy of the Mental Health Act of Ontario, you can:

- ▶ read it online at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)
- ▶ buy a copy from the Ontario Government Bookstore at 880 Bay Street (at the corner of Grosvenor Street)
- ▶ order a copy from the Service Ontario Publications by calling 416-326-5300 or 1-800-268-7540

The Act is only available in English and French and it is written in very legalistic language. If you can, ask someone who speaks English very well to explain it to you.

**What does the law mean for you?**

The Mental Health Act has a say on how to stop people who have a mental illness from harming themselves or others. It also says how to make sure that people are not kept in hospital without a good reason.

**WHAT ARE THE RULES ABOUT KEEPING A PERSON IN HOSPITAL?**

The Mental Health Act includes rules about how long people can be in the hospital. How long you stay in the hospital depends on why you are there.

Reason you are in the hospital	How long will I be in the hospital?	What else should I know?
I am here on a <b>Form 1</b> .	You must stay up to three days.	<p><b>Form 1 is not legal unless the hospital gives you a Form 42.</b></p> <p>The Form 42 says you have the right to contact a lawyer.</p>
I asked to go in, and have been in for three days.	The doctor and the treatment team talk to you to decide how long your admission will last.	
I asked to go in, I have been in for three days, and <b>now my doctor wants me to stay as an involuntary patient.</b>	<p>You may have to stay as long as <b>two weeks</b>.</p> <p>You can leave before then, if your doctor does not think you will hurt yourself or other people.</p>	<p><b>Your doctor must fill out a Form 3.</b> The Form 3 is not legal unless the hospital gives you a Form 30. It outlines the criteria for your admission. Rights Advice is provided by a Rights Advisory. This is important because Form 3 is not enough to understand your rights.</p> <p>A Rights Advisor will visit you to explain your rights, and help you if you do not agree with your doctor.</p> <p>If your doctor does not fill out a Form 3, you can leave.</p>
My doctor filled out a <b>Form 3 but I want to go home.</b>	You may have to stay for two more weeks.	<p><b>If you do not agree</b> with the Form 3, you <b>must fill in a Form 16</b>. When you do, the Consent and Capacity Board will meet to hear your case within seven days.</p>
My doctor filled out a <b>Form 3 two weeks ago.</b>	Your doctor can sign a Form 4 again. The third Form 4 and following Form 4s all expire after three months.	<p><b>Your doctor must fill out a Form 4.</b></p> <p>The Form 4 is not legal unless the hospital gives you a <b>Form 30</b>. The Form 30 tells you your rights.</p> <p>If your doctor does not fill out a Form 4, you become a voluntary patient.</p>
My doctor filled out a <b>Form 4 one month ago.</b>	You may have to stay for one or two more months.	<p><b>Your doctor can fill out another Form 4.</b></p> <p>If your doctor does not fill out another Form 4, you become a voluntary patient.</p>

## WHAT FORMS DO HOSPITALS USE, AND WHAT ARE THEY FOR?

	What is it called?	How is the form used?
Form 1	Application by Physician for Psychiatric Assessment	<p>Doctors fill out this form if they think a person may hurt themselves or other people. A Form 1 can be used to send that patient to a psychiatric hospital.</p> <p>The Form 1 does not allow anyone to detain you in jail or in any other institution. It can only be used to send you to a psychiatric hospital.</p> <p>Once the doctor completes the assessment you must be released, admitted as a voluntary or informal patient, or admitted as an involuntary patient.</p>
Form 3	Certificate of Involuntary Admission	Doctors fill out this form if they think a person should not leave hospital because they may hurt themselves or other people. A Form 3 is used to keep a patient in the hospital as an involuntary patient.
Form 4	Certificate of Renewal	Doctors fill out this form if they think a person should stay in hospital as an involuntary patient.
Form 16	Application to the Board to Review a Patient's Involuntary Status under Subsection 39(1) of the Act	You fill out this form if you think that you should not be kept in hospital as an involuntary patient.
Form 30	Notice to Patient under Subsection 38(1) of the Act	The hospital must give you this form when they put you on Form 3 or a Form 4. It explains that you have the right to talk to a lawyer.
Form 42	Notice to Person under Subsection 38(1) of the Act of Application for Psychiatric Assessment under Section 15 or an Order under Section 32 of the Act	The hospital must give you this form immediately when they detain you at a psychiatric facility for assessment under Form 1 or a Form 3. It explains your rights as an involuntary patient.
Form 47	Order for Examination Sections 33.3(1) and 33.4 (3) of the Act	This form is for patients who are under Community Treatment Orders. Doctors fill out this form when they believe a patient is not following the Community Treatment Order. Doctors use this form to ask police to bring the patient to the hospital for an examination.

You can get a copy of all of these forms on the website for the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care at [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca). You can also get detailed information about these forms in the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office's Infoguides at: [www.ppao.gov.on.ca](http://www.ppao.gov.on.ca). The Infoguides are in English so have someone who speaks English very well explain them to you.

### **WHAT IS THE CONSENT AND CAPACITY BOARD?**

The Consent and Capacity Board is an independent body created by the provincial government of Ontario under the Health Care Consent Act. The board members include psychiatrists, lawyers and members of the general public. Their role is to make sure that the rights of people with mental illness are balanced with the public's need to be safe. The board conducts hearings under the Mental Health Act, the Health Care Consent Act, the Personal Health Information Protection Act and the Substitute Decisions Act.

### **WHO CAN HELP WITH YOUR RIGHTS**

For a list of groups and individuals who can help you, look under Advocacy in the *Resources* section of this guide.

# Part 7: Mental illness and the criminal justice system

If you have a mental illness and are charged with a crime, **get help**. Criminal charges are serious. Even a minor charge can affect your life.

If you are not a citizen, being charged with a serious crime may mean that you will face serious legal problems. If you are a refugee, your permanent resident application might be affected; if you are a permanent resident and want to apply for citizenship and you are found guilty of a serious crime you might not be able to apply for a citizenship and you might be deported.

A serious crime is one that is punished with ten or more years in jail.

The court system is very complex, so anyone who is charged with a crime should get help. (For more information see the section on *Mental Health and Citizenship* on page 17.)

One of the things you can do if you have a criminal record is apply to remove your criminal record. If you have been charged with a criminal offence, you have a criminal record. You can apply for a pardon by filling out the application forms available from the Clemency and Pardons section of Parole Board of Canada (NPB). Make sure you send all required documents or the application can be delayed.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR A PARDON

The National Parole Board publishes a Pardon Application Guide which carefully explains the process and includes all forms you will need. There are private companies who offer their assistance in obtaining pardons for individuals (for a fee), but the process is reasonably easy and designed to allow individuals to apply on their own. The booklet is also available on the National Parole Board web site at <http://www.npb-cnrc.gc.ca>. To apply for a pardon, or to remove your criminal record contact: Pardons INFO Line 1-800-874-2652.

Organization	Contact Information
Pardons Information Line	1-800-874-2652 <a href="http://pbc-clcc.gc.ca/prdons/servic-eng.shtml">http://pbc-clcc.gc.ca/prdons/servic-eng.shtml</a>

People with mental illness can get help from Mental Health Court Support Services. You do not have to pay for these services. The program is paid for by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Attorney General.

## HOW DO I FIND MENTAL HEALTH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES?

If you are charged with a minor crime, contact Mental Health Court Support Services. They will help anyone in Toronto. Different mental health programs offer Mental Health Court Support Services in many provincial courts. Here is a list of phone numbers in Toronto.

<b>Court</b>	<b>Who can help</b>	<b>Phone number</b>
Old City Hall Provincial Court	CRCT Mental Health Court Workers or CRCT Court Support Program Manager	416-364-8394
Consolidated Mental Health Courts (Room 102)	CRCT Mental Health Court Workers or CRCT Court Support Program Manager Room 20	416-364-8394
College Park Provincial Court	Community Resource Connections of Toronto (CRCT) Room 263 and 265	416-598-8103 or 416-598-8108
Metro West Provincial Court	Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) West Toronto Courtroom 203, Room 146	416-745-5775
Metro North Provincial Court	COTA Health	416-667-0933
Metro East Provincial Court	Canadian Mental Health Association – Toronto (CMHA)	416-285-4177

## WHAT DO MENTAL HEALTH COURT SUPPORT WORKERS DO?

Mental Health Court Support Workers can help you in many ways. They can work closely with you to:

- ▶ give you advice and support;
- ▶ advocate on your behalf;
- ▶ connect you to services and supports;
- ▶ assist you in getting your basic needs, like housing and food by connecting you to the appropriate service and support;
- ▶ screen your charges and tell you if the charges are serious or minor;
- ▶ if suitable, recommend you for Mental Health Diversion.

When you meet with a Mental Health Court Support Worker, they will ask about your situation and what you need. They will assess your mental health status and find out if you are getting treatment. They will help you find supports and services for the short term. If you need long-term support, they will refer you to a case manager or an individual support worker.

The Mental Health Court Support Worker will also review if you are eligible for the Mental Health Diversion Program.

## WHO CAN CONTACT MENTAL HEALTH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES?

Anybody can. You can ask for help for yourself. If your friend or a member of your family is charged with a crime, you can contact the Mental Health Court Support Services.

Other people who can make referral to the Mental Health Diversion include the police, your lawyer, the Duty Counsel, the Crown Attorney, a judge, or a community agency.

## WHAT ELSE DOES MENTAL HEALTH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DO?

Mental Health Court Support Services also supports other people and the court system. Here are some of the other things it does:

- ▶ gives support and information to the family and friends of people whose cases are sent for Mental Health Diversion;
- ▶ educates the public about mental illness, what services exist for people with mental illness and how the mental health system works;
- ▶ gives advice and information to judges, lawyers and other people who work in the courts.

## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION?

Mental Health Diversion is how courts in Ontario handle some cases of criminal charges against people with mental illness. The cases are diverted and the charges are withdrawn or the crown attorney might **stay the charges**. This involves a suspension of the court proceedings for one year. The crown attorney can reactivate the charges(s) within the one year suspension period. After this one year period the charges are automatically withdrawn. The goal of the mental health diversion is to treat the person's mental illness, to provide the support they need, and to link them to services instead of criminalizing the illness.

If you have been charged with a minor criminal offense (not domestic, sexual or causing bodily harm), and have or think you are struggling with a mental health issue, then you might be eligible for the Mental Health Diversion Program.

To qualify for this, you will meet with a Mental Health Court Support worker who will screen your charges, explain the program to you and develop a diversion plan with you.

## WHAT IS A DIVERSION PLAN?

When you talk to the Mental Health Court Support Worker, they will ask what you need. They will advise you on what you could do to avoid being charged with any other crimes, how to improve your mental health and how to find support in the community.

The Mental Health Court Support Worker will make a list of the things you talked about and make a plan with you. This is called a diversion plan. The plan could say that you must be assessed and treated by a psychiatrist. It could say what things could support your basic needs like a place to live, food and clothing. It could also say what other services in the community could support you for a short time, or over a longer period.

**How does Mental Health Diversion Work?**

- ▶ Diversion is voluntary, it is up to you to accept it; you can instead choose a trial.
- ▶ By accepting the program, **you are not pleading guilty, and you will not get a criminal record.**
- ▶ You will be screened to make sure you are eligible.
- ▶ You and the Mental Health Worker will come up with a way to support your mental health.
- ▶ You will be required to follow through with the support decided upon.

**Is my record kept after the diversion?**

A record will be kept saying that you were given diversion, however, you will not have a criminal record. If you are asked whether you have ever been “found guilty” or “convicted” of a criminal offence, you can truthfully say “**NO**”.

**What will I do if I accept the diversion?**

In most mental health diversion programs you will only have to follow your diversion plan. Sometimes you might be asked by your defense or immigration lawyer to do something appropriate to help your case, especially if you have an immigration hearing. This might involve:

- ▶ a donation to the charity of your choice;
- ▶ performing volunteer work;
- ▶ writing a letter of apology.

**Do I need a lawyer for the diversion process?**

**No, you do not.** The Mental Health Court Support Worker is your advocate and support for this process.

**How long does Diversion take?**

Mental Health Diversion process could take 3 to 6 months; in rare cases it might take up to a year.

## MY CASE HAS GONE TO TRIAL AND I AM NOT A CITIZEN. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME?

If you are convicted of a serious crime, **you may be deported**. This is true if you are a permanent resident or a refugee. A serious crime is one where you are jailed for more than six months or are sentenced to ten or more years in jail.

If you are charged with any crime, **talk to your lawyer**. Tell them that you are not a Canadian citizen. Ask if your case can be sent to the Mental Health Diversion. If you do not have a lawyer, talk to the duty counsel at the court. You can also ask them to connect you with a mental health court support worker.

If the Crown sees the charge as serious, your case may not be sent for Mental Health Diversion. If a court decides that you are not criminally responsible due to mental illness or you are found not guilty, you cannot be deported. However, the court may force you to stay in a psychiatric hospital or to take treatment.

### What will happen if I am convicted?

Here is what will happen if you are not a citizen and the court decides you are guilty of a serious crime.

	What will happen	What you should do?
Step 1: Interview	The Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship may tell you to come to an interview. At the interview, they will ask about your crime and what ties you have in Canada.	If you are asked to an interview, you must go. If you <b>cannot</b> go at the time they give you, you must contact the immigration office and tell them.  You can take a family member, a friend or a mental health worker with you to the interview. You should also take proof that you are trying to get better. For example, you can take a note from your doctor, a letter stating you are a volunteer or working part-time.

	What will happen	What you should do?
Step 2: Hearing	<p>Step 2 is an <b>admissibility hearing</b>. The Immigration Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board will hold this hearing. They will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ ask about the crime you were charged with;</li> <li>▶ ask what the court decided;</li> <li>▶ ask about your immigration status.</li> </ul> <p>If you are appealing the court’s decision, you should tell the Board.</p>	<p>If you are from a country where you fear persecution, you must tell the Board at this hearing, even if you never made a refugee claim. You <b>must</b> claim refugee status at this hearing <b>before</b> the Board decides you should be deported. If a family member sponsored your application for permanent residence a long time ago, it is even more important that you claim refugee status. Your claim for refugee protection will be processed by a different part of the Immigration and Refugee Board, called the Refugee Determination Division.</p>
Step 3: Decision	<p>If the admissibility hearing decides that a criminal court found you guilty of a serious offence, the Board will issue an order for you to be deported. The Board member will tell you that you have the right to appeal the decision. You must ask for an appeal <b>within 30 days</b>. It is easy to ask for an appeal. You must fill in a form called a “Notice of Appeal”.</p> <p>When the Immigration Division makes its decision, if you have been given a sentence of two years or more, you cannot appeal their decision.</p>	

	<b>What will happen</b>	<b>What you should do?</b>
Step 4: Appeal	<p>At the appeal hearing, the Immigration Appeal Division will hear your appeal and will decide if you should be deported. Here are some of the things they consider when they make their decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ what kinds of crimes you are guilty of;</li> <li>▶ how many times you have been found guilty;</li> <li>▶ if you are likely to get better;</li> <li>▶ how much family you have in Canada;</li> <li>▶ how long you have been in Canada;</li> <li>▶ what supports you have in the community;</li> <li>▶ how established you are in Canada;</li> <li>▶ what is best for your children;</li> <li>▶ what will happen to your family in Canada if you are deported;</li> <li>▶ what might happen to you in the country you will be sent to.</li> </ul>	
After the Hearing	<p>When the hearing is finished, the Appeal Division can make one of three decisions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They can <b>dismiss</b> your appeal. This means you will be deported.</li> <li>2. They can <b>allow</b> your appeal. This means you will not be deported.</li> <li>3. They can put your deportation on hold. This is called a <b>stay of deportation</b>. You will be asked to do certain things as part of your conditions of not being deported. For example, you may have to agree to continue treatment, to keep your job, to attend school, and to not commit any more crimes. Your appeal will be allowed if you follow these conditions for a certain period of time, usually two to five years. If you do not follow the conditions, your appeal may be dismissed and you will be deported.</li> </ol>	

# Part 8: Helping someone with a mental illness

## MENTAL ILLNESS AND YOUR FAMILY

Most people spend a lot of time with their families. When we are young children we spend almost all of our time with our relatives. We spend less and less time with them when we are teenagers. When we are adults, most of us form our own families and keep close links with the family of our childhood.

For some families this may change after coming to Canada. Sometimes most of their family is left in the homeland or in different countries. The family here in Canada is just a small part of their whole family. This is very hard for people who come from countries where families include a large group of relatives. In Canada, they must survive without many of the supports they had in their homeland. This can be very stressful.

When a person has mental health difficulties, it can have a big effect on the people near to them and people who care about them. The people affected can include family members and friends, neighbours, coworkers and others. When someone close to you is in distress, or when they are changing in ways that seem strange, you may not know what to do. This can be difficult and frightening.

People who are closest to someone with mental health issues may:

- ▶ be puzzled about the changes in the person's moods, or in how the person acts;
- ▶ feel confused about what should happen;
- ▶ be afraid to ask for help because of the stigma in our society;
- ▶ need time to deal with the diagnosis, if and when one is made;
- ▶ be anxious about the treatments and what the future holds.

They may also have some of these reactions and feelings:

- ▶ a sense of loss and sadness because the change in the person has been so dramatic;
- ▶ anger at how unfair the situation is;
- ▶ feel unable to accept the changes;
- ▶ a need to find ordinary explanations for what is wrong.

## HOW FAMILIES ARE AFFECTED BY MENTAL ILLNESS

When you learn that someone close to you has mental health issues, you will find that your own situation has also changed. Family members often end up having many roles when they are caring for a relative who is not well. They may find that they become a nurse, counsellor, advocate, crisis worker, homecare worker and income provider.

Often, when they reach out to help their family member, caregivers learn what their relatives need but they do not realize what their own needs are. When families do not take care of themselves, it isn't good for anyone.

Service providers, the government and the public mostly assume that the family can and should make huge sacrifices. They do not realize how many demands are put on the family, and how unreasonable it is to assume that families should sacrifice so much. This lack of understanding and support for families is one of the drawbacks of the system in Ontario. For example, family members are often not included in treatment plans, even when their relative may want them to be included.

Families that carry enormous responsibilities and obligations without even basic support can suffer emotional burnout. They can end up withdrawing from their relatives. Luckily, there is help.

## SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

### Family support groups

Family support groups provide valuable help. These groups include:

- ▶ self-help family groups that are open to all families;
- ▶ family education and support programs in hospitals;
- ▶ education and support groups run by community agencies;
- ▶ groups organized around a particular diagnosis or a class of disorders, like the Mood Disorders Association of Toronto and Schizophrenia Society of Ontario; and
- ▶ groups for people speaking a particular language.

These family groups stress that family members need the following services and supports:

- ▶ information about mental health recovery, mental health problems, treatment options and basic support;
- ▶ support, during times of crisis and during times of ongoing recovery, from the mental health care system;
- ▶ programs that help family caregivers take care of themselves; and
- ▶ programs that allow families to support each other.

Family groups also advocate for mental health services to be improved and for ending discrimination against people with mental health issues. Often, families are stuck in the middle – between their relatives and a specialized system of care on one side, and the community and the wider public on the other. Families can help to promote a more positive environment for mental health care.

### **Resources**

Many books, brochures and videos are also available. Some of the places you can find these resources include:

- ▶ your local library;
- ▶ family organizations;
- ▶ the Canadian Mental Health Association – Ontario Division;
- ▶ the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health – Clarke Site;
- ▶ Gerstein Science Library of the University of Toronto, for technical information;
- ▶ Social Work Department, the Ministry of Health; and
- ▶ local public health departments.

Unfortunately, almost all of this information is only available in English.

### **HOW CAN FAMILY MEMBERS HELP SOMEONE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

Families can really help people who have mental illness. They can recognize the first signs of mental illness. They can help a person get help and make wise decisions about treatment. Families can help a person by supporting them during treatment. All of these things will help a person who is trying to overcome a mental illness.

Talking to your family doctor might be the first thing you do. Your family doctor could:

- ▶ refer your relative to a psychiatrist or hospital;
- ▶ prescribe medication and tell you what it can do, and about any negative side effects.

When you build a trusting relationship with a doctor, public health nurse or mental health service provider, you can all begin to work as a team in caring for the family member who is ill. Family members who are providing care must pay attention to their own needs, and tell the doctor, public health nurse or mental health service provider how the stress is affecting all members of the family.

Here are some things that family members can do to help a person with mental health issues:

- ▶ Find out what symptoms of the illness the person cannot control.  
They could be:
  - ▷ hearing voices that are telling them to do harmful things;
  - ▷ thinking things that do not make sense;
  - ▷ eating and sleeping at strange times;
  - ▷ seeing things that nobody else sees;
  - ▷ doing things in public that are not appropriate.Try to accept these as part of their illness.
- ▶ Learn the warning signs of suicide. They include:
  - ▷ closing their bank account, giving away things they own, or doing anything that shows they do not plan to be alive much longer;
  - ▷ talking a lot about how to commit suicide;
  - ▷ feeling despair most of the time.
- ▶ Pay attention if a person threatens suicide. If you think they are going to hurt themselves, **call 911**. When in an emergency, try to do the following:
  - ▷ remain calm!
  - ▷ listen to the person in crisis – what they say may hold the information you need to resolve the crisis;
  - ▷ by listening you are assuring your loved one that you are trying to help them;
  - ▷ remember your safety – if you are the focus of the person’s anxiety, let someone else talk to them;

- ▷ reduce distractions – give the person space, turn off the TV or radio and make sure only a few people are helping with the crisis.
- ▶ Believe that recovery is a possibility for everyone.
- ▶ Use language of hope and possibility.
- ▶ Be hopeful when your family member cannot be. Understand that recovery is a personal process.
- ▶ Encourage your family member to be active and productive, for example, by voting, volunteering, looking for work, going to school, and organizing family activities.
- ▶ Be realistic. Do not expect too much, or too little. Focus on his or her strengths.
- ▶ Learn how much it can hurt someone when other people judge them for having a mental illness. Try to help other members of your family understand how much this judgment can harm the person who is dealing with mental illness.
- ▶ **Do not** try to force someone to take **medication or treatment**. Nobody has the right to do that, not even a family member.
- ▶ Help the whole family learn how the stigma of mental illness can affect everyone. Remember that the person with a mental illness is still the same person. The only change is that they are having difficulty dealing with life in the way they used to.
- ▶ Take care of yourself. Make sure you keep living your own life, even if it seems hard or not normal. For example, keep going to work, keep volunteering, make time for your hobbies, and take any trips you had planned.
- ▶ When the person is recovering from an episode, let them approach life at their own pace. Try to do things **with** them, not **for** them. Encourage them to do things for themselves. This will help them feel more confident.
- ▶ Know when you should do something. Pay attention to the person's symptoms. If they seem to be getting worse, ask for help. Call their mental health worker and other supports.
- ▶ Get involved with a local support or self-help group. For a list of self-help groups, look in the *Resources* section in this guide.

Remember family support is important to the recovery of the person dealing with mental health issues. Support from the family will help the person to live up to their potential and to cope with the illness.

## ADVOCACY CAN HELP

We all know people who work to improve something. This is called **advocacy**. A person who does this kind of work is called an advocate. Some of us act as informal advocates, either for ourselves, or for other people. Informal advocates can be friends or family members, people who work at agencies, case managers or individual support workers, social workers, or your family doctor.

In mental health, advocacy means working on the following issues:

- ▶ Improving the quality of mental health services.
- ▶ Making sure that mental health services are available and open to people who need them.
- ▶ Making sure that people’s rights are fully respected within the mental health services system, within the justice system, and in the broader community.
- ▶ Making sure that service providers and the general public do not discriminate against you or anybody else.
- ▶ Changing any situation or condition to improve the lives of people who have a mental illness, or who had a mental illness in the past.

Some advocacy is individual. For example, you may be advocating for yourself, trying to get better treatment from the mental health services system or making sure your therapist treats you with respect. Individual advocacy also includes someone working on your behalf. For example, someone might try to help your Ontario Disability Support Program worker understand more about your illness. Some people who often advocate for people with mental illness include case managers, community support workers, someone with their own mental health issues, a patient advocate, or a doctor.

Some advocacy deals with broader issues. It is called **systemic advocacy**. For example, people may be trying to convince the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to be more flexible about payments, or advocating for employers to hire people with a history of mental illness.

Systemic advocacy may be carried out by active individuals or by organized groups. One such group is the Ontario Coalition of Alternative Businesses (OCAB). It is an organization which advocates for business and work-creation opportunities for people who have mental illness.

It can help you to know about groups and individuals who do advocacy work. What they do can improve your life in important ways. A list of relevant advocacy groups is listed in the *Resources* section of this guide.

## Part 9: Resources for more information

### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND SERVICES:

- ▶ call **Community Resource Connections of Toronto**  
**416-482-4103**  
**www.crct.org**
- ▶ read *Making Choices: CRCT's Guide to Adult Mental Health Services and Supports in Toronto*. You can get a copy by calling **416-482-4103** or going to our website **www.crct.org**
- ▶ call **Mental Health Services Information Ontario**  
**1-866-531-2600**  
**www.mhsio.on.ca**  
They give free information about mental health services and supports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The information is available in over 140 languages.
- ▶ look on the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at **www.health.gov.on.ca**. Type “Mental Health” in the search window. The site includes general information about mental health care issues and legal issues related to mental health in Ontario. It also includes the Mental Health Act.
- ▶ look at the website for **Psychdirect**. It is a public education and information program of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. The program aims to educate people about mental health issues, to reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues and to encourage early detection and intervention. Their website includes lots of information on mental health issues and some of the latest mental health research. **www.psychdirect.com**
- ▶ to find any kind of service in Toronto, **call 211** (or 416-397-4636) or go to **www.211toronto.ca**. To find mental health services, enter “Mental Health” in the search window.

## MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ For a list of resources about mental health, read *Making Choices: CRCT's Guide to Adult Mental Health Services and Supports in Toronto*. It is available online or from CRCT.
  - ▶ The **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health** in Toronto website has lots of information about mental health issues. They print books and fact sheets in several languages.
  - ▶ **Across Boundaries, An Ethnoracial Mental Health Organization** can put you in touch with supports and services familiar with your culture and language.
  - ▶ The website for the Ontario branch of the **Canadian Mental Health Association** has lots of information on mental health services. Their Fact Sheets are excellent summaries of many mental health issues.
  - ▶ The **Mood Disorders Association of Ontario** website has short and easily understood Fact Sheets about many mental illnesses.
  - ▶ The website for the national office of the **Canadian Mental Health Association** has lots of information on mental health issues in Canada.
- www.crct.org**  
416-482-4103
- www.camh.net**  
416-595-6059
- www.acrossboundaries.ca**  
416-787-3007
- www.ontario.cmha.ca**  
416-977-5580
- www.mooddisorders.on.ca**  
416-486-8046
- www.cmha.ca**  
416-484-7750

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YOUR LANGUAGE

### Organization

### Phone Number

#### CHINESE (MANDARIN & CANTONESE), KHMER, KOREAN, VIETNAMESE

Hong Fook Mental Health Association

416 493-4242

#### DARI/PASHTO SERVICES:

Across Boundaries, An Ethnoracial Mental Health Organization

416-787-3007

Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization

416-588-3585

Canadian Mental Health Association – Rehabilitation Action Program

416-289-6285

#### FARSI SERVICES:

Across Boundaries, An Ethnoracial Mental Health Organization

416-787-3007

Alternatives: The East York Mental Health Counselling Services Agency

416-285-7996

Community Resource Connections of Toronto

416-482-4103

#### SOMALI AND TAMIL SERVICES:

Across Boundaries, An Ethnoracial Mental Health Organization

416-787-3007

Canadian Mental Health Association – Rehabilitation Action Program

416-289-6285

Community Resource Connections of Toronto

416-482-4103

#### SPANISH SERVICES:

Spanish Mental Health Program (SMHP) - General Psychiatry, Community Mental Health and Addictions - Toronto Western Hospital

416-603-5974

Spanish Speaking Family Support Program - Toronto Western Hospital

416-603-5747

#### URDU SERVICES:

Across Boundaries, An Ethnoracial Mental Health Organization

416-787-3007

## HELP FOR NEWCOMERS

- ▶ For general information about settlement issues, visit **www.settlement.org**. This website includes a lot of information about finding a job, legal issues in sponsorship and immigration, how to find an agency that has settlement programs, and much more.
- ▶ **Across Boundaries** is an ethnoracial mental health agency that can connect you with programs that understand your culture and language.
- ▶ The **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health** has translated their fact sheets about mental health into many languages. They also published *Alone in Canada: 21 Ways to Make it Better – a self-help guide for single newcomers*. It is available online in Dari, Urdu, Somali and Tamil.
- ▶ The **Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture** helps people heal from torture. Their website has lots of practical information about recovery, and links to services in Toronto.
- ▶ **Catholic Cross Cultural Services** provides settlement services to immigrants and refugees through counselling, community outreach, education and workshops and participates in LINC.
- ▶ **Community Resource Connections of Toronto** has translated information about mental health into many languages. They also published *Navigating Mental Health Services Guide: a Guide for Newcomer Communities*. It is available online in Arabic, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Dari, English, Farsi, Pashto, Somali, Spanish, Tamil and Urdu. CRCT also provides mental health services in different languages.

**www.settlement.org**

**www.acrossboundaries.ca**  
**416-787-3007**

**www.camh.net**  
**416-535-8501**

**www.ccvvt.org**  
**416-363-1066**

**www.cathcrosscultural.org**  
**416-757-7010**

**www.crct.org**  
**416-482-4103**

- ▶ **COSTI Immigrant Services** assists settlement, information and referral, advocacy, orientation, sponsorship, job search training, translation and interpretation, mental health services, and LINC classes (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada).
- ▶ **Family Services Toronto** provides counselling and educational programs for those seeking support in dealing with relationships and family problems, parenting, depression, anxiety, job loss, separation, divorce and new relationships, sexual abuse and childhood trauma, life transitions and other issues. The agency also provides other programs and supports. They also provide individual and group counseling for women in abusive relationships. Services are provided in different languages including Farsi.
- ▶ **Northwood Neighbourhood Services** assists settlement, information and referral, advocacy, orientation, sponsorship, child services, translation and interpretation, mental health services, and LINC classes (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada).

[www.costi.org](http://www.costi.org)  
416-658-1600

[www.familyserVICEToronto.org](http://www.familyserVICEToronto.org)  
416-595-9618

[www.northw.ca](http://www.northw.ca)

## AFGHAN SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **Afghan Women’s Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization** helps the Afghan community with settlement, information and referral, advocacy, orientation, sponsorship, job search training, translation and interpretation, mental health services, and LINC classes (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada).
- ▶ **Afghan Association of Ontario** provides a range of services including orientation, integration and settlement services, counselling, information and referral, translation and interpretation, escort services, sponsorship assistance, and form filling including government and housing applications.

[www.afghanwomen.org](http://www.afghanwomen.org)  
416-588-3585

416-744-9289

## ARABIC SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **Arab Community Centre of Toronto** – Services include: information and referral, housing and legal assistance, translation and interpretation, escorting clients to appointments, individual and group counselling for adults and youth, parenting sessions, counselling and referral for victims of family violence, and settlement and orientation services for refugee and immigrants.
- ▶ **Arab Immigrant Centre** – Settlement services such as orientation, assistance with government applications including work permits, sponsorships, assistance with refugee claims and landing documents, information and referral, interpretation and translation, legal consultation – immigration procedures and laws and other services such as advocacy, completion of legal forms, basic counselling and referrals – youth, seniors, marriage and divorce

[www.arabcommunitycentre.com](http://www.arabcommunitycentre.com)  
416-231-7746

416-444-1163

### CHINESE SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **Cross-Cultural Community Services Association** – Some of the services provided include: Information, counselling, referral, translation and interpretation and settlement services: English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, citizenship classes, LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes as well as youth, women and seniors programs and support groups.
- ▶ **Chinese Family Services of Ontario** – Services provided include: Counselling – individual, group, couple, marital, family, youth, women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexual and transgendered people, seniors, immigrants, newcomers. Counselling issues include – elder abuse, family violence, wife assault, male batterers, incest, sexual assault, offenders, bereavement, gambling, and substance abuse. Settlement services, crisis intervention, youth program and employee assistance is also provided.

[www.tccsa.on.ca](http://www.tccsa.on.ca)  
416-977-4026

[www.chinesefamilyso.com](http://www.chinesefamilyso.com)  
416-979-8299

### FARSI SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **Iranian Women’s Organization of Ontario** provides various settlement services, support group, counselling, information and referral, drop-in for mothers and children, seniors program, quarterly mobile health clinic, by appointment only and educational workshops
- ▶ **Iranian Community Association of Ontario** provides Settlement and orientation, translation and interpretation, family counselling, information and referral on accommodation, education, skills upgrading, computer classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, help with form filling, job search workshops and assistance with resumes as well as cultural activities

[www.iwontario.com](http://www.iwontario.com)  
416-496-9566

[www.iranianassociation.ca](http://www.iranianassociation.ca)  
416-441-2656

## SOMALI SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **Dejinta Beesha** provides settlement and integration services, counselling, information and referral, translation and interpretation, escort service and after school programs.
- ▶ **Midaynta Community Services** helps people complete sponsorship and landing forms, monitors sponsorship and immigration cases. It also offers settlement and orientation, referrals, general counselling, translation and interpretation, employment counselling, family violence and child welfare counselling, youth leadership development and seniors services.

416-743-1286

[www.midaynta.com](http://www.midaynta.com)  
416-544-1992

## SPANISH SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **York Hispanic Centre** provides Settlement services, information, referral, counselling, translation and interpretation, form filling, educational workshops, assistance finding housing, Advice Lawyer – Legal Aid clinic for summary advice and job search skills training and employment counselling. Services are for Spanish speaking community or people of Hispanic and South American heritage.
- ▶ **The Spanish Mental Health Program (SMHP)** is a multi-disciplinary team that includes a psychiatrist, a psychologist, three clinicians, a case management and a family support worker. The program serves the Spanish-speaking population living in Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area and cities in South Western Ontario.

416-651-9166

[http://www.uhn.ca/clinics\\_&\\_services/clinics/psychiatry/programs/GPA/Clinics/SMHP.asp](http://www.uhn.ca/clinics_&_services/clinics/psychiatry/programs/GPA/Clinics/SMHP.asp)  
416-603-5747

### Services:

Psychiatric Assessment, medication management, Brief Solution-Focused Therapy/Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, case management for serious mental illnesses, family support and education and referral to community resources when needed.

### TAMIL SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **Vasantham (Tamil Seniors Wellness Centre)** is an agency that provides health and mental health information, education and referral, elder abuse, domestic violence, addiction counselling, crisis intervention and trauma counselling, elder abuse support group, and advocacy.
- ▶ **Tamil Eelam Society of Canada** provides settlement services, family support and counselling, referrals to temporary accommodation for victims of domestic violence and new arrivals, English as a Second Language (ESL) and first language literacy classes, participates in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), translation and interpretation, job search and resume preparation, and seminars and workshops on senior, women and youth issues.

<http://www.vasanthamontario.org/>  
416-324-4185

416-757-6043

### URDU SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS:

- ▶ **South Asian Family Support Services** provides various settlement services, translation and interpretation, addiction counselling, family counselling, domestic violence counselling, family workshops, job search workshops, senior and youth services.
- ▶ **South Asian Women's Centre** provides settlement services, information and referral, translation and interpretation, advocacy, guidance related to family violence, counselling and referral for assaulted women, crisis intervention, job search workshops, employment assistance and counselling, English conversation classes, and legal advice on family law, immigration, custody, child support, and abuse.

[www.safss.com](http://www.safss.com)  
416-431-4847

[www.southasianwomenscentre.ca](http://www.southasianwomenscentre.ca)  
416-537-2276

## ADDICTION SERVICES

- ▶ **Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment (DART)** is an infoline that provides you with information about drug and alcohol treatment services in Ontario, 24 hours a day.
- ▶ **Metro Addiction Assessment Referral Service** provides in person assessment, brief counselling if required, information on addiction treatment options, referrals and professional consultation. MAARS provides cultural interpreters.

[www.dart.on.ca](http://www.dart.on.ca)  
1-800-565-8603

416-599-1448

## SELF-HELP GROUPS

- ▶ The **Self Help Resources Centre of Greater Toronto** can tell you if there are any groups of people who have the same interests and concerns as you. They can also give you information about how to start a self-help group.
- ▶ The **Consumer/Survivor Information Resource Centre** produces a newsletter that talks about what is happening in the consumer/survivor community in Toronto. The newsletter also has information about work and educational opportunities.
- ▶ The **Mood Disorders Association of Ontario** has online discussion groups for people dealing with different mental health issues.

[www.selfhelp.on.ca](http://www.selfhelp.on.ca)  
416-487-4355

[csinfo@camh.net](mailto:csinfo@camh.net)  
416-595-2882

[www.mooddorders.on.ca](http://www.mooddorders.on.ca)  
416-486-8046

## FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **Family Association for Mental Health Everywhere** provides education, information, advocacy and individual supportive counselling, monthly educational meetings, support groups for children, youth, families, partners and spouses.
- ▶ **Family Outreach and Response Program** assists families with individual support, information and referral, support groups, and educational events.
- ▶ **Family Service Association of Toronto** a multi-service agency whose services include counselling and support for individuals, couples and families, and support groups.
- ▶ **Family Support Program – Toronto East General Hospital** offers an eight-week group series to family and friends of individuals diagnosed with a major psychotic disorder.

[www.fameforfamilies.com](http://www.fameforfamilies.com)  
416-207-5032

[www.familymentalhealthrecovery.org](http://www.familymentalhealthrecovery.org)  
416-535-8501 ext 2011

[www.fsatoronto.com](http://www.fsatoronto.com)  
416-595-9618

416-461-2000 ext 223

## ADVOCACY

- ▶ The **Ontario Peer Development Institute** gives support and information to individuals and to consumer/survivor groups across Ontario.
- ▶ The **Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office (PPAO)** hires patient advocates who work in every psychiatric hospital in Ontario. Their website includes lots of information about rights and advocacy.
- ▶ The **Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (OCAB)** advocates for business opportunities and jobs for people who have had mental illness.
- ▶ The **Client Rights Project** produced a booklet that talks about what rights you have if you are seeing a counsellor or therapist. To get a copy of the Client Rights Project booklet call or email.

[www.opdi.org](http://www.opdi.org)  
416-484-8785

[www.ppao.gov.on.ca](http://www.ppao.gov.on.ca)  
416-327-7000

[ocab@on.aibn.com](mailto:ocab@on.aibn.com)  
416-504-1693

[client.rights@sympatico.ca](mailto:client.rights@sympatico.ca)  
416-531-7182

## SOURCES OF INCOME

- ▶ If you cannot work permanently or for a long time, you can apply for **Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP)**.
- ▶ If you are still employed but unable to work because of illness, contact **Workplace Safety and Insurance Board**.
- ▶ If you have worked in the past, you can apply for **Canada Pension Plan** disability benefits.
- ▶ You can apply for **Ontario Works (OW)** for short-term help if you are unemployed with no Employment Insurance benefits, are unable to work and waiting for Ontario Disability Supports Program benefits, or are a youth in school who has left home.

<http://www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/programs/social/odsp/index.aspx>  
416-325-5666

[www.wsib.on.ca](http://www.wsib.on.ca)  
416-344-1000

[www.sdc.gc.ca](http://www.sdc.gc.ca)  
1-800-277-9914

[http://www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/programs/social/odsp/income\\_support/apply\\_Income.aspx](http://www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/programs/social/odsp/income_support/apply_Income.aspx)  
416-392-8623

## HOUSING

- ▶ To get on a **waiting list for social housing**, call Toronto Social Housing Connections.
- ▶ To find out about housing for people with mental health issues, read *Housing Guide 2004/2006* published by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. You can download a free copy from their website.

[www.housingconnections.ca](http://www.housingconnections.ca)  
416-981-6111

[www.camh.net/housingguide](http://www.camh.net/housingguide)  
416-595-6059  
(If you order a copy by phone, it costs \$24.95.)

## WORK AND TRAINING

- ▶ To get advice about mental health issues and the workplace, visit the **Mental Health Works** website. This is a project of the Ontario branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

[www.mentalhealthworks.ca](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca)  
416-977-5580 ext. 4120

- ▶ To find out about jobs for people with mental health issues, contact the **Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses** (OCAB).
- ▶ **Human Resources and Skills Development Training Canada** has a website that helps connect people with possible jobs. It is called the Possibilities Project.

**ocab@on.aibn.com**  
**416-504-1693**

**www.poss.ca**

## BOOKS ABOUT MEDICATION

Many books include detailed information on the many psychiatric drugs available – what they are used for and their side-effects. Here are three.

Gorman, Jack (1998), *The Essential Guide to Psychiatric Drugs, 3rd Edition*, St. New York: Martin's Press

Preston, John D., Talaga, Mary C., and O'Neal, John H. (2003), *Consumer's Guide to Psychiatric Drugs – Revised Edition*, Gretna, LA: Wellness Institute

Townsend, Mary C. (1995), *Drug Guide for Psychiatric Nursing, 2nd Edition*, Philadelphia: F.A. Davies Company

## OUTSIDE OF ONTARIO

- ▶ To find materials about mental health for newcomers in other parts of Canada, go to the Health Canada website. To focus on mental health, type “Mental Health” in the search window.
- ▶ The website for the national office of the Canadian Mental Health Association has lots of information on mental health issues in Canada.

**www.hc-sc.gc.ca**  
**Toll free: 1-866-225-0709**

**www.cmha.ca**  
**416-484-7750**

Resources listed in this guide do not constitute an endorsement by CRCT, nor are these resources exhaustive. Nothing is implied by an organization not being referenced.

# Part 10: Things to Remember

Often people are afraid to talk about mental health because there are many misconceptions about mental illness.

It is important to learn the facts to stop discrimination and to begin treating people with mental illness with respect and dignity. These are things that are mentioned in different parts of this guide, however, we want to repeat this important message and leave you with these common myths and facts.

## MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

**Myth: There's no hope for people with mental illness.**

**Fact:** People with mental illness lead active, productive lives. There are more treatments, strategies, and community supports than ever before. More are on the way.

**Myth: People with mental illness are violent and unpredictable.**

**Fact:** In reality, almost every person who has mental illness is no more violent than anyone else. In fact, they are much more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves. You probably know someone with a mental illness and don't even realize it.

**Myth: I can't do anything for someone with mental health needs.**

**Fact:** You can do a lot, starting with the way you act and how you speak. You can create an environment that nurtures them by building on people's strengths and promotes good mental health. For example:

- ▶ You can avoid labelling people with words like "crazy," "wacko," "loony," or by their diagnosis. Instead of saying someone is a "schizophrenic" say "a person with schizophrenia."
- ▶ You can learn the facts about mental health and share them with others, especially if you hear something that is untrue.
- ▶ You can treat people with mental illnesses with respect and dignity, as you would anybody else.

**Myth: Mental illness cannot affect me.**

**Fact:** Mental illness is very common – it affects almost every family in Canada. Mental illness does not discriminate. It can affect anyone.

**Myth: Mental illness is the same as a developmental delay.**

**Fact:** The two are distinct disorders. A developmental delay means that a person's intellectual function is limited and they find some daily living skills difficult. People with mental illnesses have a range of intellects, just like the general population. Their condition causes a change in their thinking, their mood and how they act. It does not affect their intellect.

**Myth: Mental illness is caused by weak character.**

**Fact:** Mental illness results from a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors. Research has shown genetic and biological factors are associated with schizophrenia and depression. Social influences, such as loss of a loved one or a job, can lead to various other illnesses.

**Myth: People with mental health needs, even those who have received effective treatment and have recovered, are not good workers.**

**Fact:** Employers who have hired people with mental illness say that they are punctual and have good attendance. They also say people with mental illness are motivated, do good work, and they stay in jobs the same as, or more than, other employees. Studies by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) show that there are no differences in productivity when people with mental illness are compared to other employees.

**Myth: Once people develop mental illness, they will never recover.**

**Fact:** Studies show that most people with mental illness get better, and many recover completely. This means that people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. For some individuals, recovery means being able to live a fulfilling and productive life. For others, recovery means their symptoms are reduced or ended. Science has shown that having hope is important for a person's recovery.

**Myth: People with mental illness are poor or less intelligent.**

**Fact:** Many studies show that most people with mental illness have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone no matter how intelligent they are, what social class they belong to or what their level of income is.

**Myth: Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.**

**Fact:** A mental illness is not a character flaw, it is an illness. It has nothing to do with being weak or lacking willpower. Although people with mental illness can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill. They are not lazy because they cannot just get better when they want to.

This section was adapted from: *The Elimination of Barriers Initiative: Myths & Facts About Mental Health*, produced by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Maryland, USA. It is available by calling (240) 276-1330 and *Understanding Mental Illness*, produced by the Canadian Mental Health Association, available online at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca).

# Part 11: References

Several written resources played a key role in the development of this guide, either in terms of content or in terms of formatting and style. These were:

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) – Fact sheets.

Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario (2005), *Being There: When Mental Illness Strikes Someone Near You*, Toronto

Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto (no date), *Understanding Mental Illness: Resource Manual*, Toronto

Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation (no date), *When Something's Wrong: Ideas for Families*, Toronto

Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (2003), *Challenges and Choices: Finding Mental Health Services in Toronto*, Toronto

Client Rights Project (1998), *Client Rights in Therapy and Counselling: A Handbook of Client Rights and Therapist Responsibility*, Toronto

Community Resource Connections of Toronto (2006), *Making Choices: CRCT's Guide to Adult Mental Health Services and Supports in Toronto*, Toronto

Frances, Allen and First, Michael B. (1999), *Am I Okay? A Layman's Guide to the Psychiatrist's Bible*, New York: Touchstone.

©2006 Mind, reprinted from 'Understanding Mental Illness' by permission of Mind (National Association for Mental Health), [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office (April 2003), *Info Guide*, Toronto

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (no date), *Rights and Responsibilities: Mental Health and the Law*, Toronto

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2005), *The Elimination of Barriers Initiative: Myths & Facts About Mental Health*, Maryland

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005), *Recovering Your Mental Health: A Self-Help Guide*, Rockville, Md.

For more information on mental health resources, or a copy of this guide, please contact Community Resource Connections of Toronto at 416-482-4103 or visit our website to download a copy <http://www.crct.org>

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TRILLIUM  
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**LA FONDATION  
TRILLIUM  
DE L'ONTARIO**



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