

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Healthy, empowered people are the foundation of resilient communities, as are the quality community mental health and mental health services that buffer people from hardship.

People experiencing mental illness often face specific challenges in creating a high quality of life for themselves. They may have difficulty finding stable employment, accessing affordable treatment, and may face enduring stigma and discrimination. Those in rural communities can find it particularly challenging to navigate their mental illness.

"Accessing addiction and mental health services is challenging, especially in rural and remote areas."

- Alberta Mental Health Review, 2015

Mental Health Challenges for Rural Communities

Service Challenges

Scarcity: In general, it is more difficult to access services; rural residents cite long travel times as a reason for not accessing counselling or addictions services.

Cost of services: Professional aid can be very expensive without comprehensive healthcare coverage.

Effectiveness: Inadequate funding for programs leads to long waitlists, high rates of turnover, gaps in the types of services provided and limited follow-up ability.

Social Challenges

Stigma: Rural communities experience higher levels of mental health stigma than urban areas.

Lack of economic opportunity: Lower income levels and rates of unemployment or underemployment are major points of distress for rural residents

Indigenous intergenerational trauma: Deep-rooted trauma from the Canadian residential school system, discrimination and oppressive policy has created complex mental health problems for Indigenous peoples.

Community includes everyone, and strengthening our rural communities means we must have a compassionate, informed and properly equipped workforce that can uplift people struggling with mental illness and poor mental health.

Healthy, empowered people are the foundation of resilient communities.

Personal Resilience is one of the Canadian Mental Health Association's five characteristics for mental health fitness and well-being, along with *Ability to Enjoy Life, Balance, Self-actualization* and *Flexibility*. It describes a person's ability to bounce back after hardship, to put events into perspective and make plans to recover, to find support through friends and family, and to move forward with resolve and optimism.

How is your personal resilience?

Do the statements below resonate with you? Are you challenged by any of them? Take the CMHA's mental health meter quiz to learn more about your mental health and ways to manage your emotions, motivation, and outlook.

[Learn more and take the quiz >>>](#)

I am able to live my life and follow healthy routines even when I'm under considerable stress.

I can be happy without guilt following major emotional upheaval.

When I feel overwhelmed by problems, I can make a plan to address them.

I confide in and find support from my friends and family in difficult times.

I get involved in issues that are important and affect me.

I think there is potential to learn and grow from difficult times.

