

# MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS – DIRECT SERVICES

The following are some of the issues identified by CMHA in Alberta as areas of concern relating directly to the provision of mental health services:

1. Support for community services is inadequate to meet present demand let alone the latent demand that exists. It is widely recognized that community-based mental health services are more effective in most cases than institutional services but only if adequate resources are made available for community support.

It should also be noted that while medication is often needed, it is not a replacement for support services.

2. More long-term support is needed for those unable to maintain treatment for chronic, recurring problems.
3. Assertive Community Treatment programs don't meet current demands and need to be greatly enhanced. There are several modes of ACT which help people to get and maintain a treatment program but a severe shortage of funding to support them. ACT is an expensive investment but it pays dividends in the long term in improved care and compliance.
4. More early intervention programs are needed, including more for pre-65 clients with early onset of cognitive deterioration.
5. More psychiatrists are needed along with improved accessibility to their services, particularly in northern and rural areas, e.g. Grande Prairie. This concern applies to CTOs but is also true for treatment on a broader basis.
6. More capacity is required for treatment of those with concurrent disorders, e.g. mental illness and addiction.
7. There is a shortage of psychiatric beds in most hospitals. There is little benefit of expanding criteria for admission for treatment if there are not enough beds available.
8. Improved integration and coordination of mental health services is needed.
9. Enforcement, implementation plan and appeals procedures are needed for CTOs.
10. Increased education and resources are needed at the family physician level.