

# CMHA Mental Health Promotion Tool Kit

## What's the Tool Kit About?

Although the factors that influence mental health are numerous and complex, there are many simple ways to support and sustain mental health at the community level. The projects that are profiled in this tool kit provide examples of straightforward and effective approaches to promoting mental health in diverse communities.

This tool kit emphasizes that the means to promote mental health are already present in communities. Mental health promotion requires imagination, innovation and partnership, but it does not require extensive financial resources or training. Identifying and mobilizing individual and community assets can help mental health promotion projects to take root and flourish, benefiting all members of the community.

The Introduction to this document provides information on the origins of the tool kit, the Canadian Mental Health Associations (CMHA) background in mental health promotion, and a glossary of key terms that we will be using throughout the tool kit. This background provides the context for the sections that follow.

Part 1, briefly introduces the projects chosen as examples of effective mental health promotion at the community level. For each of the three examples, you'll find a background to and summary of the project. This will set the stage for Part 2, where we'll explore the process of developing, implementing and evaluating mental health promotion projects, using examples from the three projects to illustrate important points.

Part 2, the meat and potatoes of the tool kit, is organized around a planning model that has been well used in many different communities to achieve a variety of goals. The planning model presents the process of promoting mental health at the community level as a series of steps. The model will serve as an overall guide, and examples from the three projects will animate and illustrate the steps.

## Forward

### What is Mental Health Promotion?

Research from a number of sources<sup>1</sup> shows that mental health promotion is a concept that has significant potential for contributing to the well-being of individuals and communities. But what exactly does it mean?

Good mental health is a goal that most of us share, and mental health promotion is a means of reaching that goal. Mental health is promoted through processes which give people the ability to function well, or which remove barriers that may prevent people from having control over their mental health.

For example, strengthening people's ability to bounce back from adversity and manage the inevitable obstacles that life tends to throw in our path is a fundamental way of promoting mental health. In general, though, any actions which are taken for the purpose of fostering, protecting and improving mental health can be seen as mental health promotion. These can range from community-level interventions such as equitable social policy development, to individual-level interventions which cultivate skills, attitudes and behaviors conducive to mental health.

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<sup>1</sup> See annotated resource list at the end of this section.

Mental health promotion applies to the whole population in the context of everyday life; it is not only for those who experience mental health illness, nor for those who are considered to be at risk. There is a role, however, for interventions designed specifically for certain groups, such as people who care for a family member with mental illness.

There are a few key factors to keep in mind in relation to mental health promotion. One is the importance of informal relationships -- with friends, family, co-workers, and others - which play a vital role in supporting and maintaining positive mental health. Mental health promotion initiatives build on the networks of social support that are already present in communities, and create new relationships that enhance our sense of belonging.

Secondly, it is important to consider that mental health promotion can take many forms. Because positive mental health is the result of many interacting factors, there is no single way to promote it. Communities are made up of a diverse range of people, so efforts to promote mental health need to consider a variety of strategies and approaches that are relevant to the full range. Finally, it is essential that efforts to promote mental health recognize and reflect the diversity of cultures within our communities; these efforts will contribute to building a society that ensures fair and equitable treatment -- one that accommodates and respects the dignity of people of all origins.

To be successful, mental health promotion efforts require active citizen involvement in identifying mental health needs, setting priorities, controlling and implementing solutions, and evaluating progress towards goals - essentially a community development model.

In a sense, this is no different from the process followed in most community-based health promotion projects. If the process is so similar, why set mental health promotion apart from generic health promotion efforts?

Although the principles and processes may be similar, the outcomes of mental health promotion and generic health promotion can be quite different whereas health promotion projects might be working toward improved cardiovascular health or decreased rates of smoking, mental health promotion focuses explicitly on mental health outcomes such as increased sense of personal control, empowerment, self-determination, and resilience.

Much of the work of mental health promotion has to do with shifting attitudes -- emphasizing the importance of maintaining positive mental health instead of dealing with individual distress, and dealing with mental illness in a balanced and humane way that will dismantle stigma and encourage recovery.

Small community mental health promotion projects (like the ones described in the kit) will probably not radically alter perceptions or society, but if a small-scale project is planned, evaluated and then championed, it can have an incremental effect on wider social policy and the decisions that affect whole populations.

We all need mental health promotion. By identifying and activating the personal and social strengths that support positive mental health, people can work together to develop healthier communities.

### **Rationale for the Tool Kit**

In conducting preliminary research for this tool kit, we came across numerous practical guides and resources for community action and health promotion programs. We didn't, however, find any that pertained specifically to promoting mental health at the community level.

Written information on mental health promotion tends to fall into the categories of theoretical and conceptual work, recommendations to bring about mental health promoting change at the policy

level, and guidelines for health professionals to follow to incorporate a mental health promotion approach into their work. We didn't turn up much practical information that was geared toward helping people promote mental health in their own communities.

Both the research process and feedback from community groups indicated that this tool kit would fill a gap in the mental health promotion field, providing the kind of practical information and resources that will help people in communities take action to promote mental health.

### **What is CMHA and What is its Connection to Mental Health Promotion?**

This tool kit is a document of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), a national, voluntary organization whose mission is to promote the mental health of all people. CMHA is unique in Canada as a non-governmental organization with an explicit mandate for mental health promotion and education.

An important objective of the organization is to advocate improvements in mental health services and to press for changes in social policies that have an impact on individuals' mental health.

There are divisions of CMHA in every province and territory, and branches in cities and towns throughout Canada. Their diverse efforts and activities are united by a common vision that builds on the principles of mental health promotion.

To further our mission to promote the mental health of all people, CMHA National has focused on the concepts and principles of mental health promotion; with support from the Mental Health Promotion Unit of Health Canada we developed a conceptual model for understanding mental health promotion and a framework for developing mental health promotion programs.

We built on this background work to create this tool kit, which we hope contains effective tips, strategies and resources to help bring mental health promotion to life in communities across the country.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We are grateful to a number of individuals and organizations who contributed to this project.

The development and production of this kit would not have been possible without the support of our funder, the Population Health Fund of Health Canada. This document was made possible by the funder, but does not necessarily represent the official policy of Health Canada.

We also want to thank Natacha Joubert, of the Mental Health Promotion Unit of Health Canada, for championing the cause of mental health promotion at the national level. Many people contributed a great deal to the three projects profiled in this kit. Without their enthusiasm and energy, the projects would not have become such excellent examples of mental health promotion in action. We can't name all of those individuals here, but we would like to especially thank those who took the lead in those projects: Moyra Buchan for the Helping Skills project, Bonnie Pape and Heather McKee for the Inclusion in Community project, and Garda Sinclair-Moran for the Seniors' Medicine Wheel project.

A number of people gave generously of their time and expertise to review drafts of this document. We wish to acknowledge their contribution to the kit -- their comments and insights were invaluable. Those people include Tom Mawhinney, Bonnie Pape, Anne Simard, Jeffrey Nguyen, Rhonda Mauricette, John Raeburn, Liz Roberts, and Michelle Pante.

The tool kit builds on and borrows from the resources in the Community Tool Box, an on-line resource for community building based at the University of Kansas. Thank you to Jeffrey Schultz

and all those who contributed to making the Community Tool Box such a wonderful and complete resource for all aspects of community development and mobilization.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Why a Tool Kit?**

The idea for a Mental Health Promotion tool kit came from people working to address individual and collective health concerns in many communities across Canada. Over the past year or two, CMHA, in partnership with the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) conducted nationwide surveys to find out what is being done to promote mental health locally. The surveys showed that there is already a wide range of community-level activity which can be termed “mental health promotion.” These activities include efforts such as helping children to develop healthy self-esteem, providing individuals with mental illness with the skills and opportunities for obtaining meaningful employment, and bringing seniors and children together to share stories and experiences.

Those who responded to the surveys also offered a valuable suggestion: they told us they needed a standard set of tools and resources to develop, implement and evaluate their mental health promotion practices.

This tool kit is a response both to that suggestion, and to the apparent gap in resources on practical aspects of implementing mental health promotion.

### **Why is it called a Tool Kit?**

A multitude of factors contribute to making a community what it is. Mental health promotion projects respond to the unique circumstances and assets of a certain community at a given point in time; the conditions that give rise to a particular approach in one community would not necessarily exist in another.

That's why mental health promotion projects cannot simply be replicated for use in other communities. It's not possible to create a blue print or template for mental health promotion that can be lifted from one community and applied to another achieve that same result. Attempting to do so would not only stifle the unique local citizen creativity that exists in each place, but would also threaten to turn authentic mental health promotion initiatives into more generic, service-oriented programs.

Because each community contains such a unique mixture of assets, resources and problems, efforts to improve the mental health of local citizens need to be generated from within. Instead of trying to replicate mental health promotion initiatives, we need to stimulate the development of unique initiatives across Canada that encourage people and communities to have a greater sense of control, and that provide support to people in dealing with the ups and downs of life.

For these reasons we don't refer to this resource book as a manual or guide, but as a tool kit - a place where people can find useful examples and tips about the ways that several communities responded to the challenge of promoting the mental health of their citizens. The kit is built around a straightforward planning model, and contains information on many relevant topics, such as effective facilitation, and soliciting in-kind support. There are also a number of practical tools, such as a sample funding proposal and evaluation plans that were used successfully in the selected projects.

We hope the stories in the kit, as well as the planning steps and tools will help to stimulate new ideas about ways to promote mental health in your community.

### **Who is this Tool Kit for?**

This tool kit is intended for anyone who is interested in promoting mental health at the local level. In developing the kit, we focused on making it clear and straightforward both in style and content, so that it would appeal to a broad range of people.

Many other mental health promotion resources are written primarily for health professionals, and therefore reflect a more service-oriented approach. In contrast, this tool kit is intended to provide the kind of practical examples and tips that can be applied by a wide range of community members who are motivated to improve mental health -- professionals and non-professionals alike.

We hope that the tool kit will serve as a useful primer to those who are new to the field of mental health promotion and community development, and that it will also provide new insights to veteran community activists and mental health advocates.

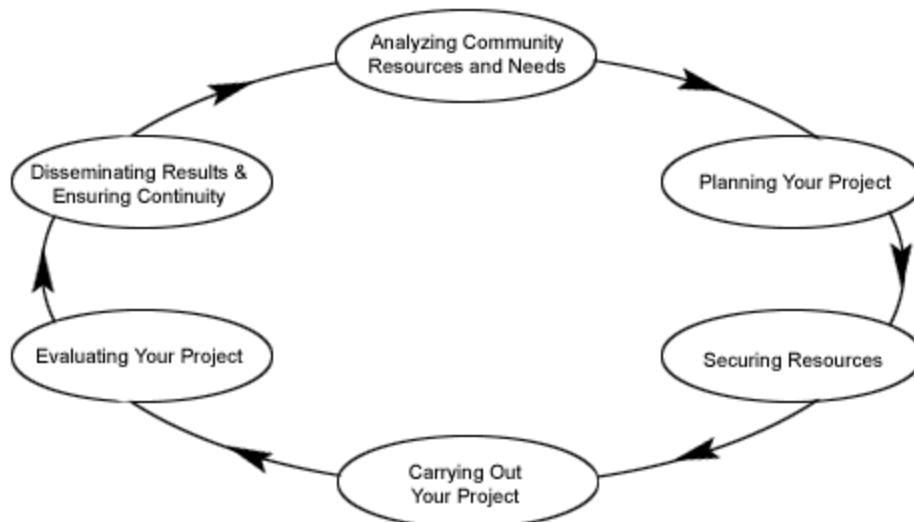
### How to Use this Tool Kit

The tool kit tells the stories of how people in several communities took action to promote mental health, but it does not have to be read straight through from beginning to end. Rather, the relevant sections can be consulted as they are needed. For that reason we have included a detailed Table of Contents so you can turn directly to the section you're interested in.

In Part 1, we introduce three projects that exemplify different approaches to promoting mental health at the local level: Inclusion in Community, Helping Skills, and Seniors' Medicine Wheel. A background and summary of each project provides the context for Part 2.

In Part 2 we look closely at the actions taken by community members to bring mental health promotion to life. The process of promoting mental health at the community level is laid out in a series of steps, best represented as a circle (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 : Mental Health Promotion Planning Model**



It is important to view the community process as fluid rather than linear -- with the implementation steps forming a circular, or cyclical pattern rather than being points on a straight line arranged in a specific order. In taking action to promote mental health in your community, you will be

constantly moving back and forth between tasks and stages, because in practice, the process does not have an ordered and predictable beginning, middle and end.

This planning model is a variation on a process that is tried and true, having been used by various groups for many years in efforts to improve their communities. We'll use the model as a guide to explore the different steps involved in setting up a mental health promotion project.

Examples from the projects introduced in Part 1 will illustrate how the planning process actually took place in several diverse communities. The mental health promotion projects that we chose did not follow the planning model to a T by any means; they did, to varying degrees, address each of the planning steps in their projects. They are here to provide ideas for you to adapt to your own particular needs.

The illustrations and examples from the projects introduced in Part I ground the planning process in the real world context of community life. We hope that by reading these stories, you will take away some of the wisdom community members gained from their experiences, and you'll be inspired to promote mental health in your own community.

## Glossary of Terms

The following are definitions of key terms that will appear often throughout this tool kit.

**CAPACITY BUILDING** involves enhancing the ability of individuals and groups to mobilize and develop resources, skills and commitments needed to accomplish shared goals.

**COMMUNITY CAPACITY** refers to the ability of community members to use the assets of its residents, associations and institutions to improve quality of life. Each community's collection of assets will be unique, for it will reflect the specific characteristics of its population, its political structures and geography.

Many different terms, including **CONSUMER, SURVIVOR, CONSUMER/SURVIVOR and EX-PATIENT** have been coined in North America to describe people who have experienced mental illness. The terminology chosen implies a particular point of view, and can change over time with changes in ideology and perspective.

Since consumer and consumer/survivor are the most widely used term across Canada at the time of writing, you will come across these terms in this tool kit in the sections addressing the relevance of mental health promotion for people with mental illness.

The concept of **EMPOWERMENT** is the bedrock upon which mental health promotion efforts are built. Empowerment means having a sense of control over one's life, and is crucial for everyone, whoever they are and wherever they live. Empowerment is strongly related to feelings of personal well-being.

**HEALTH PROMOTION** is concerned with maximizing the involvement of individuals and communities in improving and protecting quality of life and well-being. Health promotion aims to address equity in health, the risks to health, sustainable environments conducive to health, and the empowerment of individuals and communities by contributing to healthy public policy, advocating for health, enabling skills development and education.

**MENTAL HEALTH** is an integral part of overall health. Mental health is the result of the interaction of various predisposing factors (i.e. early childhood experiences) precipitating factors (i.e. stressful life events), social support and individual resources (i.e. resiliency) and experiences.

**MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION** is the process of developing positive mental health both for and with the community in general and individuals who experience mental illness.

The concept of mental health promotion recognizes that people's mental health is inextricably linked to their relationship with others, environmental and lifestyle factors, and the degree of power they can exert over their lives.

**MENTAL ILLNESS** is a recognized, medically diagnosable disorder that results in the significant impairment of an individual's cognitive, affective or relational abilities. Mental illnesses result from biological, developmental and/or psychosocial factors.

In the context of this kit, **PARTNERSHIPS** are alliances that are used to improve the health of a community. **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS** bring together people from diverse parts of the community in order to address a particular issue co-operatively, and with mutual respect and sensitivity. A wide range of skills and resources is present in such collective efforts, a feature that makes collaborative partnerships especially powerful tools in bringing about change.

**POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH** is the emotional resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It involves a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own, and others' dignity and worth.

**RESILIENCY** is a recurring theme in discussions about and approaches to mental health promotion. In this context, resiliency can be described as the quality that allows an individual or group to function well despite the odds against them. Two fundamental concepts are associated with resiliency: risk and protective factors. Mental health promotion concepts focus on minimizing the impact of risk factors (such as stressful life events) and enhancing the protective factors such as social support that increase people's ability to deal with life's challenges.

**STAKEHOLDERS** are those people who are interested, involved, and invested in the project or initiative in some way. In the case of mental health promotion initiatives, groups of people who might be identified as stakeholders may be: community groups, funders, health and social service providers, or university or college-based research teams.

"Mental health is created, and jeopardized, in families and schools, on streets and in workplaces. It is the result of... the way we are treated by others, and the way we treat other people and ourselves"

-Framework for Action for Promoting Mental Health in Europe. European Commission, 1997

## **Annotated Resource List**

**A British Columbian legacy.** McKnight, J.L Evanston, III. Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research. Northwestern University. 1990.

This paper describes the work of a citizen initiative in British Columbia designed to make communities more welcoming to people with developmental disabilities. It is a personalized account of the author's participation in guiding the enterprise through its first two years. The paper provides insights into the principles and guidelines that are fundamental to successful citizen efforts to make communities more inclusive and welcoming for all people.

**A dictionary of public health promotion and education: terms and concepts.** Naomi N. Modeste. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.

This dictionary presents a selection of widely used terms that reflect the process of health promotion and education rather than disease specific terminology. It emphasizes the four settings of the community, workplace, primary care and schools. Related terms are cross-referenced and key sources are mentioned; the second section lists 32 health and professional organizations, mostly American.

**Framework for action for promoting mental health in Europe.** National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health. Helsinki: European Commission, 1997.

This document outlines the key concepts and a framework for action needed to promote mental health in Europe. This framework is required in planning, implementing, evaluating and monitoring national and international mental health promotion and prevention policies and programs.

**Mental health promotion: A quality framework.** London: Health Education Authority, 1997.

Produced by Britain's Health Education Authority, this document provides a framework for demonstrating the benefits and value of mental health promotion, with a key focus on measuring success. It provides a starting point for identifying priorities and planning interventions.

**Mental health promotion: Policy, practice and partnerships.** McColloch, G.P. and Boxer, j. London: Balliere Tindall, 1997.

This text for practitioners and service providers discusses many of the issues that arise in putting the concepts of mental health promotion into practice. Although it primarily addresses the interests and concerns of service providers, this practical guide will be helpful for a wide variety of people interested in mental health promotion.

**Social action series.** Willinsky, C. and Pape, B. Toronto: Canadian Mental Health Association, National Office. 1997.

This publication draws on a summary of a literature review as well as a series of interviews with key stakeholders in the field of mental health promotion. It contains four main sections: the meaning of mental health promotion; the components of a mental health promotion approach; the contrast between mental health promotion and other similar ideas; and some practical applications.

**Promoting health through community development.** In Promoting health and mental health in children, youth, and families. Glenwick, D. S. and Jason, L.A., (eds). New York: Springer, 1993.

This book chapter describes the opportunities and challenges in promoting health through community development. It summarizes and critiques prominent models and programs that use elements of community development practice in health promotion. It uses several case examples to illustrate the process, and suggests future research and action issues related to understanding and improving community health initiatives.

**Rules of the game: Lessons from the field of community change.** Homan, M.S. Pacific Grove, CA.: Brooks Cole, 1999.

This hands-on guide to community work offers practical wisdom and guidelines to demystify the community change process. Homan presents the insights he gained through many years of working with communities to bring about positive change. He identifies the skills, attitudes and choices that are important to achieving success in bringing about community change. His style is informal, making the content of the book accessible to a wide audience.

**Unhealthy societies: The afflictions of inequality.** Wilkinson, ROC. London: Routledge, 1996.

This book demonstrates that the social cohesion of egalitarian societies produces improved quality of life and health. Examples from Britain, Japan, the United States and

Eastern Europe are given throughout the five sections that examine the health of societies, health inequalities, social cohesion and conflict, psychological causes of illness and the relationship between redistribution of economic growth and quality of life.