

# Voice for Mental Health Collective

## This is what we believe in and advocate for:

### 1. Equity for Mental Health and Addictions Care – There is no health without mental health

- Mental health and addictions services have been consistently underfunded when compared to physical health services. This must change.
- Access to mental health and addictions services in Canada is not equitable. Publicly funded mental health and addiction services have long wait lists. Private mental health and addictions service providers, where the client pays, can be expensive, which means only those who can afford to pay or who have benefit plans that cover the cost are able to get the help they need.
- Those who are part of marginalized groups and communities - including those who are indigenous, poor, immigrants and refugees, racialized, and/or LGBTQS2+ - face even greater barriers when it comes to accessing help for mental health and addictions.
- The mental health system must be focused on the person and be a fully integrated system of care. This means family physicians, healthcare facilities, and community agencies that provide mental health and addiction services working together for the overall quality of health of the individual with mental health and/or addictions issues and not independently.

### 2. Prevention of Avoidable Harm – An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

- Children are severely impacted by lack of services. Many adults with mental health issues had symptoms start in childhood. Educating children and youth from an early age about mental health and mental well-being, and getting help when issues first arise are key.
- Addressing mental health and addiction issues means looking at the whole person and all factors that may affect their mental health and well-being such as housing, income, employment, access to healthcare, education, social supports, etc.
- Canada must develop a National Suicide Prevention Strategy.
- People deserve to live, work, study, and play in psychologically safe spaces and places. Public policy and legislation must reflect this.

### 3. The Value of Lived Experience- Nothing about us without us

- People who have been living with or have lived with mental health and/or addictions issues (people with lived experience) and their families<sup>1</sup> have unique perspectives that need to be heard by healthcare providers, community agencies, and government. People with lived

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<sup>1</sup> We believe that family refers to two or more persons who are related in any way—biologically, legally, or emotionally. People have a right to define their families.

experience in mental health and addiction and their families must be brought in as partners in the design and creation of mental health and addictions services and changes to the overall mental health system.

- Peer support for both persons with mental health and/or addiction issues and their families must be a part of all mental health and addictions services. Peer support is about connecting with another person, with appropriate training, who has similar lived experience of their own and can relate to what a person is going through.