

## Everything Is Not OK: 74% of Ontarians experiencing increased mental health and substance use challenges during the pandemic

### ***Province's mental health leaders launch Everything Is Not OK campaign calling on governments to take immediate action***

**TORONTO, ONT. (March 9, 2021)** – Ontario's leading mental health and addiction organizations are coming together to say *Everything Is Not OK* in a new campaign that highlights the impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of children, youth and adults. The campaign calls for immediate action by all levels of government to reduce wait times for mental health and addiction services.

Ontario's mental health crisis is reaching a breaking point as a result of the pandemic. Almost 75 per cent of the population is facing increased mental health and substance use challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic according to a [survey from May 2020](#).

The seven organizations involved in the campaign, representing the full continuum of mental health and addiction care from community care to hospital care, serve more than 1 million Ontarians. The organizations include: Addictions and Mental Health Ontario (AMHO), Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario (CMHA), Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO), Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores), The Royal, and Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care.

They are calling on all levels of government to take action now to improve access to support and services for those who need urgent care. The campaign also includes specific actions that the organizations themselves are ready to take on as partners in improving care for the people who need it most.

Before COVID-19, there was a mental health and addiction crisis in Ontario. The pandemic has only made it worse. Businesses have closed. People have lost their jobs. Parents are attempting to work while helping teach their kids. Seniors have been isolated from their loved ones. At-risk populations are being overlooked. Students have not seen their friends. Health care workers are at the breaking point. Worst of all, people are dying.

These realities are having a significant impact and yet too many Ontarians are waiting too long for access to mental health and addiction care. That's why the *Everything Is Not OK* campaign is calling for a mental health and addiction system - supported by long-term and sustainable investments - that provides:

- 1. Consistent care.** Because regardless of whether you are in northern Ontario or rural Ontario or downtown Toronto, all Ontarians should get the same high-quality care.
- 2. Faster care.** Because people are waiting too long to get the support and treatment they are looking for.
- 3. Easier access to care.** Because it's too complicated and Ontarians don't know where to turn to for mental health or addiction services.
- 4. Transparent care.** Because Ontarians don't know how long they are going to wait and what they can expect from their care.

To find out why Everything Is Not OK, visit [www.everythingisnotok.ca](http://www.everythingisnotok.ca).

## QUOTES

“We have collaborated on a unanimous call to action to address inequities in access to mental health care and supports for all Ontario citizens, regardless of age, geography, ability to pay or level of support required.” – Catherine Zahn, President and CEO, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

“No matter who you are, your race, your gender, your sexuality, where you live or how much money you make, you should have timely access to quality mental health and addiction services.” – Camille Quenneville, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario

“We are going to need a resilient population to recover from COVID-19 and that means addiction and mental health must be a part of the recovery plan. The government has repeatedly said that mental health and addiction is a priority. Making high quality services available to people when they need them is possible and the solutions we are putting forward will make that happen.” – Adrienne Spafford, CEO, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario.

“Through the pandemic we are seeing highly concerning increases in serious child and youth mental health issues – including increased suicidality and increases in eating disorders. We know before the pandemic wait times and wait lists were already too long. We need the government to partner with us now to reduce wait times – an entire generation of children are at risk.” – Kimberly Moran, CEO, Children’s Mental Health Ontario.

“It's OK to admit everything is not OK, and to let decision-makers know we can't wait any longer to take action to improve Ontario's mental health and addiction system. Let's work together to make it OK.” – Carol Lambie, President and CEO, Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care

“We are eager to work with government to create and fund a better mental health and addictions system that will deliver consistent care, faster care, easier access to care and transparent care for all Ontarians.” – Karim Mamdani, President and CEO, Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences

“The COVID-19 pandemic has put even more stress on people's lives and the healthcare system. There is no recovery without a plan to address the mental health and addiction challenges Ontarians are facing.” – Joanne Bezzubetz, CEO and President, The Royal

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## ABOUT EVERYTHING IS NOT OK

Everything Is Not OK is a campaign launched by Ontario’s leading mental health and addiction organizations that collectively support more than one million children, youth and adults with their mental health or substance use challenges every year. The group includes: Addictions and Mental Health Ontario (AMHO), Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO), Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores), Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, The Royal, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Canadian Mental Health Association – Ontario (CMHA). For more information, visit [www.everythingisnotok.ca](http://www.everythingisnotok.ca)