

ANNUAL REPORT

CMHA Ottawa

2023/24



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ottawa
Mental health for all

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Board of Directors 2023-2024

The Board of Directors of the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association is composed of an esteemed group of individuals representing a cross-section of different professions, disciplines and experiences.

The CMHA Ottawa Board of Directors is responsible for establishing the organization's strategic direction and goals, setting the policies and practices that govern its actions, and for overseeing the use of the organization's resources to achieve its goals.

Chair: Nabanita Giri

Vice Chair: Peter Donnelly

Past Chair: John James

Treasurer: Vincent Trottier

Secretary: Admir Minarolli

Directors

Jessica Adley

Mary Bartram

Shannon Black

Nathalie Cadieux

Matthew Gilmour

Jette Haswell

Marya Jaleel

Chris Macaulay

Lynne Vail



Vision, Mission, Values



Our vision

We work to develop a community that values everyone's human dignity, mental health and well-being.



Our mission

Our purpose is to:

- Offer evidence-informed services for individuals experiencing mental illness and/or substance use disorder
- Promote positive mental health for all
- Promote an integrated system of mental health services in collaboration with clients, families, service providers and other stakeholders



Our values

We are guided by our commitment to:

Social Responsibility: A shared obligation to inform, educate and support our community in the understanding and prevention of mental illness, the reduction of stigma, and the promotion of mental health, and to broadly enhance respect and care for individuals experiencing mental illness.

Social Justice: The right of all individuals to be treated equitably and fairly, to have freedom of choice, and to have their personal privacy respected.

Social Inclusion: All individuals have a right to full participation in our society and to have access to the human necessities of a home, social connections, occupational pursuits, and necessary health care.

Anti-Oppression: A commitment to identify, challenge, and change the values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal oppression.

Self-Determination: The rights of individuals to be involved in all decisions that affect them and to have the knowledge, experience, and opportunity to contribute significantly to the development of their service plans, the processes by which they are provided, and their objectives.

A Message from the Board Chair and the CEO

The community-based mental health and substance use healthcare sector has recently faced challenges—some emerging, many ongoing. Over the last fiscal year, our talented and dedicated staff worked on the frontlines of a complex landscape that included the escalation of the opioid crisis and increasing toxicity in the unregulated drug supply, chronic homelessness and a housing supply pushed to its brink, countless stressors in the day-to-day lives of the people we serve, the demoralizing effects of stigma, and the rise of dangerous rhetoric surrounding harm reduction and addictions.

And yet, we found hope: The promise of greater government investment in supportive and affordable housing. The compassion and care of our supporters. Unprecedented visibility and fundraising efforts at our branch. Inspiring community partners. Advancing mental health awareness. The bolstering of peer support. Awe-inspiring research and evaluation projects undertaken at our branch, contributing to the growing evidence base in the sector. The camaraderie among our direct service staff, enabling teams, directors and management. The resilience and life-affirming tenacity of our clients.

In 2023–2024, our branch added a new unit to our renowned Housing First condo program. We marked our 70th anniversary with an open house celebration. We fostered the growth of our Recovery College program. We did push-ups on live TV!

We also saw changes in leadership at the branch: the arrival of a new CEO and the departure of the Board Chair—the proud co-authors of this note. At the beginning of 2024, we announced the four C's that guide our organization: commitment, community, compassion and courage.

The demand for our services has never been greater. However, throughout 2023–2024 and beyond, our clients made strides: With the help of our team, they rediscovered the safety and security of a roof over their head. They got on Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Payments (ODSP). They discovered strengths they didn't know they had, or they'd forgotten long ago. They were discharged from hospital or were diverted from court. They enhanced meaningful social and community integration. They addressed varied mental health disorders across our range of services. They discovered peer groups. They entered the workforce. They engaged in harm reduction and substance use education. They advocated for themselves. They started rebuilding their lives.



Nabanita Giri
Board Chair



Dr. Susan Farrell
CEO

Financial Overview



Province of Ontario	\$ 18,231,563
City of Ottawa	\$ 2,068,088
Other programs	\$ 2,234,188



Salaries and benefits	\$ 14,346,497
Building and grounds	\$ 4,285,849
Supplies and other	\$ 3,375,775

The Four C's for 2024



COMMITMENT

We must honour our commitments to our funders, our clients, our partners, and to each other.



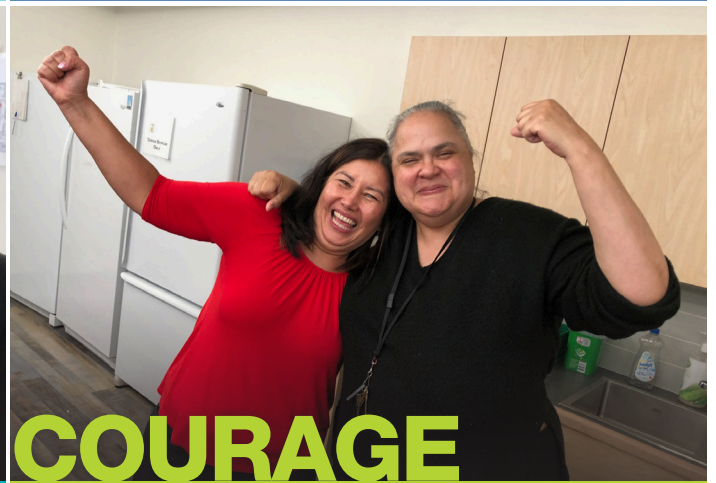
COMMUNITY

We must continue to build on our partnerships and we need to get better known by the wider community.



COMPASSION

We will continue our compassionate care for our clients, our teams, our partners and ourselves. We need to do right by each other and care for each other.



COURAGE

We will be brave and be bold in our planning and our growth.

Year in Review: Five Highlights

The 2023–2024 fiscal year was one of growth and change, particularly in how we promote our branch to the local community. Here is just a handful of highlights from between April 2023 and March 2024:

1

In July 2023, we welcomed our new CEO, Dr. Susan Farrell, a dedicated and visionary leader in the community mental health sector. We also said farewell to our outgoing Executive Director, Dr. Tim Simboli, as he concluded a remarkable career of 45 years in health and social services.

2

In October, we celebrated our branch's 70th anniversary, marking seven decades of meeting the mental health needs of our local community—from the early years focused on public advocacy to the implementation of case management and outreach services, and everything in between. To mark the occasion, we held an open house at our building at 311 McArthur Avenue in Vanier, where we highlighted the past, present, and future of the range of programs and services offered at the branch, and our staff enthusiastically welcomed guests from far and wide.

3

At CMHA Ottawa, we are one of the largest Housing First providers in Canada. In December, we spent three days with Dr. Sam Tsemberis, the innovator of the Housing First model for ending homelessness:

- **Day One:** Our CEO, Dr. Susan Farrell, interviewed Dr. Tsemberis at a special convocation and panel discussion at uOttawa.
- **Day Two:** We launched a new social prescribing initiative with Drs. Tsemberis, Tim Aubry and Christina Mutschler, and frontline staff and clients from our Housing Outreach Team and our partners at Options Housing.
- **Day Three:** Dr. Farrell presented to Infrastructure Canada alongside Drs. Tsemberis and Aubry, highlighting the CMHA Ottawa condo program, a shining example of Housing First in action.

4

In January 2024, we embraced Bell Let's Talk Day and its theme, 'Let's create real change', by focusing on the profound effect of peer programming on creating positive change in the lives of the people we serve, and the way peer support is changing mental health and substance use healthcare for the better. The campaign featured two appearances on CTV Ottawa: Scott William, Desktop Technician and former client, on CTV Ottawa Morning Live; and Dr. Susan Farrell on the news at noon.

5

In February 2024, we participated in The Push-Up Challenge, CMHA's new social change and fundraising initiative. Participants in the challenge were invited to complete 2,000 push-ups in 23 days, while mental health facts kept them motivated along the way. Our branch ranked fourth in funds raised across the country, bringing in \$87,877.58 for our Recovery College program!

By the Numbers: Programs and Services

CMHA Ottawa's case management services provide intensive long-term supports for individuals living with severe and persistent mental illness who are experiencing chronic homelessness or may be at risk of homelessness. They may have a concurrent disorder (mental health diagnosis and problematic substance use) or be involved in the justice system. Community support workers and clients work together to develop goals and plan for an eventual transition out of services and into the community.

Direct Service

- **Intensive Case Management (ICM)** services were provided to 474 individuals who require long-term support.
- CMHA Ottawa coordinates all **Mental Health Community Support Services (MHCSS)** for the Champlain region, providing a central access point for ICM, which is provided by a consortium of local agencies. 144 individuals were assigned to a worker at CMHA Ottawa (54) or one of its partners (90).
- **System Navigators** provide comprehensive information, support and assistance to individuals living with a mental illness, their families, and health service providers. 4,118 contacts were provided support, information and referrals.
- The **Familiar Faces** program received 2,596 referrals from hospital emergency departments, resulting in 167 individuals receiving support. Of those, 115 individuals needed longer-term care and were referred to Transitional Case Management.
- The **Housing Team** administered 376 provincially funded rent supplements, meaning that 238 clients of CMHA Ottawa and 138 MHCSS and ACTT (Assertive Community Treatment Team) clients now have stable, affordable housing. Of these rent supplements, 81 supported clients experiencing problematic substance use and 34 were dedicated to justice-involved clients. In addition, 93 City Housing Allowance clients are supported by the housing team. CMHA Ottawa houses 41 clients and former clients in condominium units owned and operated by the agency.



Outreach Services

Outreach services help individuals with complex needs and mental illness in developing goals and connecting with ongoing supports to maintain housing and stability. There are three types of outreach services: court, hospital and housing.

- **Court Outreach:** 339 individuals involved in the justice system received services (referrals from Mental Health Court and the community).
- **Hospital Outreach** supported the successful discharge of 110 clients from the hospital into the community.
- **Housing Outreach:** 271 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness were helped by the Housing Outreach Team in finding and/or maintaining permanent housing of their own.



339

individuals involved in the justice system received services



110

clients successfully discharged from the hospital into the community



271

individuals finding and/or maintaining permanent housing of their own

Specialty Services

- The **Youth in Transition** team served 41 clients aged 16–24, prioritizing youth experiencing chronic homelessness.
- 32 individuals who have a mental illness in addition to an intellectual and/or developmental disability (Dual Dx), received services from the **Dual Diagnosis Case Management** team, and an additional 18 individuals received **Dual Diagnosis Justice Case Management** services.
- 84 clients received support from the **Peer Team**, benefiting from the unique wisdom and understanding that can only be provided by a person with lived experience—whether in a group setting or one on one.
- The **Nursing Team** provided support to staff and 182 clients, promoting mental and physical wellness, rehabilitation and recovery.
- The **Nursing and Concurrent Disorders** teams recorded 512 contacts from clients for smoking cessation.
- The **Peer Engagement Advisory Council (PEAC)** is a group of nine peer advisors, one family member, seven representatives from staff and management, and two Board members, who meet regularly to support the agency in improving its quality, safety and outcomes.
- **Recovery College** is a peer-designed and peer-facilitated workshop series that equips participants with the skills we all need to thrive. It offered 50 courses to 200 students. Topics included: conquering negative thoughts, coping with triggers, isolation and loneliness, and empowerment in your home. Partner organizations included OC Transpo, the Hopewell Eating Disorder Support Centre, and the African, Caribbean and Black Wellness and Resource Centre.

Counselling Services

- Through the **Concurrent Disorders (CD)** treatment program, 441 clients with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders received integrated treatment. Activities include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for PTSD and addictions, women’s, men’s and mixed groups, harm reduction outreach and care, and more.
- In partnership with The Royal Ottawa Hospital, 131 individuals experiencing depressive and anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder received CBT through the **Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP)** program.
- The **Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)** program helped 48 clients who have challenges in managing emotions. Through DBT, clients learn effective problem-solving skills that help them in meeting their long-term goals and in reducing impulsive behaviours such as self-harm, problematic relationships, social isolation, low self-efficacy, and emotional vulnerability.



441

clients received integrated treatment through Concurrent Disorders treatment program



131

individuals received CBT through OSP program



48

clients received DBT support

Research and Evaluation

The diverse programs and services offered at CMHA Ottawa provide fertile ground for important research and evaluation projects that make lasting contributions to the field of mental health and addictions services.

The day-to-day work that takes place at CMHA Ottawa is innovative, impactful, varied and compelling. Every year, our clients, frontline staff, program managers, senior leadership, and peer experts work with students from the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College and others on a variety of research and evaluation projects and clinical practice placements.

These projects:

- help inform local health policy,
- improve care at CMHA Ottawa and other agencies,
- provide an opportunity for those with lived experience to help shape effective interventions,
- build capacity among staff by using evidence-informed tools and implementing evidence-based practices,
- train the professionals of tomorrow, and
- contribute to our understanding of socio-environmental factors that affect the inequities experienced by the people we serve.

CMHA Ottawa has had a huge impact on my life. They contacted me when I was at my lowest point and helped get me to where I am today. The staff is amazing and they really put their clients at the forefront of their recovery. I wouldn't be where I am today without this organization and am very grateful! —Acacia, graduated client and peer advisor

Bright Ideas

Every year, we highlight recent research and evaluation activities in a roundup event called Bright Ideas. Led by our Decision Support and Accountability Team (DSAT), the Bright Ideas webinar illustrates the important role of research and evaluation in delivering vital community-based mental health and substance use healthcare programs and services.

The 2023–2024 edition featured 12 presentations in three areas of focus: Research and Evaluation of Cutting-Edge Interventions, Understanding the Needs of Service Users, and Implementing Services That Work.


Topics included:


- An Examination of the Effectiveness of Smoking Cessation Treatment Interventions for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness
- Community Mental Health Services for Frequent Emergency Department Users: Qualitative Outcomes
- Needs Assessment for Discharge Planning from Intensive Case Management (ICM) Services
- ICM Length of Time in Service: Characteristics of People in ICM Longer Than Five Years
- Fresh Veggies for Clients of CMHA Ottawa
- CMHA Ottawa's Recovery College Pilot Program: A Formative Evaluation
- Developing an Organizational Culture of Supervision in Community-Based Mental Health
- Many more

Research and evaluation are critically important in the field of community-based mental health and substance use healthcare. At CMHA Ottawa, we are proud to participate in these initiatives and implement their findings, as we strive to understand and best serve the communities in which we live.



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 **Understanding the
Needs of Service
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 **Implementing
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