

# Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, Review (29th Legislature)

February 2016

# FACT sheet

## Join the conversation on mental health.

This February, the Alberta government's Standing Committee on Families and Communities is reviewing amendments to the Mental Health Act.

### Request for Input

The Legislative Standing Committee on Families and Communities has requested input on the changes to the Mental Health Act from 2007. These changes are known as the *Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007*.

The two main changes under review are “criteria for involuntary admission of persons with mental disorders to health care facilities” and “the use of community treatment orders for persons requiring ongoing mental health services” (Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007).

This FACT sheet will provide you with information about these changes, as well as the state of mental health in Alberta. To share your comments about the act, send a written submission by February 29, 2016, to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities:

FamiliesCommunities.Committee@assembly.ab.ca  
3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 Street NW, Edmonton,  
AB T5K 1E7

### Criteria for Involuntary Admission to a Hospital or other Health Care Facility

An important change in this amendment is changing the wording to be more precise. Previously, the act stated that a person may be admitted involuntarily if they are “likely to present a danger to themselves or others.” Danger is a subjective idea. The act now states: “likely to cause harm to themselves or others, or suffer serious mental or physical deterioration or serious physical impairment” (Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007).

Since 2007, doctors are enabled to think about harm instead of danger, which gives them a more clear way to measure whether a patient should be admitted involuntarily (The Standing Committee on Families and Communities, (n.d.)).

Doctors may also now take into consideration a patient's overall mental and physical health. If a mental illness is likely to cause a serious decline in their physical health, or lead to a further decline in their mental health, doctors can recommend admission (The Standing Committee on Families and Communities, (n.d.)).

### If you or someone you know needs help now, you can call:

Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642 (24/7)

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (24/7)

Addiction Services Helpline: 1-866-332-2322 (24/7)

Edmonton Social Planning Council, Suite 37, 9912-106 Street  
(780)423-2031 info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca

Connect with @edmontonspc on your favourite social network!



## Community Treatment Orders

Community Treatment Orders, or CTOs, are new to Alberta. A CTO will provide support for a person with a mental illness by creating a treatment plan for the patient and a caregiver. CTOs are an alternative to involuntary admission to health care facilities and rely on the support networks that are vital to mental health. Consent is required in almost all cases for a CTO, and each CTO must include a supervisor for the plan as well as a time limit. (The Standing Committee on Families and Communities, (n.d.))

## Going Back Home

The act requires that the health care provider let the patient's family doctor and next of kin know they've been released. This may be a guardian or nearest relative. This notice will include a summary of treatment and recommendations for future treatment. These measures are intended to help the patient recover and move toward health with a support system in place. (The Standing Committee on Families and Communities, (n.d.))

## If you're hurting:

- ▶ Know you're not alone.
- ▶ Know it's a real disease.
- ▶ Know you can get better.
- ▶ Know where to get help: call the Mental Health Help Line toll free, 24/7. 1-877-303-2642 (Addiction & Mental Health, Alberta Health Services, 2013).

## If you're a helper:

- ▶ Talk about mental illness. Ditch the stigma.
- ▶ Offer emotional and practical support, like offering a lift.
- ▶ Keep an eye open for setbacks and improvements.
- ▶ Consider studying Mental Health First Aid: [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca) (Addiction & Mental Health, Alberta Health Services, 2013); Canadian Mental Health Association, (n.d.)).

## Mental Health in Alberta: The Stats

- ▶ In 2013, 13% of Albertans, including 10.8% of teenage Albertans, filled at least one prescription for an antidepressant (Alberta Health, Health System Accountability and Performance, Surveillance and Assessment Branch, 2014a, 2014b).
- ▶ 5% of emergency room visits in 2004 were related to mental health problems, a 5% increase from the previous year (Alberta Mental Health Board, 2007).
- ▶ 22% of these visits were due to anxiety disorders (Alberta Mental Health Board, 2007).
- ▶ In Alberta, more people die by suicide than from car crashes each year (Addiction & Mental Health, Alberta Health Services, 2013).

## Mental Health Challenge

Alberta Health Services has compiled a one-week plan to help improve your mental health. By taking one step a day, you can reduce stress, improve your outlook on life, and move toward mental wellness (Alberta Health Services, (n.d.)).

**Day 1:** Eat healthy foods. Grab an apple, or try out quinoa.

**Day 2:** Get active. Take a walk around the block at lunchtime or chase your niece or nephew around.

**Day 3:** Be kind. Make someone smile with a compliment or place a note in a friend's lunch bag.

**Day 4:** Practise gratitude. Say thank you to your barista, or wave at the driver who let you change lanes.

**Day 5:** Be yourself. Give yourself a genuine compliment, and don't compare your beginning to someone else's middle!

**Day 6:** Get your groove on. Make a playlist of your fave upbeat tunes, and dance it out.

**Day 7:** Laugh. Watch a funny movie. Double impact if you're with a BFF!

## References

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