

Your Wellness Day Backgrounder

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver Burnaby Branch (CMHA VB) and the MPA Society are two leading mental health charities committed to mental health promotion and supporting the recovery of individuals experiencing a mental illness. Over the past year, with the changing economic and social climate, our organizations are witnessing the impact of increased stress and anxiety on the residents of our community.

In fact, Canadians cite finances as their top source of stress more frequently than any other issue (Desjardins Financial Security 2008 Health Survey.) Between October 2008 and March 2009, over 259,000 Canadians have lost their jobs. Along with life's day to day challenges and major changes such as moving homes, divorce, sickness and injury, now more than ever Canadians are facing job loss and financial insecurity.

The best way to manage stress is to find support for yourself in things that matter most, your family, friends, and the community.

It's no surprise that this year's national mental health week focus is:
Building Your Mental Health One Support At A Time.

From this message, CMHA VB and MPA Society have banded together with local businesses to offer an opportunity for people to do just that. *Your Wellness Day* encourages us to take some time, maybe with your family and friends, to the spa or salon and do something nice for yourself, thereby supporting your mental health. At the same time the participating businesses will be donating back 20% of sales to CMHA VB and MPA to assist those with mental health concerns and promote mental wellness in our community.

Your Mental Health

Definitions of mental health are changing. It used to be that a person was considered to have good mental health simply if they showed no signs or symptoms of a mental illness. But in recent years, there has been a shift towards a more holistic approach to mental health.

Today, we recognize that good mental health is not just the absence of mental illness. Nor is it absolute some people are more mentally healthy than others, whether they are mentally ill or not. These realizations are prompting a new kind of focus on mental health that identifies components of mental wellness and mental fitness and explore ways to encourage them (www.cmha.ca)

The Impact of Mental Illness

Health Canada's 2002 Report on Canadian Mental Health revealed that 20% of all Canadians regardless of age, race, gender, culturally back ground or economic status will experience a mental illness at some point in their life. That means that there is not one member of a community that is not directly affected, either personally or through family, friends or work colleagues.

Mental illness is a complex interplay of genetic, biological, personality and environmental factors. It affects someone's emotions, behaviours, interactions with others and ability to function. Mental illness like many illnesses can be treated. Recovery is possible with an appropriate mix of medical and non-medical interventions including community support and education.

Unfortunately, the stigma attached to mental illnesses presents a serious barrier not only to diagnosis and treatment but also to acceptance in the community. This lack of understanding and support may exacerbate problems associated with the illness leading to isolation, addiction, job loss, homelessness and even suicide. Along with high personal and family costs mental illness is expensive costing the Canadian economy over \$16 billion per year.

The Work of CMHA VB

For over 50 years CMHA VB has been committed to health promotion in Vancouver and Burnaby through programs and services that expand knowledge, emphasize recovery, build resiliency and create opportunities and resources for those affected by mental illness.

All of our services promote the recovery model, which is based on the belief that for each person recovery is possible and is increased through self-determination. Thus, our rehabilitation services and education and training programs deliver outcomes that support people to have goals that bring enhanced meaning and purpose to their lives:

Find Work

Social Enterprise Services - We assist in the creation and operation consumer run businesses that offer employment and bring revenues back to the community.

Supported Employment Services - Helping individuals with a mental illness find and keep paid employment in mainstream jobs.

Volunteering

Supported Volunteer Program - Using our successful volunteer preparation course, “Ready Set Go and Volunteer” along with individual support creating opportunities for people to give back.

Volunteer Program - Our volunteer program offers numerous volunteer opportunities within our branch.

Social and Recreation

Recreation Programs - Offering a range of activities and special events (through out Vancouver and at our drop-in Centre in Burnaby and at various BC Housing sites) that promote self-esteem and friendships.

inCREDable Programs Series - Programs for children and youth that focus on early intervention and promote resiliency and psycho-social educational development.

Meeting New Goals

Volunteers In Partnership Program - This 1-1 program matches volunteers to assist an adult with mental illness to pursue social and leisure goals.

Peer Support Program - We manage the Fraser North Peer Support Program that utilizes shared experience to promote recovery.

BC Health Care Worker Program - We provide on-site psycho-social support to clients living in Burnaby’s Hall Towers.

Education and Training

Education Services delivers a variety of courses, workshops and educational opportunities as well as engaging in public education and outreach throughout the Lower Mainland.

Information Resource Centre located at UBC Detwiller Pavilion are lending library collections related to areas of mental health.

Chinese Mental Health Promotion Program available in both Mandarin & Cantonese addresses issues ranging from the young to the young at heart.

Bounce Back Program - Individuals suffering from low mood and anxiety can find support in this guided self-help program which includes a DVD, *Living Life to the Full*, and 3-5 tele-coaching sessions with a Bounce Back coach.

Therapy for those Living with Chronic Illness - Another form of individual support. Our counselor practices psychotherapy to assist those in managing their health and improving their overall wellness.

The Work of MPA Society

Vision

MPA Society is a Non-Profit organization created in 1971 as a self-help alternative for the mental health community.

MPA Society promotes the dignity and well-being of people with mental health issues.

MPA Society provides supported housing, advocacy and community resources.

Mission

To inspire hope and facilitate [recovery](#) for individuals with mental health issues.

To establish and operate social, vocational, recreational and housing programs that support people in their own communities.

Philosophy

Recovery from mental illness is achievable through empowerment, autonomy, responsibility and peer support.

At MPA Society, we Value:

- The uniqueness of every person;
- The right to self-determination;
- Peer Support;
- Shared decision-making with Members;
- Creativity and Innovation; and
- Excellence

At MPA Society, we Believe:

- In Hope
- That every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect;
- That every person possesses an array of strengths and abilities;
- That every person has the right to be the “director” of their own recovery;
- Individual growth should be nurtured and encouraged to maximize individual potential and capability.

Our Programs and Services

Community Resource Centre

Promoting Mental Health in Your Community

Mission

“To provide resources which enhance the quality of life of individuals with mental illness through community involvement, advocacy and support”.

Philosophy

The needs of our membership are met through advocacy, activities and social gatherings including meals.

People with mental illness can be vulnerable and stigmatized. The Community Resource Centre provides a safe community setting for our members to socialize and engage in peer support in a welcoming environment.

Our Goals Are

- To offer social, recreational and skill building activities
- To encourage and support involvement in the community
- To improve the quality of life of our membership
- To offer advocacy, outreach and crisis intervention
- To provide resources for accessing the basic needs of nourishment and housing

Membership

The MPA Community Resource Centre is a membership based resource available to community members who live with mental illness. Membership implies both connection and responsibility. Members have created rules of conduct for attendees to follow ensuring the peaceful enjoyment and safety for those accessing this valuable resource. There is no cost for membership.

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday: 10:00am - 7:30 pm Saturday
and Sunday: 12:00pm - 7:30 pm

Supported Housing

Mission Statement

"To provide safe, affordable and supportive housing to person's living with a mental illness. These housing options should be situated throughout communities so that individuals may reside in the neighborhood of their choice."

Philosophy

Adequate shelter is a basic need and a fundamental human right. There is a critical shortage of affordable housing units for persons with a mental illness. By providing various housing alternatives, MPA Society supports individuals in their communities while they continue their journey towards [recovery](#) from mental illness.

Programming

MPA started to offer housing alternatives in the early 1970's with their first member owned, communal living group home in the Westside, Kitsilano area of Vancouver. Currently MPA Society provides over 325 units of Supported Housing by offering 11 different programs throughout the Vancouver region and 1 program located in Maple Ridge. These programs provide flexibility in programming to attempt to meet the individual needs of each resident. Staffing levels and support services range from locations with on site staff, which are available 24 hours, to independent living programs with bi-monthly outreach staff contact for tenants who reside in market rental apartments throughout Vancouver.

Available supports include assistance with:

- Life skills training, cooking, budgeting and finances, home management
- Financial subsidies
- Social and peer support
- Vocational training/access to volunteer programs
- Recreation, health and fitness
- Advocacy and legal services
- Referrals for mental health and addictions treatment and information
- Illness and symptom management
- Medication information and support
- Public transportation
- Community resources and supports

Goals

In conjunction with other mental health supports, the ultimate goals in supported housing is to provide a safe and secure home while empowering the individual to maintain as high a level of independence as possible. It is imperative that these housing options are present in all neighborhoods so that individuals can retain existing connections with their family, friends, and other mental health support networks.

Licensed Housing

Mission Statement

To inspire hope and facilitate recovery for individuals with mental health issues using the principles of [Psychosocial Rehabilitation](#).

Philosophy

Recovery and hope is achieved through empowerment, autonomy and responsibility.

Programming

During the 1990s MPA Society enhanced its housing options by providing Licensed Housing as part of a continuum of housing services for the membership of MPA Society. Each of the nine homes is licensed under the Community Care and Assisted Living Facilities Act and is guided by the accompanying Adult Care Regulations of the Act. Eight of the homes are located throughout the City of Vancouver including two homes in the Kitsilano area and one home is located in the City of Maple Ridge.

Programming services in Licensed Housing are developed within the framework of the principles of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and are based on the concept that [recovery](#) from mental illness is possible.

Advocacy and Social Justice

Mission

To empower and support people with mental illness to ensure their social and legal rights are promoted.

Philosophy

Advocacy and social justice is achieved through recognition of human rights, fair treatment under the law, and an impartial share of the benefits of society.

Programming

People with mental health issues are often not aware of their social and legal rights. As a result, many in this community may not receive all the services to which they are entitled.

MPA Society Advocacy includes involvement with:

Mental Health Empowerment Advocacy Program (MHEAP)

- Legal Aid and Financial advocacy
- Education & Workshops
- Tenancy Rights
- Research

Court Services

- On site court advocacy
- Community outreach
- Law reform

Riverview Hospital Wide and Individual Advocacy

- Policy Reform
- Patients rights information
- Mental Health Review Panels
- Service Delivery Dispute Resolution

