



**Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance
Mental Health Workgroup
Ideas for Organizations to Promote Positive Mental Health**

Positive Mental Health and its Benefits

Positive mental health is more than the absence of a mental illness (WHO, 2007). People with positive or flourishing mental health experience greater resilience and stronger bonds with friends and family, miss fewer days at work, use fewer health care services, and experience lower levels of chronic conditions (Keyes 2007). Communities also benefit from enhanced social interaction and mentally healthy environments at school, work and in social settings (WHO et al., 2004). Conversely, poor mental health and mental illness can have debilitating effects on a person's life and on the population's health (Government of Canada, 2006; WHO et al., 2004).

What Can Your Organization do to Promote Positive Mental Health?

To help advance mental health promotion, the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA) Mental Health Workgroup compiled ideas from OCDPA membership organizations on how might an organization promote positive mental health. A summary is provided below to help you and your organization to promote positive mental health:

- Conduct internal audit of practices related to promoting mental health, create plans and identify objectives, integrate mental health into organization's activities, policies and procedures and messaging.
- Develop and support a mental health workplace committee that can audit mental health needs/services available in organization.
- Reduce stigma by bringing mental health issues to forefront.
- Enhance mental health literacy¹ within the organization and its stakeholders.
- Education and awareness raising initiatives directed to stakeholders (general public, health intermediaries, decision-makers, etc).
- Create new tools/initiatives with a mental health component.
- Ensure the use of positive images and language in communication materials.
- Fund ongoing research re: mental health and chronic disease.
- Increase participation in inter-sectoral partnerships/initiatives and consult with other organizations to share ideas on promoting positive mental health.
- Provide access to mental health services in the community.
- Advocate/influence policy making at various levels and across sectors.

References:

- Government of Canada. (2006). *The human face of mental health and mental illness in Canada*. Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, Cat. No. HP5-19/2006E.
- Keyes, Corey L. M. (2007). "Promoting and protecting mental health as flourishing." *American Psychologist*. 62(2):95-108.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2007). "Mental health: strengthening mental health promotion," fact sheet no. 220, September 2007. Retrieved at: www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs220/en/
- World Health Organization, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the University of Melbourne. (2004). *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging evidence, Practice*. Summary Report. World Health Organization. Retrieved at: http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/promoting_mhh.pdf

¹ Mental health literacy: "the knowledge and skills that enable people to access, understand and apply information for mental health" (CAMIMH, 2008)