

The Mental Health Sector in Niagara & Niagara Region's Role

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Provincial Landscape

- One million Ontarians experience mental health or addictions issues
- Ontario developed a comprehensive strategy from extensive consultations to rebuild the mental health and addictions system called the [Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System](#)
- Ontario's system challenges:
 - Wait times
 - Barriers to access
 - Fragmentation
 - Funding
 - Uneven quality
 - Lack of data

Niagara's Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) Sector

- MHA Access Line Niagara connects individuals aged 16+ to the 16 mental health and addiction agencies in Niagara that are funded through Ontario Health
- Combined budget for these 16 agencies is approximately \$25 million, with a combined accountability to serve 35,000 individuals (not unique individuals – many are served by more than one organization in the continuum of services)
- Many other professionals and organizations provide services for individuals and families experiencing MHA issues
- Primary Care provides baseline mental health care, often before individuals enter the MHA system

Core Services in the Mental Health and Substance Addictions Sector

Niagara Region Mental Health is one piece of the continuum of core services in Niagara that includes:

- Emergency and crisis response
- Acute and specialized (hospital bed-based)
- Community Treatment and Support:
 - Comprehensive services and supports
 - Intensive services and supports
 - Bed-based recovery supports
 - Collaborating Partners (e.g. primary care, public health, social services, schools, justice related services and family and youth services)

Niagara Region Mental Health (NRMH)

- NRMH falls under the core service category of Community Treatment and Support – comprehensive and intensive services
- NRMH serves over 1500 individuals:
 - Adults experiencing severe and persistent mental illness
 - Youth/emerging adults experiencing their first episode of mental health issues

NRMH funding

- 100% funded by Ontario Health
- Total budget = \$6.5 million (approximately 25% of Niagara's Ontario Health funding specific to MHA)
- Average annual budget increase over past 7 years has been 0.7% (exclusive of funding enhancements for new positions and initiatives)
- Average increase is not keeping up with inflation

Team-based, interdisciplinary approach:

Total FTE complement: 60.5 permanent; 1.5 temporary, including:

- Mental Health Caseworkers
- Occupational Therapists
- Program Assistants
- Registered Nurses
- Nurse Practitioner
- Peer Specialists
- Psychiatrists
- Social Workers

NRMH Services

- Assertive Community Treatment (two teams: Niagara South and Niagara North)
- Intensive Case Management (two teams: adult and geriatric)
- Early Psychosis Intervention
- Youth Mental Health & Addiction
- Telemedicine Psychiatry Consultation
- Partnership programs

Demand for NRMH Services

- Close to 500 individuals are waiting for services with average wait times ranging from 16 to 245 days, depending on the service
- Demand exceeds capacity
- Continuous quality improvement efforts closely monitor performance
- Lack of resources is a consistent theme across Niagara and Ontario

Other Niagara Region Programs Addressing Mental Health

- Sexual Health program, Clinical Services Division
- Family Health Division
- Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Division
- Emergency Medical Services

Why Partnerships are Important

- Many intersections between mental health and issues such as homelessness and substance use and for special populations
- Collaboration and partnerships bring the diverse expertise from different sectors to serve the client in a holistic way

Other Internal Partnerships

- Homelessness Services, Community Services
- Seniors Community Programs, Community Services

External Partnerships and Collaborations

- NRMH provides collaborative mental health services with other organizations such as Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON)
- Example - Addiction Supportive Housing and Youth Mental Health and Addiction – Early Intervention

Niagara Ontario Health Team (NOHT-ÉSON)

- Serves the communities of Lincoln, St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Thorold, Welland, Niagara Falls, Wainfleet, Port Colborne and Fort Erie
- Targeting the top 5% of people who are high users of health care and social services
- These individuals are often served by multiple organizations and are at risk to experience fragmented, uncoordinated care
- Recognizing the unique barriers to health for Indigenous, Francophone or otherwise marginalized people
- Goal is to facilitate an integrated care approach

NOHT-ÉSON

Membership (43 organizations):

- Mental health and addiction core service providers
- Home & long-term care service providers
- Hospital, Primary care providers and Community healthcare centres
- People with lived experience
- Post-secondary institutions
- Indigenous health networks
- Francophone community representatives

NOHT-ÉSON Priority Population MHA Working Group

- Part of the NOHT-ÉSON
- Supported by a Project Manager who is accountable to the mandate of the Working Group
- Project Manager position is funded by Ontario Health; NR Public Health is the employment sponsor and does not direct the project
- MHA Working Group is committed to improving help-seeker outcomes and experiences by ensuring streamlined and coordinated access to appropriate mental health and addiction services that are grounded in evidence, and provide equitable access to high quality services
- Further updates on project in 2022

Questions?