



The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador appreciates the Association of Psychology in Newfoundland Labrador sharing its priorities with parties as part of its mission to advance the discipline and profession of psychology in this province.

Our party and our government recognize the important and necessary role psychologists play in our healthcare system. We are committed to better services and better outcomes, and we recognize the urgency of reforming mental health and addictions care in this province to address gaps in our system, strengthen existing programs and services, and break down the barriers of stigma and timely access.

Since we formed government, we have undertaken considerable work to improving mental health services and outcomes.

In June 2017, we launched our action plan *Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador*. Since then, there has been a significant reduction in the number of people waiting for mental health and addictions counselling services, though much more remains to be done.

System transformation will require the combined effort of all of government, working closely with the regional health authorities, health care providers, including psychologists; individuals and families with lived experience, and community agencies.

We have established an Executive Committee comprised of the Deputy Minister of Health and Community Services, the CEOs of the four regional health authorities and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, which reports directly to the Minister of Health and Community Services and provides organizational direction to the Mental Health and Addictions Provincial Program Implementation Team.

The Implementation Team, comprised of senior mental health and addictions staff at the Department of Health and Community Services and the regional health authorities, provides the oversight and approval for the planning and program work of eight project teams, and operationalizes the governance structure. They are also responsible for the performance monitoring and evaluation of the Implementation Plan.

The project teams are:

- Promotion/Prevention Team
- Wait Times Reduction Team
- Inclusion Team
- Health in Correctional Settings Team
- Health in Schools Team

- Service Redesign Team
- Provincial Services Team
- Indigenous Health (to be determined by and in consultation with Indigenous people)

Progress report updates on our Towards Recovery Action Plan are provided to our Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council.

A new Recovery Council, comprised of individuals with lived experience of mental illness and/or an addiction, also has a performance monitoring function, reporting directly to the Minister.

This is a solid plan, complete with budgets, timelines and accountability and performance monitoring mechanisms.

Through a bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada, we have secured \$28.8 million over five years for mental health and addictions services.

Overall, we will increase provincial mental health and addictions spending from approximately 5.7 per cent of the total annual health care budget to nine per cent by April 2022 to better align with the recommended national average.

We are dedicated to mental health care that is respectful, person-centered, accessible, recovery focused, collaborative, effective and efficient, responsive and inclusive.

To meet the goal of improving access, collaboration and continuity of care; we are reducing wait times, replacing services at the Waterford Hospital with services closer to home, introducing stepped care, including e-health options; implementing a provincial opioid dependence treatment system and creating provincial policies and programs applied consistently and equitably across all regional health authorities

We recognize the workplace and the K-12 system as two environments allowing for mass prevention and early intervention efforts.

In addition to access to psychological services under the group insurance plan, provincial employees have access to mental health services under the Employee Assistance Program, a joint program of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and its unions that promotes employee wellness.

EAP provides assistance to employees or an immediate family member in resolving a personal problem.

One of the actions of the Implementation Team under our Towards Recovery Action plan is to advocate for better health insurance programs from personal and employer-funded health insurance providers to align the plan's provisions with the individual's needs.

Timely access to mental health and addictions services is crucial to the health and well being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Stigma, wait lists and service gaps often compound the problems people face as they try to access help. Geography and difficulties in recruiting and retaining health care providers in some communities also pose challenges to providing access to a full range of services.

Actions to help tackle wait times include:

- Directing Chief Executive Officers of regional health authorities to reduce the wait list and wait times for mental health and addictions services within one year of the release of the report;
- Developing a wait time reduction Implementation Plan, including a plan to address no-show rates to better accommodate the challenges faced by some individuals in attending appointments;
- Adopting a standardized methodology for collecting and reporting wait times in all regional health authorities; and,
- Providing provincial oversight and regular public reporting on wait times and wait time reduction progress.

We are pleased to say that our collective work to date has resulted in a reduction in wait lists by more than 60 percent.

Through service redesign, we are introducing a stepped-care approach, which involves developing and offering a range of mental health and addictions services integrated, wherever possible, within existing community and primary health care services throughout the province, including:

- Self-management programs for mental wellness, anxiety and depression;
- Counselling services;
- Strongest Families Program for children, youth and their families;
- Therapist-assisted, online, cognitive behavioural therapy for depression, anxiety and addictions;
- Peer support;
- Provincial Warm Line;
- 24/7 access to medical withdrawal management;
- Day treatment programs;
- Access to in-patient services for eating disorders;
- Single session walk-in clinics;
- Assertive community treatment (ACT) teams;
- Mobile crisis intervention teams;
- Dedicated mental health services for first responders, including ambulance personnel, firefighters, police officers and correctional staff; and,
- Support for families and caregivers of people living with mental illness and addiction

A stepped-care approach increases access to services by matching mental health needs to the most appropriate level of care. This approach takes pressure off growing wait lists, so people who need higher levels of care can access services more quickly. These services should include walk-in clinics, where people could meet with a therapist for a one-hour single session appointment, without waiting for an appointment time, which we have implemented through our Doorways service. Care can be either stepped up, if people need additional treatment and support to reach their goals, or stepped down, if less intensive treatment and support is needed.

As a government, we are proud to have launched an Autism Action Plan. Budget 2019 commits \$2.5 million for plan implementation, which will increase to an annual ongoing investment of \$5 million.

Through our Autism Action Plan, we:

- are committed to evidence-based treatment and management of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Treatments for ASD should match individualized needs and be grounded in strong evidence of effectiveness. This commitment to evidence-based treatment and management will result in improved access to cognitive behavioural therapy and other evidence-based interventions for children and adults living with ASD and experiencing mental health concerns.
- Recognize that all health professionals and educators need ASD specific training and development to be effective in providing support and are committed to clinical training in evidence-based practices for ASD for all professionals working within the Provincial Autism Services Program, the Supporting Abilities Program and Mental Health and Addiction Services.

One of our first actions as a government was the establishment of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes. A priority area of that review was student mental health and wellness.

Our Education Action Plan commits to a review of roles and responsibilities of specialist personnel, such as educational psychologists, speech language pathologists, and guidance counsellors, with the aim to improve access through improved service delivery to children and youth as well as:

- improved education for teachers and early childhood educators on mental health and wellness through initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning;
- embedded social/emotional learning in curriculum;
- a set of indicators of future mental health and addictions issues;
- specific learning outcomes for student mental health and addictions in most curriculum as it is renewed;
- increased accessibility to health services for children and youth and improved timeliness of service delivery; and
- policies and procedures to address chronic absenteeism and school dropout.

Our Towards Recovery plan also includes a commitment to provide specialized training for people who work one on one with LGBTQ2S individuals, including physicians, nurses, community and school-based psychologists, teachers, counsellors and social workers.