

The proportion of Canada's population over the age of 65 will increase from 13% in 2006 to 22% in 2026. The aging of the population will bring a corresponding significant increase in the number of seniors with mental health problems and illnesses.

MUNICIPALITIES AND THE AGING POPULATION

Because of their responsibilities for transportation, the built environment, social housing and in some jurisdictions long-term care, community services, recreation and other services, municipalities have a large role to play in improving the mental health of seniors.

THE FACTS

- While cognitive impairments, including dementias, encompass many of the mental health problems and illnesses faced by seniors, other problems, especially mood disorders and substance abuse, are equally prevalent.
- Vulnerable older adults and seniors with reduced mobility are not just at higher risk of poor physical health but also of poor mental health.
- Isolation is an important risk factor for poor mental health of seniors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Consult the MHCC's *Guidelines for Comprehensive Mental Health Services for Older Adults in Canada* for details about housing and community services planning considerations.
- Use *The Seniors' Mental Health Policy Lens Toolkit* on the MHCC website when planning changes to municipal programs and policies.
- Expand the availability of affordable supported housing that will meet the unique needs of an aging population.
- Make your municipality an age-friendly community, including paying attention to safety issues and how the built environment and transportation encourage mobility.
- Involve seniors in the planning of community and recreation services that meet their needs.

A broad range of efforts are needed to promote the mental health of seniors...Age friendly communities facilitate access to appropriate housing and transportation and contribute to reducing the risk of social isolation.

(*Changing Directions, Changing Lives: the Mental Health Strategy for Canada*).

Download the Seniors Guidelines and Mental Health Policy Lens Toolkit at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca.

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