



Supporting Older Adults: Using principles and values to promote best practice

The following principles and values are intended to guide the development of policies, programs, and services that promote and support the mental health of older adults, as well as programs and services for older adults who are living with mental health problems and illnesses. These principles and values are informed by the [Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens](#) and are fully integrated within the [Guidelines for Comprehensive Mental Health Services for Older Adults in Canada](#).

The principles and values

- are based on the lived experience of diverse older adults and their families, as well as from evidence, literature reviews, and from consultations with key stakeholders from across Canada.
- must be used collectively, as each is significant in promoting the mental health and well-being of older adults.

This tool should be used to support planning and implementation of the recommendations made in the [Guidelines for Comprehensive Mental Health Services for Older Adults in Canada](#).



Mental Health
Commission
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How can I apply the principles and values?

- Reflect on the questions below as you review your policy, program, or service.
- If you are unsure of the applicability of a question, gather information to deepen your understanding before making a decision.
- Review any boxes left unchecked. Consider how you might make changes to incorporate the principle or value in your policy, program, or service.

Individual-Level Principles and Values



Respect and Dignity

Does your practice or policy

promote the self-esteem and dignity of older adults?

demonstrate respect for older adults?

provide a positive view of aging?

acknowledge older adults as having full and continuing roles in society?



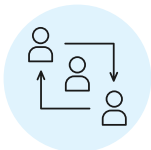
Self-Determination, Independence, and Choice

Does your practice or policy

provide opportunities to make choices?

provide support to facilitate choices and informed decision making?

provide space for older adults to use their abilities?



Participation, Relationship, and Social Inclusion

Does your practice or policy

provide opportunities for older adults to be meaningfully involved or consulted?

facilitate access to the social networks, relationships, and communities of older adults?

foster a sense of belonging for older adults?



Fairness and Equity

Are older adults treated in a way that maximizes inclusion?

Do older adults have equitable access to your program?

Are the needs of older adults given equal consideration to those of others?

Are older adults protected against discrimination on the basis of age?



Security

Does your practice or policy

provide a sense of safety for older adults?

facilitate physical, psychological, and/or financial security for older adults?

reduce risk to the health, security, or well-being of older adults?

ensure that help is available if needed?

System-Level Principles and Values



Accessible

Do older adults have equitable and timely access, if needed?

Is there sufficient information being adequately communicated to older adults?

Are there any social, educational, cultural, financial, or physical barriers preventing access for older adults?



Person and Relationship Centred

Does your practice or policy

provide space to consider the social and economic context in which the older adult lives?

have sufficient resources to meet the individual needs of older adults (e.g., physical design, number of staff)?

consider and respect the values and preferences of older adults?



Wellness and Recovery Focused

Does your practice or policy

enhance quality of life for older adults living with mental health problems and illnesses?

encourage resiliency and hope in older adults with mental health problems and illnesses?

empower and support older adults in their journey of recovery and well-being?



Support for Family/Caregivers

Are caregivers

recognized as partners in care for older adults?

supported for their role in the care of older adults?

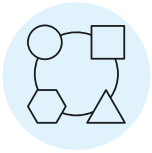
consulted for their knowledge and experience while protecting confidentiality?



Education and Support for Service Providers

Do service providers have knowledge of the unique needs of older adults with mental illness?

Are there supports in place for service providers to effectively carry out their roles (e.g. training, consultations)?



Diversity and Cultural Safety

Is your practice or policy promoted, designed, and resourced to ensure inclusiveness of all older adults?

Are service providers able to understand the diverse social, political, linguistic, economic, and spiritual needs of older adults and provide appropriate support?

Does your practice or policy aim to mitigate the risk of negative impacts on older adults from marginalized groups or communities (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, or Métis, 2SLGBTQ+, racial minorities, low-income, disabled)?



Comprehensive

Does your practice or policy

promote and support the mental health of all older adults?

include a comprehensive range of services to support the needs of older adults?



Integrated, Flexible, and Seamless

Are the unique needs and strengths of various groups of older adults considered?

Is there an opportunity to collaborate with or refer to other resources and professionals for needs that are out of scope?



Supportive of Mental Health Promotion

Does your practice or policy

integrate mental health promotion strategies?

facilitate the capacity of older adults to improve their mental health?



Evidence Informed

Does your practice or policy

include current evidence and best practices from multiple sources of knowledge?

incorporate the lived experience of older adults and their caregivers?

Interested in learning more?

Our webpage for supporting the mental health of older adults has several additional resources to help support the implementation of best practice and create comprehensive mental health services.

Access it here: www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/seniors

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