Canadian Mental Health Association
Champlain East

Association canadienne pour la santé mentale
Champlain Est

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Mental Illness awareness Week, October 4 – 10, 2026

Mental Health Care Is a Right, Not a Privilege

Submitted by Jennifer Meyer, Mental Health Promoter, CMHA Champlain East

Every year, Mental Illness Awareness Week serves as a powerful reminder that mental health affects us all. This national public education campaign aims to raise awareness of the barriers people face when seeking support, fight discrimination, and encourage meaningful conversations about mental health. It also brings together advocates, organizations, and communities to unite their voices in support of systemic change and improved access to care.

The theme, "Mental Health Care Is a Right, Not a Privilege," reflects a reality that cannot be ignored. In any given year, one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness, and by the age of 40, half of Canadians will have experienced a mental health challenge. While many people still view mental illness differently than physical illness, its impact can be just as serious, and even life-threatening.

The statistics are sobering. More than 4,000 Canadians die by suicide each year, and people living with mental illness are more likely to experience substance use challenges, chronic medical conditions, and premature mortality. Whether through our own experiences or those of a family member, friend, coworker, or neighbour, every one of us will be affected by mental illness at some point in our lives.

Despite the widespread impact of mental illness, a significant gap remains between those who need support and those who receive it. Many Canadians report that their mental health care needs are not fully met, and too many children, youth, and adults continue to face barriers to accessing timely, appropriate services. These gaps highlight the urgent need for increased investment, awareness, and community support.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Champlain East is committed to helping close this gap. Guided by the belief that mental health care is a fundamental right, CMHA Champlain East works to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, promote understanding, and create opportunities for people to seek help without fear of judgment.

Through education, outreach, wellness programs, and community support, CMHA Champlain East helps individuals build mental health knowledge and develop skills that can prevent or lessen the impact of mental illness. By providing information, promoting early intervention, and

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connecting people to local resources and services, the organization empowers community members to access the support they need to live healthy, meaningful, and fulfilling lives.

Mental Illness Awareness Week reminds us that creating a mentally healthy community is a shared responsibility. Together, we can challenge stigma, advocate for equitable access to care, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to receive the support they deserve. Because mental health care is not a privilege reserved for a few, it is a right that belongs to all of us.

For more information, contact Jenny, Mental Health Promoter, at 613-551-2490 or email meyerj@cmha-east.on.ca

DO YOU NEED HELP?

Dial or text 2-1-1 for free and confidential service that easily connects people to the critical social and community supports they need.

If you are thinking of suicide, please call 9-8-8 which is a mental health crisis and suicide prevention line.

The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA, please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at www.cmha-east.on.ca