



BC Alliance for Monitoring  
**Mental Health Equity**

# Achieving Mental Health Equity in British Columbia

Recommendations from Mental Health Experts



**CASCH**  
Canadian Alliance for  
Social Connection and Health



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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report provides recommendations and implementation strategies for improving mental health equity in British Columbia. These recommendations were developed by **The BC Alliance for Monitoring Mental Health Equity (BC AMMHE)**, which is a coalition of researchers who came together in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to promote mental health equity. The key recommendations include:

1. Support Community approaches to mental health promotion and empowerment.
2. Implement Integrated responses to mental health and substance use disorders
3. Investment in mental health care accessibility, specifically reducing barriers for equity deserving groups.
4. Develop evidence-based policy and practice guidelines for digital mental healthcare and make digital programs and services more accessible and equitable.
5. Optimize mental health screening referral pathways
6. Invest in structural support for healthcare workers.
7. Invest in ongoing training and infrastructure support for mental health providers.

After the initial development of these guidelines, it became clear that it was necessary to develop specific, actionable strategies for each of them. To accomplish this, key informant interviews were conducted to identify specific, actionable steps that could be taken to address each recommendation.

It is our hope that by pursuing these implementation strategies, British Columbia can lead the globe in eliminating the mental health inequities facing our communities.

## Acknowledgements

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

BC Alliance for Monitoring Mental Health Equity respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we work is the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations.

# BACKGROUND

The mental health landscape in British Columbia highlights an increasingly heavy burden of mental health and substance use disorders arising from deep-rooted and complex social challenges. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is increasingly clear that there is critical need for comprehensive support and intervention strategies that support individuals and communities to address upstream causes of poor mental health and substance use, while also providing direct supports to prevent and treat these conditions as they emerge within our communities. In particular, it is necessary to bolster our social support systems and enhance community resilience to reduce burdens on the healthcare system.

Furthermore, it is evident that the impact of mental health challenges does not fall evenly across the population. Those belonging to equity-deserving communities, who are already navigating the complexities of marginalization, oppression, discrimination, and violence, find themselves disproportionately affected. This disparity underscores the necessity for targeted and inclusive mental health services that address the unique needs of these communities, ensuring that support is accessible to all, particularly to those who are most vulnerable.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

This is why British Columbia needs a strategy to promote mental health equity.

**By equity, we mean a commitment to reduce and ultimately eliminate unjust and avoidable differences in health status by social positions and identities, with particular attention to those who experience social and/or structural barriers to health or healthcare (e.g., youth, 2S/LGBTQ+ people, Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, and those with pre-existing mental health concerns).**

With this goal, the present report offers seven key recommendations and associated implementation strategies to promote mental health equity in British Columbia.

# 1

## SUPPORT COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND EMPOWERMENT

*"Not unlike the physical health consequences, growth in the prevalence of mental health challenges amid the pandemic illustrates how profoundly population-level mental health is shaped by the social determinants of health." (Jenkins et al., 2021)*

**We recommend that British Columbia invest in a population approach to mental health, inclusive of promotion, prevention and treatment – with specific attention to reducing mental health inequities.**

Investing in a population approach to mental health that encompasses promotion, prevention, and treatment can significantly enhance the well-being of individuals and communities across British Columbia. This approach acknowledges the complex interplay between various determinants of mental health, such as socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, cultural background, and environmental factors. By focusing on community-driven solutions and empowerment, this strategy aims to address the root causes of mental health issues and reduce disparities. Tailored interventions can better meet the specific needs of diverse groups, promoting inclusivity and accessibility. Furthermore, empowering communities to take part in their mental health initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and resilience, ultimately leading to more sustainable mental health outcomes. This inclusive strategy not only addresses immediate mental health needs but also builds a foundation for long-term mental health equity.

### Specific Actions:

- Host a policy forum with experts and people with lived experience to explore opportunities for enhanced community investments.
- Establish an expert advisory board to guide mental health promotion, policy, and practice consisting of individuals with lived experience from equity-deserving groups.
- Conduct surveys and focus groups within each health authority to identify community-specific mental health priorities, map patient journeys to identify access issues, and assess acceptability for existing and potential interventions.
- Fund targeted mental health promotion campaigns and programs in community centers, schools, and online platforms, focusing on awareness, prevention, and early intervention.
- Fund an annual conference for community-based organizations providing mental health supports to gather together, share lessons learned, and identify opportunities for improving programs and supports, particularly for equity-seeking groups.

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendations for supporting community approaches to mental health promotion and empowerment closely align with British Columbia's Mental Health Strategy, "A Pathway to Hope." This strategy emphasizes a holistic and inclusive approach to mental health and substance use care, underscoring the importance of prevention, early intervention, and addressing the root causes of mental health challenges. By advocating for a population approach to mental health that includes promotion, prevention, and treatment, these recommendations reflect the strategy's commitment to enhancing the well-being of all British Columbians through accessible and community-driven solutions.

"A Pathway to Hope" highlights the need for equitable access to culturally safe and effective care, especially for equity-deserving groups, mirroring the recommendation's focus on reducing mental health inequities. The strategy's emphasis on wellness promotion, prevention, and seamless and integrated care aligns with the proposed actions to host policy forums, establish expert advisory boards, conduct community-specific assessments, and fund targeted mental health campaigns and programs. These initiatives are geared towards empowering communities, fostering resilience, and ensuring that mental health services are inclusive and tailored to meet the diverse needs of the population.

Furthermore, the strategy's approach to building resiliency, valuing diversity, collaborating across sectors, and committing to innovation and achieving results resonates with the suggested specific actions. By focusing on community investments, leveraging the expertise and experiences of those with lived experience, and facilitating knowledge sharing among community-based organizations, these recommendations complement and reinforce the strategic directions outlined in "A Pathway to Hope." Together, they pave the way for a more comprehensive, inclusive, and effective mental health and substance use care system in British Columbia.

# 2

## IMPLEMENT INTEGRATED RESPONSES TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

*"As a means of coping with deteriorations in mental health and stressors of the pandemic, many parents identified an increase in alcohol use." (Gadermann et al., 2021)*

### **We recommend that British Columbia implement integrated responses that address concurrent mental health and substance use disorders.**

Integrating responses to tackle concurrent mental health and substance use disorders is essential for providing comprehensive and effective care. Individuals experiencing co-occurring disorders often face complex challenges that require a coordinated approach to address both the mental health and substance use aspects of their condition. An integrated response ensures that treatment services are not provided in isolation, which can lead to fragmented care and poor outcomes. By implementing integrated care pathways, British Columbia can facilitate seamless access to a range of services, including medical treatment, psychological support, and social care, tailored to the unique needs of each individual. This approach promotes a holistic view of recovery, recognizing that addressing substance use and mental health disorders together can lead to better engagement in treatment, reduced health disparities, and ultimately, more successful health and social outcomes. Additionally, integrated responses can help in breaking down the stigma associated with seeking help for substance use disorders, encouraging more individuals to access the support they need.

### **Specific Actions:**

- Develop a standardized training module for healthcare providers on integrated care for mental health and substance use disorders.
- Ensure that primary care networks and community health centres are appropriately staffed with mental health specialist and community navigators that can respond to mental health and substance use needs of primary care patients.
- Create a centralized referral system that enables quick access to specialized care for individuals with concurrent disorders.

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendation for implementing integrated responses to mental health and substance use disorders is in strong alignment with British Columbia's Mental Health Strategy. Indeed, the strategy acknowledges the intricate connection between mental health and substance use disorders and prioritizes seamless and integrated care as a foundational pillar to improve the health and well-being of individuals facing these concurrent challenges.

"A Pathway to Hope" underscores the importance of an integrated care approach, highlighting initiatives to bring together a range of services—including medical treatment, psychological support, and social care—under a unified care pathway. This mirrors the recommendation's call for comprehensive care models that address the complex needs of individuals with co-occurring disorders. By advocating for the development of standardized training modules for healthcare providers, staffing primary care networks with mental health specialists, and creating a centralized referral system, the recommendation complements the strategy's objectives to enhance service integration, improve access to care, and ensure a holistic approach to treatment.

Furthermore, the strategy's commitment to equitable access to culturally safe and effective care resonates with the recommendation's emphasis on reducing health disparities and breaking down the stigma associated with seeking help for substance use disorders. "A Pathway to Hope" also highlights the need for collaboration across healthcare providers, community organizations, and government agencies to implement integrated care models effectively. This collaborative approach is reflected in the suggested specific actions to strengthen the workforce and improve care coordination for individuals with concurrent disorders.

Overall, the recommendation for implementing integrated responses aligns with the strategic vision and actions outlined in "A Pathway to Hope." Together, they underscore the commitment to transforming the mental health and substance use care system in British Columbia into one that is more responsive, integrated, and focused on the needs of individuals and families navigating the complexities of concurrent disorders.

# 3

## INVEST IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY, SPECIFICALLY REDUCING BARRIERS FOR EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS

**We recommend identifying and eliminating barriers to mental health care through investments in tailored programming that meets the specific needs of equity-deserving populations.**

*"It is essential that governments, health systems, care providers and other key stakeholders recognize and act upon the opportunity to invest in accessible and equitable mental health care delivery" - Dr. Jill Murphy*

Enhancing access to mental health care for equity-deserving groups involves recognizing and dismantling the unique barriers these populations face. These groups may include individuals from marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ communities, those with disabilities, and people living in poverty, among others. Barriers can range from financial constraints, cultural and language differences, to stigma and discrimination. Investing in tailored programming means developing services that are not only accessible but also culturally sensitive and inclusive, ensuring that all individuals feel welcomed and understood. Such investments should also focus on training healthcare professionals in culturally competent care and expanding services to underserved areas. By prioritizing the needs of equity-deserving groups, British Columbia can move towards a more equitable mental health care system that acknowledges and addresses the disparities in access and outcomes. This approach not only benefits those directly impacted but also strengthens the overall mental health framework by making it more inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of its population.

### Specific Actions:

- Map out geographic and demographic barriers to mental health care access for equity-deserving groups across British Columbia.
- Develop mobile health units and telehealth services to reach underserved areas, offering services in multiple languages.
- Launch an awareness campaign about mental health services tailored to equity-deserving populations, utilizing channels that effectively reach these groups.
- Fund universal access to peer-led initiatives to reach equity-deserving communities, and investigate opportunities for co-placement in community, health centres, and housing agencies.
- Provide equity-oriented training modules for clinicians and others' involved in providing care to reduce stigma and ensure that all individuals have access to services that are culturally-sensitive.

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendation to invest in mental health care accessibility, specifically reducing barriers for equity-deserving groups, aligns seamlessly with the ethos and directives of British Columbia's Mental Health Strategy. Indeed, the strategy places a significant emphasis on equitable access to culturally safe and effective care, recognizing the necessity of addressing and dismantling the unique barriers faced by marginalized and equity-deserving populations.

"A Pathway to Hope" articulates a commitment to making mental health and substance use services more inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of British Columbia's diverse population. This includes specific actions aimed at enhancing service delivery to meet the unique needs of various communities, much like the recommendation's call for tailored programming and services. The strategy's focus on developing and implementing culturally safe practices in healthcare settings resonates with the recommended provision of equity-oriented training modules for clinicians and healthcare providers.

Moreover, the strategy acknowledges the importance of innovative service delivery models, such as mobile health units and telehealth services, to extend the reach of mental health care to underserved areas and populations. This approach is in direct correlation with the recommendation's emphasis on mapping out and overcoming geographic and demographic barriers to access, ensuring that care is available where and when it's needed, in a language and format that is accessible to all.

Launching awareness campaigns tailored to equity-deserving populations and funding peer-led initiatives, as recommended, also mirror the strategy's goals of increasing public knowledge and understanding of mental health issues, reducing stigma, and promoting the use of available mental health and substance use services among all communities, especially those that have historically been marginalized or underserved.

The alignment between the recommendation and "A Pathway to Hope" underscores a shared vision for a mental health care system in British Columbia that is not only accessible and equitable but also reflective of and responsive to the rich diversity of its population. Together, these aligned efforts aim to build a mental health framework that acknowledges, respects, and actively addresses the disparities in access and outcomes for equity-deserving groups, moving towards a more inclusive and equitable health care system.

## 4 DEVELOP EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTHCARE AND MAKE DIGITAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES MORE ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE.

*"Though digital mental health may improve access, there are also risks that it might exacerbate inequities in access to care among high-risk populations who may face poorer digital resources or other barriers. Equity-oriented research is needed to identify needs and gaps to equitable digital health care delivery." (TEAM-CAP)*

**We recommend the development and dissemination of guidelines to support digital mental health services, ensuring that they are appropriately tailored for implementation and delivery across settings.**

The emergence of digital mental healthcare offers unprecedented opportunities to expand access to mental health services, particularly for individuals in remote or underserved regions. However, the effectiveness of these digital interventions depends on their alignment with evidence-based practices and the specific needs of the population served. Developing policy and practice guidelines for digital mental health services ensures that these interventions are grounded in the latest research and best practices, enhancing their efficacy and safety. By tailoring these guidelines for various settings—rural and urban, schools, workplaces, and healthcare facilities—British Columbia can facilitate a wide and equitable adoption of digital mental health solutions. These guidelines should also address issues of digital literacy, privacy, and accessibility to ensure that digital mental health services do not inadvertently exacerbate existing disparities. Making digital programs more accessible and equitable involves not only technological infrastructure but also supportive policies that recognize and mitigate potential barriers. This strategic approach can significantly contribute to the scalability of mental health services, offering flexible and responsive care options to meet the diverse needs of the population.

### Specific Actions:

- Convene a task force of digital mental health experts to review current literature and practices, formulating comprehensive guidelines.
- Pilot digital mental health services in select communities to evaluate the guidelines' effectiveness and gather feedback.
- Roll out training programs for mental health providers on the adoption and use of digital platforms, based on the finalized guidelines.

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendation to develop evidence-based policy and practice guidelines for digital mental healthcare and enhance the accessibility and equity of digital programs and services is in direct alignment with British Columbia's Mental Health Strategy. The strategy acknowledges the evolving landscape of mental health and substance use care, emphasizing the need for innovation and the incorporation of digital health solutions to improve access to care across the province.

"A Pathway to Hope" acknowledges the need to extend care to underserved populations, including those in remote or rural areas, and for providing flexible options that cater to the diverse needs of British Columbians. This mirrors the recommendation's focus on leveraging digital platforms to broaden the reach of mental health services while ensuring these interventions are based on the best available evidence and tailored to be effective across various settings.

The strategy's commitment to creating more seamless and integrated care pathways includes exploring digital and telehealth solutions as a means to enhance service delivery. This is congruent with the recommendation's call for the establishment of guidelines that ensure digital mental health services are safe, effective, and equitable. Furthermore, the emphasis on making digital mental health solutions more accessible aligns with the strategy's overarching goals of improving access to care and reducing barriers faced by equity-deserving groups.

Additionally, "A Pathway to Hope" highlights the importance of innovation and the use of technology in transforming mental health and substance use services. The recommendation to convene a task force to develop digital mental health guidelines and to pilot these services in select communities aligns with the strategy's vision for a proactive, evidence-informed approach to service enhancement. The strategy's focus on training and supporting healthcare providers to adopt new tools and interventions also corresponds with the recommendation's action to roll out training programs for mental health providers on digital platforms.

# 5

## OPTIMIZE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING AND REFERRAL PATHWAYS

*"During COVID-19 quarantine, follow-up phone calls or visits from public health professionals should include appropriate mental health checks." (Daly et al., 2021)*

**We recommend improved screening for mental health challenges into primary care practice as well as pathways for people who screen positive to gain rapid access to initial follow-up consultation.**

Integrating mental health screening into primary care practices is a critical step towards early identification and intervention for mental health challenges. Primary care settings are often the first point of contact for individuals seeking help for health-related issues, making them an ideal venue for early detection of mental health conditions. By implementing systematic screening processes, healthcare providers can identify mental health issues at an early stage, even in patients who may not have sought mental health care independently. This approach requires the development of clear, efficient referral pathways to ensure that individuals who screen positive for mental health challenges can quickly access specialized care. Rapid access to initial follow-up consultations is crucial for engaging patients in treatment, preventing the escalation of symptoms, and improving overall outcomes. Optimizing screening and referral pathways in British Columbia will necessitate training for primary care providers in mental health screening techniques, as well as the establishment of strong links between primary care and mental health services. This integrated approach will facilitate a seamless continuum of care, from early detection to treatment and support, thereby enhancing the mental health and well-being of individuals across the province.

### Specific Actions:

- Create a stepped-care approach, that provides access to community social supports, digital mental health services, support groups, and therapy or counselling.
- Integrate a standardized mental health screening questionnaire into electronic health record systems used by primary care clinics.
- Develop an automated referral system within the electronic health record that suggests appropriate stepped-care mental health services based on screening results.
- Establish a follow-up protocol ensuring patients receive initial consultation within two weeks of referral.

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendation to optimize mental health screening and referral pathways aligns closely with the objectives and actions outlined "A Pathway to Hope." This strategy emphasizes the importance of early identification, seamless care, and efficient referral systems as essential components of an integrated approach to mental health and substance use services.

"A Pathway to Hope" advocates for enhancing the connection between primary care and mental health services, which mirrors the recommendation's focus on integrating mental health screening into primary care practices. By advocating for systematic screening processes and the development of clear referral pathways, the recommendation supports the strategy's goal of ensuring that individuals who need specialized mental health care can access these services promptly and effectively.

The strategy's commitment to a seamless and integrated care system is reflected in the recommendation for a stepped-care approach. This approach, which provides various levels of support based on individual needs—from community social supports to digital mental health services and therapy—aligns with the strategy's vision for a continuum of care that is responsive, accessible, and tailored to the diverse needs of British Columbians.

Moreover, "A Pathway to Hope" highlights the need for innovation in service delivery, including the use of digital technologies to improve access to care. The recommendation's actions to integrate standardized mental health screening questionnaires into electronic health records and develop automated referral systems are examples of leveraging technology to enhance care coordination and efficiency, thus ensuring rapid access to mental health services.

The establishment of follow-up protocols to ensure timely initial consultations further aligns with the strategy's emphasis on timely and effective care. "A Pathway to Hope" recognizes the critical nature of early intervention and the need for a health care system that enables quick transition from primary care to specialized mental health services.

In summary, the recommendation to optimize mental health screening and referral pathways complements and reinforces the principles and priorities of "A Pathway to Hope." Together, they underscore a shared commitment to improving mental health outcomes through early detection, integrated care, and the strategic use of technology to streamline access to and delivery of mental health services across British Columbia.

# 6

## INVEST IN STRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

*"Specific strategies must be developed to provide support to those providing unpaid care work and emotional labour alongside medical expertise. These might include improved access to childcare and mental health resources, among other strategies. Without such structural changes, there is a real risk of disproportionate levels of COVID-19-related burnout among women physicians." (Smith et al., 2021)*

**We recommend structural supports for healthcare workers through provisions of sick leave, staffing, and childcare in order to reduce burnout and protect the integrity of the mental health workforce.**

Healthcare workers, including those in the mental health sector, are at significant risk of burnout due to the emotionally taxing nature of their work, long hours, and often insufficient resources. Investing in structural supports such as comprehensive sick leave policies, adequate staffing levels, and accessible childcare services is crucial to mitigate these risks. Such investments not only safeguard the well-being of healthcare workers but also ensure the quality and sustainability of care provided to patients.

While an assessment is needed to identify the most important structural supports, there are a variety of areas immediately ready for action. For example, provisions for sick leave are essential to allow healthcare workers the time needed to recover from illness or manage stress, without the added worry of lost income or job insecurity. Adequate staffing is equally important to prevent overwork and the chronic stress that can lead to burnout and high turnover rates. Accessible childcare services address a critical barrier for many healthcare workers, enabling them to balance their professional and personal responsibilities more effectively.

By supporting healthcare workers in these fundamental ways, British Columbia can enhance job satisfaction, reduce burnout rates, and retain a skilled and motivated mental health workforce. This, in turn, contributes to a stronger, more resilient healthcare system capable of meeting the diverse and evolving mental health needs of its population.

### Specific Steps:

- Conduct a survey of healthcare workers to identify the most pressing structural challenges facing the healthcare workforce.
- Work with implementation and evaluation specialists, unions, and other partners to implement pilot programs that address structural needs, including subsidized childcare and appropriate staffing compliments.
- Evaluate the pilot program's effectiveness after one year, with the goal of expanding successful strategies regionally

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendation for investing in structural support for healthcare workers aligns with British Columbia's Mental Health Strategy, particularly in its emphasis on supporting the workforce that delivers mental health and substance use services. While the strategy broadly focuses on improving care for British Columbians facing mental health and substance use challenges, the recognition of the need for a resilient, well-supported healthcare workforce is implicit in its goals for system-wide transformation.

"A Pathway to Hope" outlines the importance of developing a comprehensive and coordinated approach to mental health and substance use care. Integral to this approach is ensuring that healthcare workers have the resources, supports, and working conditions necessary to perform their roles effectively and sustainably. The strategy's commitment to enhancing the quality of care and access to services can only be realized through a workforce that is healthy, supported, and capable of meeting the complex needs of patients.

The recommendation's focus on providing sick leave, adequate staffing, and childcare aligns with the strategy's underlying principle of creating a better work environment for healthcare providers. This includes ensuring healthcare workers have access to the necessary supports to prevent burnout, a critical component in retaining a skilled and motivated workforce. Furthermore, "A Pathway to Hope" implicitly supports the idea that taking care of the caregivers is a prerequisite for delivering patient-centered, compassionate, and effective care.

By advocating for structural supports, the recommendation also addresses the strategy's call for innovation and improvement in the health system's capacity to provide mental health and substance use services. Implementing supports such as sick leave, adequate staffing, and childcare not only benefits healthcare workers but also contributes to a more responsive and resilient healthcare system overall.

Specific actions like conducting surveys to identify healthcare workers' needs and piloting programs to address these needs are practical steps that resonate with the strategy's approach to evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement. Evaluating the effectiveness of these pilot programs and considering their expansion is aligned with the strategy's commitment to adaptability and scalability in improving mental health care delivery across the province.

# 7 INVEST IN ONGOING TRAINING AND INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

*"Training and capacity building for providers will also be needed to ensure effective implementation of evidence-based e-mental health care..." (Murphy et al., 2021)*

**We recommend investments in capacity building and infrastructure support for providers to support ongoing needs of providers and patients in an evolving healthcare environment.**

The field of mental health care is continuously evolving, with new research findings, therapeutic techniques, and technologies emerging at a rapid pace. Investing in ongoing training for mental health providers ensures that they remain at the forefront of effective treatment methodologies, are well-equipped to apply evidence-based practices, and can adapt to the changing needs of their patients. This commitment to professional development enhances the quality of care, supports the delivery of culturally competent services, and promotes innovation in treatment approaches.

Infrastructure support is equally crucial, as it provides the necessary tools and resources for mental health providers to deliver services efficiently and effectively. This includes investments in telehealth platforms, electronic health records systems, and other technological solutions that facilitate remote care, streamline administrative tasks, and improve communication between providers and patients. It also encompasses the physical infrastructure of care settings, ensuring they are conducive to patient well-being and privacy.

By investing in both training and infrastructure, British Columbia can build a resilient mental health care system that is capable of addressing the complex needs of its population. This dual focus not only supports the immediate needs of providers and patients but also lays the groundwork for a sustainable and adaptable healthcare environment.

## Specific Actions:

- Conduct regular environmental and cross-jurisdictional scans to identify key technologies and infrastructures being used to meet patient needs.
- Identify current gaps in knowledge and skills through surveys and focus groups with mental health providers and patients.
- Develop a series of online and in-person training modules addressing key knowledge needs.
- Provide grant opportunities for healthcare providers to facilitate their adoption of key technologies, including secure video conferencing tools and patient management systems.

## Alignment with BC's Mental Health Strategy

The recommendation for investing in ongoing training and infrastructure support for mental health providers is fundamentally aligned with the priorities and goals articulated in "A Pathway to Hope." This strategy emphasizes the need for a well-equipped, knowledgeable, and adaptable healthcare workforce to deliver high-quality mental health and substance use services across the province.

"A Pathway to Hope" recognizes that the effectiveness of mental health care is significantly enhanced when providers are trained in the latest evidence-based practices and supported by robust infrastructure. This includes the integration of technology in care delivery, such as telehealth services, which is particularly pertinent in the context of an evolving healthcare landscape. The strategy's focus on innovation and the adoption of new technologies reflects the recommendation's emphasis on providing infrastructure support to enable more flexible and accessible care delivery.

The strategy also highlights the importance of continuous learning and development for healthcare providers, ensuring they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to meet the diverse needs of their patients. This aligns with the recommendation's call for regular environmental scans to identify emerging technologies and training needs, underscoring the strategy's commitment to maintaining a high standard of care through professional development.

Moreover, "A Pathway to Hope" outlines actions to improve the mental health care system's capacity, including enhancing the physical and technological infrastructure within which care is provided. This is in harmony with the recommendation's focus on investing in both the digital and physical environments of healthcare delivery, from secure video conferencing tools to conducive care settings, ensuring they are optimized for patient well-being and privacy.

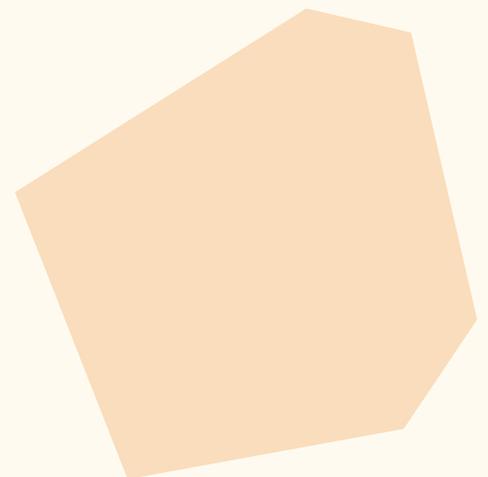
The specific actions suggested, such as conducting surveys to identify gaps in knowledge and skills, developing training modules, and providing grants for the adoption of technology, resonate with the strategy's approach to building a more resilient, responsive, and well-supported healthcare workforce. By focusing on both training and infrastructure, the recommendation reinforces the strategy's vision for a mental health and substance use care system that is adaptable, sustainable, and capable of meeting the evolving needs of British Columbians.

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, achieving mental health equity is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires significant investments of time, energy, and financial resources. This effort demands a coordinated approach involving key stakeholders at multiple levels of government, as well as collaboration across various sectors, including healthcare, education, and community services. The challenges in addressing mental health disparities are substantial, stemming from systemic barriers, social determinants of health, and historical inequities. However, the path to overcoming these obstacles is outlined in the comprehensive recommendations provided in this report.

These recommendations serve as a strategic blueprint for action, emphasizing the importance of community-based approaches, integrated care models, enhanced accessibility, and the development of supportive infrastructure for both healthcare providers and recipients. Implementing these recommendations requires not just commitment but also a willingness to adapt and respond to emerging needs and feedback from communities most impacted by mental health inequities.

We are confident that with concerted effort and ongoing dialogue among all stakeholders, mental health equity is an achievable goal. The recommendations detailed in this report represent a critical step forward, offering practical and evidence-based strategies that can bring us closer to ensuring that every individual in British Columbia has equitable access to mental health services. This endeavor, while challenging, promises significant benefits for the well-being and resilience of our communities, laying the groundwork for a future where mental health support is accessible, inclusive, and effective for all members of society. By embracing these recommendations and committing to their implementation, we can make substantial progress in bridging the mental health equity gap in British Columbia, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life and health outcomes for all its residents.





BC Alliance for Monitoring  
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