



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EQUAL HEALTH MEANS CLOSING THE GAP IN ACCESS TO CARE

CAMIMH marks Mental Illness Awareness Week with a call for equal health, fair funding and no exceptions

(OTTAWA, ON) October 2, 2026 - To mark Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW), taking place October 4 - 10, 2026, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is calling for mental health and substance use health to be treated with the same priority as physical health across Canada's health care system.

This year's theme, **"Equal Health. Fair Funding. No Exceptions,"** reflects a simple principle: awareness must be matched by access. Canadians have made clear that mental health and substance use health matter, but recognition alone does not ensure care is available when it is needed. Equal health means being able to access timely, appropriate mental health and substance use health services when care is needed.

"True health equity requires that mental health and substance use healthcare be treated as essential health services, fully equal to any physical medical care," stated Florence Budden, CAMIMH Co-Chair. "Universal healthcare is an empty promise unless patients can access robust, reliable support and services the moment they reach out for help."

CAMIMH's [2026 National Report Card on Mental Health and Substance Use Health](#) shows there is still significant work to do. Canadians gave current wait times for publicly funded mental health care an F, and equal access to mental health care compared to physical health care also received an F. At the same time, 87 per cent of Canadians said timely access to mental health care is important. Substance use health care also received poor marks: Canadians gave their overall ability to access publicly funded substance use health services a D, while satisfaction with provincial governments on access received an F. Yet 69 per cent of Canadians said timely access to substance use health services is important. Canada's economic strength depends on the health and well-being of the people who drive it. A strong country starts with healthy people—and that means ensuring Canadians can access timely and affordable mental health and substance use health care when and where they need it.

"We know where the gaps are. What Canadians need now is action to close them," said Anthony Esposti, CAMIMH Co-Chair. "That means sustained investment, clear accountability and a commitment to improving mental health and substance use health care across the country."

Mental Illness Awareness Week is an opportunity to move the conversation beyond awareness and toward what Canadians should be able to expect from the health system. For CAMIMH, equal health means timely, appropriate access to care, fair funding means ensuring services have the resources to



meet need, and no exceptions means mental health and substance use health cannot be treated as secondary to physical health.

Equal Health. Fair Funding. No Exceptions.

For more information about Mental Illness Awareness Week, visit [HERE](#).

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***About CAMIMH:** Formed in 1998, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is the national voice for mental health in Canada. CAMIMH is a member-driven alliance of mental health and substance use health organizations comprised of people with lived or living experience, their families and caregivers, and health care providers. CAMIMH's mandate is to ensure that mental health and substance use health is placed on the national agenda so that the people of Canada receive timely and appropriate access to care and support.*

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