

**PROVINCIAL
MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Annual Report

April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM CHAIR

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2020–2021 Annual Report for the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council). The Advisory Council is a Category Three (3) government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and plans and reports under these requirements. As interim Chair, my signature below acknowledges the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council is accountable for the results reported.

The past year has been a challenging one with the COVID-19 global pandemic impacting the work of the Advisory Council and the lives of members both personally and professionally, many of whom have had to turn their attention to pandemic response within their respective organizations. However, despite the many challenges, COVID-19 has created rich learning opportunities, innovative solutions to the provision of care, and enhanced collaboration among the provincial government, community-based organizations and the business community, all with the shared goal of meeting the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

On behalf of the Advisory Council, we are honoured to have played a key role this past year in the pandemic response, as we worked simultaneously to continue the work of **Towards Recovery** in transforming the mental health and addictions system in this province.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to all members of the Advisory Council for their continued dedication to mental health and addictions issues in the province. On behalf of the Advisory Council, I also extend appreciation for the efforts of staff within the Department of Health and Community Services for their support in making our work possible.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Pollett, Interim Chair
Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

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Overview

The Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) reports to the Minister of Health and Community Services on key mental health and addictions matters to formulate effective decision making and policy development; and provides oversight to the implementation of **Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador**.

Further information about the Advisory Council is located on the Department of Health and Community Services website at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/mentalhealth-committee/mentalhealth/provincial-mental-health-and-addictions-advisory-council/>.

Membership

Council appointment recommendations are made by the Public Service Commission using a merit-based process in accordance with section 25(a) of the **Public Service Commission Act**. Members of the Advisory Council are then appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services, and include individuals representing diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences (see Appendix A for membership list).

The Advisory Council brings diverse backgrounds, knowledge and experience in the area of mental health and addictions, including:

- Personal lived experience/family experience
- Regional health authorities
- Psychiatry and family medicine
- Education
- Health promotion and prevention
- Community organizations
- Memorial University of Newfoundland/College of the North Atlantic
- Business community
- Justice system (police/legal aid/corrections/private bar)
- National organizations
- Indigenous people

Member terms: Advisory Council members shall be appointed for a term of three years and may be re-appointed for one further term of three years, for a maximum of six years. Where the term of office expires and a successor has not been appointed, the member may continue to hold their position until a successor is appointed.

Funding

Members are not remunerated for their participation on the Advisory Council. Administrative costs associated with Advisory Council meetings are covered by the Department of Health and Community Services.

The Advisory Council does not maintain a separate office, and secretariat support is provided by the Mental Health and Addictions Division, Department of Health and Community Services.

Meeting Frequency

In the 2020-21 reporting period, the Advisory Council was challenged with scheduling meeting due to the pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, the Advisory Council did not meet during the 2020-2021 reporting period and no expenses have been incurred. In general, all costs incurred by the Advisory Council are administrative and covered by HCS.

The Advisory Council does not maintain a separate office; support and secretariat services are provided by the Mental Health and Addictions Division, First Floor, West Block, Confederation Building, St. John's.

Highlights and Partnerships

The Advisory Council maintains a strong partnership with the Department of Health and Community Services and the Recovery Council in providing oversight on the implementation of **Towards Recovery** recommendations. Its diverse membership also reflects the many community partnerships that support the work of the Advisory Council.

Although the Advisory Council did not meet in the 2020-2021 reporting period, members were invited to participate on the COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Group to support pandemic planning for issues related to mental health and addictions.

There were a total of 34 Vulnerable Population Task Group meetings held in 2020-21 and the Advisory Council chair attended every meeting, providing valuable input into the pandemic response on behalf of the Advisory Council. Furthermore, several Advisory Council members joined the Vulnerable Population Task Group representing their community agency and/or lived experience which aided the Task Group with informed planning for the pandemic and improved communication with the Advisory Council.

Report on Performance: Objectives 2020-2023

The Advisory Council provides support to the Minister of Health and Community Services in an advisory capacity. As such, the following objective will guide its direction for the period April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2023, and will be reported on yearly for the duration of this period.

Issue: Provide oversight for the implementation of recommendations in Towards Recovery
The Advisory Council is embedded into the **Towards Recovery** governance structure, thus providing meaningful input and oversight into the implementation of the recommendations.

Several Advisory Council members also serve as members on **Towards Recovery** project teams and/or working groups.

Annual Objective

By March 31, 2021, the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council will have provided advice and oversight to the Minister of Health and Community Services regarding implementation of **Towards Recovery** recommendations.

Indicators:

- Obtained expert and group member expertise
- Invited community groups and other organizations to present information
- Provide advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services
- Made recommendations to government-led mental health and addictions initiatives

Measure: Provided commentary and recommendations.

Indicator	Outcome
Obtained expert and group member expertise	During 2020-21, the Advisory Council provided expertise by email or teleconference, outside of regularly scheduled meetings. The Advisory Council continued to utilize the combined expertise of its members by reviewing and providing feedback on Towards Recovery documents, and other emerging priorities. The Advisory Council has also provided oversight on the implementation of several Towards Recovery recommendations.
Invited community groups and other organizations to present information	During 2020-21, the Advisory Council continued to focus on the implementation of Towards Recovery recommendations. However, no formal presentations by community groups or other organizations occurred given community groups' efforts were placed on responding to the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Prioritized advice provided to the Minister	Advisory Council feedback and advice was provided to the Minister on many areas related to mental health and addictions. Priority topics included: providing advice on the model of care for health in corrections; provincial expansion of opioid dependence treatment hubs; finalization of the provincial stepped-care; and approvals for stepped care, mental health triage and a provincial psychiatry referral process.
Made recommendations to government-led mental health and addictions initiatives	Made recommendations to government-led mental health and addictions initiatives, as part of the provincial mental health and addictions system transformation.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The Advisory Council's current interim chairperson and council members' appointment terms have expired. New membership appointments are presently in the process of being finalized through the independent appointments process, and appointments are expected to be made soon.

There are concerns by experts in mental health and addictions that social isolation, unemployment, domestic violence and disrupted grief processes, among other factors, will cause a surge in mental health and addictions challenges in the weeks, months and years ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Advisory Council will continue to provide guidance and oversight to **Towards Recovery** to ensure the mental health and addictions system meets the needs of the population.

The Advisory Council will also continue to provide guidance on the development of person-centered, community-based mental health and addictions programs as they are implemented throughout the province. Together with multiple partners, and with leadership from the Department of Health and Community Services, we look forward to playing a key role in this challenging and transformative work.

Appendix A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Membership 2020-21

Name	Current Experience
Sheldon Pollett	Interim Chair, Community Service Provider - Youth
Angela Crockwell	Community Service Provider - Youth
Angie Wilmott	Schools Guidance Counsellor/Psychologist
Des Coombs	Psychologist
Dr. Greg Radu	Psychiatrist, Eastern Health
Dr. Ted Callanan	Professor, Psychiatrist, Eastern Health
George Skinner	Social worker, Community Advocate
Lisa Browne	Community Service Provider
Mark Gruchy	Lived Experience, Community Coalition
Michelle Kinney	Nunatsiavut Government; Northern Region
Paula Corcoran-Jacobs	Lived Experience
Peter Cornish	University Professor/Researcher
Rita Notarandrea	National Organization, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
Thelma Whelan	Education Consultant; Western Region

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

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