

**Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council
Activity Plan**

April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2029

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2026 - 2029 Activity Plan for the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council). The Advisory Council is a Category 3 Provincial Government Entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and plans and reports in accordance with the requirements for such entities.

This Activity Plan identifies key objectives to be accomplished during the planning period to provide sound advice that will inform policies and programs and enhance the delivery of mental health and addictions services within Newfoundland and Labrador. In the development of this plan, careful consideration was given to the strategic directions of the Provincial Government related to health and community services.

As Chairperson, my signature acknowledges the Advisory Council's accountability for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of the objectives contained herein.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Coish". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melissa" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Coish".

Melissa Coish, Chairperson
Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

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Overview

The Advisory Council reports to the Minister of Health and Community Services and advises on key mental health and addictions matters to support decision-making and policy development. The Advisory Council also provides input and oversight for the completion of all actions outlined in the five-year provincial action plans: **Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador**.

The Advisory Council was appointed in June 2010 as a Category 3 Government Entity. Membership includes the Chair and Vice-Chair and consists of no less than 12 and no more than 15 members. There are currently 13 members, each possessing a wide range of expertise and experience. Please refer to Annex A for more membership information.

The work of the Advisory Council is supported and funded by the Mental Health and Addictions Division, Department of Health and Community Services.

Mandate

In addition to broadly informing and providing guidance on the mental health and addictions system in Newfoundland and Labrador, including connections to broader government strategies related to the social determinants of health, the Advisory Council provides input and advice on matters related to:

- The successful completion of **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**;
- Enhancing mental health and addressing mental illness, substance use and addiction;
- Fostering public awareness, education and anti-stigma efforts; and
- Addressing other priorities as they emerge.

Primary Clients

The Advisory Council aims to ensure provincial policies and programs are evidence-based and person-centred to better meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who access the provincial mental health and addictions system either themselves or with a loved one.

Lines of Business

The Advisory Council provides support to the Minister of Health and Community Services in an advisory capacity. All final decisions related to provincial policies and programs rest with the Minister of Health and Community Services.

Vision

A responsive, coordinated and evidence-informed mental health and addictions system that provides timely access to services and matches individuals with the most appropriate service at the right time.

Issue

The Advisory Council advises the Minister of Health and Community Services on key mental health and addiction matters to support decision-making and policy development.

Issue statement: Provide input and oversight for completion of all actions contained within the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** and **Our Path of Resilience**.

In June 2022, the Provincial Government released **Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador**¹, a five-year action plan that includes 12 targeted actions and a commitment to improved monitoring, surveillance and research aimed at reducing the incidents of suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador. The action items focus on community mental health literacy and capacity building, as well as prevention, intervention and follow-up services for people impacted by suicide.

In July 2022, the Provincial Government released the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador**². The five-year action plan focuses on prevention, screening, brief intervention, referral and treatment and includes 13 actions to be completed by March 2027.

The Advisory Council is embedded into the governance structure and provides meaningful input and oversight of the implementation of the actions of both plans. There is regular reporting to the Advisory Council by HCS officials. While the timeframe for these action plans will come to an end in March 2027, the recommendations will have an ongoing impact on service planning and delivery.

In July 2025, the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions released its final report on programs and services, and the implementation of new initiatives to better serve the needs of the province.³ The report contains ten key recommendations to further strengthen the provincial mental health and addictions system. The Advisory Council will be embedded into the governance structure to provide input and oversight of the implementation of these actions.

Objectives and Indicators

The Advisory Council will continue to advise the Minister of Health and Community Services on key mental health and addictions matters and trends to formulate effective decision making and policy development until March 31, 2029. The indicators will change annually as work progresses on the implementation of actions and as other priorities emerge.

By March 31 of each year of this plan, the Advisory Council will have provided input and oversight to advance work on all actions in **Our Path of Resilience**, **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** and those stemming from the Final Report of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions.

Annual Objective

By March 31 of each year of this plan, the Advisory Council will have provided the Minister of Health and Community Services with advice on key mental health and addictions matters to support decision making and policy development. Especially those relating to increased access to

¹ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/files/Our-Path-of-Resilience-An-Action-Plan-to-Promote-Life-and-Prevent-Suicide-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador-.pdf>

² <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/files/ProvincialAlcoholActionPlan.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/files/AllPartyCommitteeonMentalHealthReport2025.pdf>

substance use and addictions treatment, reduced wait times for services, and expanded mobile crisis response teams.

Indicators

The following indicators will be used over the duration of this three-year activity plan to help determine whether the Advisory Council is meeting its annual objective.

1. **Input into Strategic Plans:** The Advisory Council will have provided documented input on all completed actions under **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** related to increasing access to services and reducing wait times.
2. **Use of Expert Advice:** The Advisory Council will have engaged subject-matter experts in consultations, including those related to reducing wait times for mental health and addictions services and expanding service access.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The Advisory Council will have facilitated participation of representatives of Provincial Government departments/agencies, NL Health Services, and community groups in consultations related to the development of new mental health and addictions services.
4. **Knowledge Development:** The Advisory Council will have participated in knowledge - sharing sessions focused on mental health and addictions system improvement, including strategies to reduce wait times for services.
5. **Advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services:** The Advisory Council will have provided timely evidence-based advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services, including advice on increasing access to services, reducing wait times and expanding the mobile crisis response service.

Annex A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council Membership

Membership, including the chairperson and vice-chairperson, are appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services. The Advisory Council is listed in Schedule C of the **Public Service Commission Act**, which means it is a Tier 2 Board for the purposes of making appointments. Therefore, appointment recommendations are made by the Public Service Commission utilizing a merit-based approach.

The current Advisory Council is a 13-member group representing diversity in backgrounds, skills and experiences. The term of appointment for current members will expire in August 2027. The Advisory Council's membership is as follows:

Melissa Coish	Chair, Health Care Excellence Canada, Eastern Urban Zone
Tina Davies	Vice-Chair, Richard's Legacy Foundation, Eastern Urban Zone
Lynn Hiscock	NL Schools, Eastern Rural Zone
Barry Hewitt	NL Health Services, Eastern Urban Zone
Dr. Jason Chaulk	NL Health Services, Eastern Rural Zone
Shelly Collins	NL Health Services/Seniors NL, Eastern Urban Zone
Brad Glynn	Lifewise NL, Eastern Urban Zone
Jeffrey Hillyard	Murphy Centre, Eastern Urban Zone
Kara Whalen	Service Canada, Eastern Urban Zone
Karen Kelly	Department of Education, Central Zone
Lorelei Kelly	NL Health Services, Central Zone
Leah Loder	NL Health Services, Western Zone
Linda Davidge	Department of Justice and Public Safety, Labrador-Grenfell Zone

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

Secretariat Support and General Inquiries

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