

# Media Release



Canadian Mental  
Health Association



## December 15, 2020 - For immediate release

Timiskaming Health Unit has launched two complementary campaigns to help end substance use related stigma and promote mental health.

**Mental health** is integral to physical health, indeed the World Health Organization has proclaimed that there is no health without mental health. Timiskaming Health Unit (THU), along with Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Cochrane Timiskaming are proud to launch a campaign to help de-mystify mental health. While 1 in 5 of us will live with mental illness, we all have mental health.

“It is important to distinguish that mental health does not mean mental illness. Mental illness refers to a disturbance in thoughts, feelings and perceptions that are severe enough to affect day to day functioning; these can include such things as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, schizophrenia and addictive behaviours” says Tyler Twarowski, Director of Service with CMHA. “Meanwhile, mental health is a state of wellbeing, and we all have it”

THU has also launched an **anti-stigma campaign**, called *Let's work together to: Stop the shame. Stop the blame. Stop the stigma* (#StopStigmaNorth). Stigma is any attitude, belief or behaviour that discriminates against people and often emerges in the form of derogatory language that shames and belittles people. The anti-stigma campaign aims to create awareness around the stigma experienced by those who use drugs, and language associated with substance use and addiction, as well as challenge the stereotypes of people who use drugs and/or live with addiction. The campaign challenges individuals to reframe their perceptions of people who use drugs, that people who use drugs are real people.

A substance use disorder is a health condition, and people should not be defined by their illness or health condition. Stigmatizing language is inaccurate, hurtful, and disempowering.

“Society categorizes individuals who use drugs and relates the use of drugs to specific identities, however we know that anyone can use drugs, and that addiction can affect anyone” says Kerry Schubert-Mackey, Director of Community Health at THU. “Stigma impacts people who use substances, their families, and the community. Stigma is one of the biggest barriers to seeking support, whether that's health or treatment services, or even talking about it with friends and family and stigma also impacts sustaining recovery” adds Schubert-Mackey.

THU and CMHA say that we all have a role to play in addressing the stigma faced by people who use drugs, and those who seek help for mental health issues.

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For more information

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