



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

NEWS RELEASE

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British Columbians urged to check in on their mental health



Photo caption: Kevin Gemmell, President, British Columbia Association of Broadcasters; Jonny Morris, Senior Director of Public Policy, Research and Planning, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division; Jacki McPherson, Board Member, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division and Health Director, Osoyoos Indian Band.

Vancouver, B.C. – British Columbians will soon be invited to check in and take action on their mental health thanks to a generous airtime donation by the province’s broadcasters.

The British Columbia Association of Broadcasters (BCAB) announced its members have chosen the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA-BC) as this year’s Humanitarian Award recipient organization.

“The Humanitarian Award is an opportunity for non-profit organizations to gain significant exposure for the important work they do at no cost to them for the airtime,” says BCAB president Kevin Gemmell. “There are significant stigmas around mental health issues. Our association members felt it was important to continue keeping these issues in the forefront, to help break down those stigmas and educate the public so everyone can play a role in helping and healing.”

Mental illness is costly and can be life threatening. Depression and anxiety are the most common mental illnesses in British Columbia. Over 12 per cent of British Columbians will [experience](#)

[depression](#) and over 16 per cent will [experience anxiety](#). Unfortunately, more than 50 per cent will not access help, despite the fact that early intervention works. Anxiety is one of the most treatable mental illnesses and the right intervention for depression can help 80 per cent feel better, sometimes [stopping the symptoms entirely](#).

The goal of the CMHA BC campaign is to change how people think about mental illness and initiate a discussion about early intervention.

The organization hopes to encourage people to check in on their mental health by taking a short online quiz and then connect them with free tools and resources which will support them to bounce back – to get the help they need and prevent the escalation of their illness.

“We are thrilled to have been chosen by the BCAB as this year’s Humanitarian Award recipient organization,” says Bev Gutray, Chief Executive Officer, CMHA – BC Division. “We will use this valuable exposure to champion help-seeking behaviour and reach out to British Columbians experiencing early signs of mental health problems or addictions problems. We are here to help.”

Gutray says CMHA BC has a number of easily accessible and evidence-based programs and resources, such as their “Bounce Back” program, to benefit those in need of help and the loved ones supporting them.

She adds if people get the help they need early enough they can effectively manage their mental health and wellbeing. “We want to reach people before they reach a crisis point – just as medical professionals do with those showing early signs of potentially life-threatening physical illnesses,” says Gutray. “We don’t want people waiting to have to enter the mental health system through the emergency department or by being brought to care by police. We want all children, youth and adults to get help early and receive the support and care that will make a difference.”

Gemmell says the airtime value donated towards Humanitarian Award recipients is in excess of \$1 million each year. “Every radio and television station around BC is asked to run produced elements of the campaign a minimum of 10 times per week throughout the year - but many offer significantly more in that time.”

“The Humanitarian Award is an opportunity for us to collectively give back on an annual and ongoing basis,” adds Gemmell. “It’s quite simply our duty and honour to offer this kind of program to deserving provincial organizations.”

This year’s campaign will begin in July and continue running on member stations throughout the province for one full year.

BCAB Humanitarian Award nominations open in the fall of each year. Information on the criteria and process can be found on the BCAB website: www.bcab.ca.