



Mental Health
& Addictions

Mental Health & Addictions Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Together, we are charting a bold course for mental health and well-being — one rooted in **compassion, collaboration,** and **courage,** and with access for all of those who need it.

Join us as we transform care and create brighter futures for all of those we serve.



Thriving **Teams.** *Transforming* **Care.** *Brighter* **Futures.**



The way we work together

The way we work informs every action outlined in the Mental Health and Addictions Strategic Plan. We strive to embody these practices both as individuals and as a program. We demonstrate them through the thoughtful implementation of our goals.

We are committed to learning from, and building relationships with, diverse communities to create more equitable mental health and addiction services, support systems, and care.



Collaboration and
Community-Building



Transparency
and Trust



Flexibility and
Adaptability



Equity and
Integrity



Caring and
Empathy



Continuous Innovation
and Improvement

We believe in partnership.

Services are shaped through collaboration among clients, caregivers, communities, and care partners to strengthen the mental health ecosystem across Nova Scotia and beyond.

Transparency builds trust.

We make decisions openly and collaboratively, creating safe, trusted spaces where healing begins.

We treat people as individuals.

We step beyond the status quo to meet people where they are. By adapting to changing needs and reimagining services alongside communities and partners.

Our integrity keeps us honest.

We show up with purpose, humility, and passion. We listen, learn, and amplify underrepresented voices to drive meaningful change and create genuine belonging.

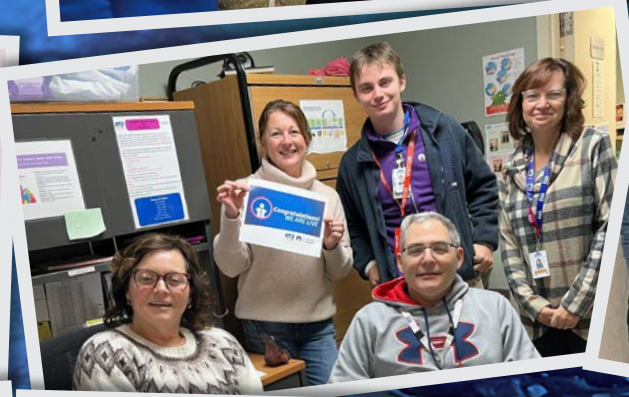
We are humans first.

We build safety through open communication and authentic connection, by leading with empathy and recognizing individuals as experts in their own lives.

Evidence guides all that we do.

Lived experience is as valuable as data. Through a culture of learning, we stay curious, test new ideas, and use both stories and evidence to drive improvement in care.

Thriving Teams.
Transforming Care.
Brighter Futures.



Our vision in motion

“Support has been my anchor. My family and friends remind me I'm not too much, not too broken, not too complicated to love. And then, there's the IWK - a place that shaped my journey. My pediatric healthcare team always made me feel safe, even in the scariest medical moments.”

- Jenna Kedy, Youth Advisor



OBJECTIVE: Our People Will Thrive

Key results:

- Champion strong teams where everyone feels valued (safe, supported, and trusted) by colleagues
- Leverage people's skills to work to their full scope of practice
- Diversify our teams so that the people we serve see themselves reflected in our staff
- Expect all staff and physicians to consistently adopt a stance of cultural humility and competence, tailoring support to individuals' diverse backgrounds and circumstances



OBJECTIVE: We Will Transform Access

Key results:

- Enhance access to services through flexible methods that reflect the diverse needs of individuals
- Streamline transitions in, between, and out of our services
- Promote early intervention for youth and families by working with our community-based partners
- Optimize access to the right level of care within and beyond IWK Mental Health and Addictions services
- Reimagine intensive services to better meet diverse needs across Nova Scotia
- Transform MHA spaces



OBJECTIVE: We Will Create Impact

Key results:

- Leverage data to optimize outcomes and tailor interventions to address specific needs
- Generate knowledge through research to enhance clinical capabilities within Mental Health and Addictions and our community
- Incorporate insights from diverse communities with evidence of best practices to create equitable processes and programs
- Lead and advocate for child and youth mental health system transformation



OBJECTIVE:
Our People Will Thrive

Thriving Teams.



Key Results

Champion strong teams where everyone feels valued (safe, supported, and trusted) by colleagues

• Initiatives (2-year actions)

- Invest in activities that support building strong relationships within teams and across services
- Enhance clarity and transparency of communication
- Develop a process and accountability for systematically seeking, and responding to, feedback from staff
- Create a work environment where staff with diverse backgrounds are supported with opportunities to advance into leadership roles
- Strengthen leaders' skills across all levels of the programs

Leverage people's skills to work to their full scope of practice

- Optimize decision-making for all levels of leaders to be agile and responsive
- Identify core clinical skills and stance for clinical staff, then develop skills by:
 - *creating a clinical developmental pathway to support staff*
 - *identifying education/learning goals for each year*
 - *increasing opportunities for professional development*
- Expand technology-enhanced administrative tools that are efficient and integrated
- Expand the utility of wayfinding tools and an AI-enhanced directory in our knowledge management system (SHELF)

Diversify our teams so that the people we serve see themselves reflected in our staff

- Create mentorship and leadership development opportunities for staff from diverse communities
- Take an equity-based approach to health workforce recruitment and retention and support successful employment

Expect all staff and physicians to consistently adopt a stance of cultural humility and competence, tailoring support to individual's diverse backgrounds and circumstances

- Enhance clinical service to include cultural humility and competence in care planning and service delivery
- Promote staff's cultural knowledge and practices to support all staff to work in ways that respect and appreciate all clients' diversity

OBJECTIVE:
We Will Transform Access

Key Results

Enhance access to services through flexible methods that reflect the diverse needs of individuals

• Initiatives (2-year actions)

- Collaborate with Tajikeyimi k and Nova Scotia Health to work towards reconciliation and meet the diverse needs of Indigenous clients and communities
- Mobilize the African Nova Scotian program through internal capacity building and links with existing services
- Leverage technologies to facilitate and support accessible service delivery
- Update and develop program and team materials to reflect the diverse needs of people
- Expand the Shared Care model when care gaps are identified
- Design services and care with youth and caregivers as fully active partners in co-creating solutions
- Advance training in EDIRA principles, trauma-informed care, person and family-centred care, and cultural competency/humility for IWK MHA staff
- Develop tools and resources to enhance communication about MHA services
- Offer flexible service options for people to engage in care

Streamline transitions in, between, and out of services

- Smooth transition processes
- Optimize One Patient One Record capabilities to facilitate communication

Promote early intervention for youth and families by working with our community-based partners

- Align the work of the health promotion team with MHA Strategic Plan priorities
- Partner to support assessment and treatment for 0-5 population
- Develop a capacity-building strategy for external education



OBJECTIVE:
We Will Transform Access



Key Results

Optimize access to the right level of care within and beyond IWK MHA services

• Initiatives (2-year actions)

- Improve e-resources including website content and navigation
- Collaborate with community and education-based partners to identify needs and resources for youth with mild to moderate mental health problems
- Invest in responding to the needs of clients who seek acute care intermittently

Reimagine intensive services to better meet diverse needs across Nova Scotia

- Redesign intensive services to match the diverse treatment needs of children, youth, and caregivers in Nova Scotia
- Establish strategic partnerships to support expanded intensive services
- Develop a provincial implementation roadmap

Transform MHA spaces

- Use universal design principles in all space projects to meet client and employee needs
- Review current spaces through an accessibility and inclusion lens
- Adopt green practices to reduce our impact on the environment



OBJECTIVE:
We Will Create Impact

Key Results

• Initiatives (2-year actions)

Leverage data to optimize outcomes and tailor interventions to address specific needs

- Integrate measurement-based care into clinical care delivery and leadership activities to align with leading practices
- Build dynamic dashboards and processes for every service that is in real-time with established key performance indicators
- Integrate continuous quality improvement best practices into every service
- Create a formal data governance structure to support using data to inform decision-making
- Invest in data integration methods to link key sources of information

Generate knowledge through research to enhance clinical capabilities within MHA and our community

- Establish research priorities that align with the MHA Strategic Plan
- Create a process for staff to engage in research
- Expand knowledge translation efforts to communicate the impact of research to staff and community
- Leverage academic institutions' partnerships

Incorporate insights from diverse communities with evidence of best practices to create equitable processes and programs

- Develop the IWK MHA Community Engagement Framework
- Collaborate and co-design with diverse communities from the beginning of research initiatives
- Measure outcomes holistically incorporating EDIRA principles
- Share learning with internal teams and staff to improve the care experience of diverse communities

Lead and advocate for child and youth mental health system transformation

- Lead the Expansion of Trauma-Informed Care training, practices, policy and trauma-specific treatment in child, adolescent, and family MHA settings in NS
- Launch and connect Integrated Youth Services into the MHA system
- Communicate our contributions and leadership at provincial, national, and international levels.



Mental Health & Addictions

“ My son struggles with substance use issues and began to display psychosis symptoms over a year ago. We were very fortunate to be connected with the early psychosis team who he is still connected to now, a year later. Although he still has some struggles, we have somewhere to turn when things become more difficult. Because of the support we have received through various IWK services, I have a renewed sense of hope for my son's and our family's future.”

- Parent supported by the Mental Health & Addictions program

Our hopes for the next five years

Thriving Teams. Transforming Care. Brighter Futures.

- Transitions within the program and with our community partners are seamless.
- Our staff are inspired and have many opportunities to grow and develop while knowing they are valued and essential to our success.
- Everyone will be able to engage with the service that is right for them, at the right time, in the right place, with the right people to meet their diverse needs.
- We are a data-driven learning health system and are known for excellence in research and innovation.
- We are regarded as the best place to work in Canada; our people are inspired and have many opportunities to grow and develop.
- We are sought out for our knowledge and expertise and how we learn from our communities.

For more information, visit:

iwkhealth.ca/mha

