



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Fort Frances Branch

CMHA Fort Frances Branch

2022-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



VISION

Mental health and wellness
in all communities.

MISSION

To be a leader in the provision
of advocacy, education, research, and
client centered recovery based services
in the Kenora-Rainy River Districts.

VALUES

Collaboration
Empowerment and self-determination
Diversity and social justice
Accountability, integrity and transparency
Innovation

PROGRAMS:

- Psychogeriatric Resource
- District Peer Support
- Addiction Peer Support
- Peer Support Drop-In Centres
- District Mental Health Services for Older Adults
- Community Support Team:
 - Case Management
 - Court Diversion & Support
 - Housing Supports
- Ontario Structured Psychotherapy
- Safe Bed
- Joint Mobile Crisis Response

SERVICE LOCATIONS

Fort Frances
Atikokan
Kenora
Dryden
Sioux Lookout
Red Lake

INTRODUCTION

CMHA Fort Frances Branch (CMHAFF) last engaged in a detailed strategic planning process in 2019, for the period of 2019-2022. The leadership of the organization identified that it was time for a new Strategic Plan, given the changes in both the world around us and in the organization itself.

Senior leadership staff developed surveys that were provided to clients/families, staff, and community partners, to obtain feedback on how the organization and its services were viewed throughout the CMHAFF service areas in the Kenora and Rainy River districts. The CEO and the facilitator reviewed all of the survey responses, and together developed a list of commonly raised priority areas from the surveys.

Staff in both leadership and frontline service delivery roles in the organization came together with members of the Board of CMHAFF on June 15, 2022, to consider the current environment, both internal and external, in which CMHAFF finds itself, and CMHAFF priorities in light of the current environment.

The day started with the vision, mission and values of the organization, and the CMHAFF Land Acknowledgment, led by the CEO.

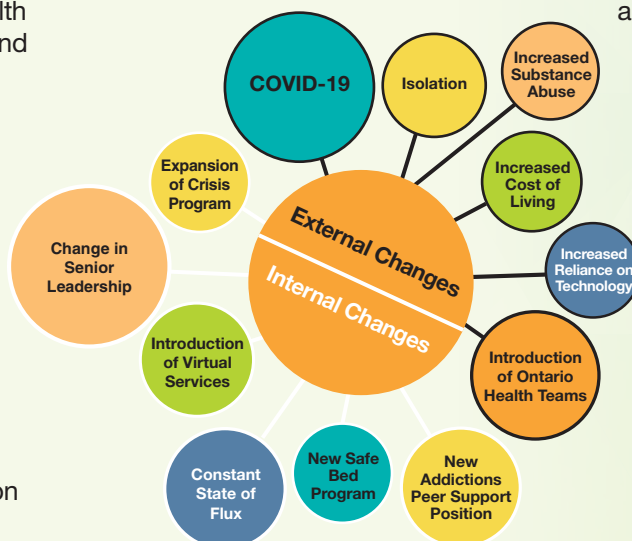
The participants then split into small groups for a discussion about the changes that have occurred over the past three years, first identifying changes external to CMHAFF, and then changes internal to the organization. Following the conversation about changes, there was a good discussion of the strengths and challenges of the organization, in light of the changes identified, in preparation for a discussion of the priorities identified in the survey results.

EXTERNAL CHANGES

Given that during the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted almost every aspect of people's lives, we first talked about external changes and impacts. Isolation resulting from masking, restrictions, and other aspects of pandemic life, was noted by all groups. People throughout society felt more isolation and division from others, which lead to an increase in mental health and addictions challenges and substance use. Participants also saw some positive impacts from this, in that conversations about the importance of mental health and addictions issues have become far more important and widespread throughout society. Concern was expressed about the increasing cost of living, and reliance on technology for all parts of life affecting all residents. The organization and delivery of services has changed on a provincial level, with the transition of the Local Health Integration Network to Ontario Health, and the introduction of Ontario Health Teams, and the work that their development includes.

INTERNAL CHANGES

The past three years have been a time of significant change within CMHAFF. All groups identified that the change in senior leadership was a pivotal event, with the retirement of the former Executive Director and Director of Services within months of each other. Service delivery was in a constant state of flux and upheaval, as pandemic rules changed frequently, at some points almost hourly. The provision of virtual services was new to the organization, and again created a need for staff to adapt as necessary. Finally, all identified that the provision of 24-hour services with the Safe Beds Program was a new and different modality for CMHAFF, requiring changes to the organization on many levels, in addition to the creation and expansion of other programs such as Mobile Crisis Response and the Rapid Access to Addiction Medicine Program.



STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Before moving on to discuss organizational priorities, the participants engaged in discussion of the strengths and challenges faced by the organization, keeping in mind the external and internal changes of the past three years.

All groups identified a lack of internal supports for Human Resources/hiring, IT, etc. as posing very real challenges for the organization. Communication, both within programs and between programs was noted. Complex caseloads and changing program delivery methods has highlighted the importance of ongoing support and training, and technology skills training and support is particularly important.

There was an enthusiastic identification of strengths of the organization, to meet these challenges. The experience, creativity, commitment to client-centred care, the grace and resiliency of the staff and the leadership were clearly the most important strengths of CMHAFF. An organizational commitment to work-life balance, or as one participant said, it is really “life-work” balance, is critical. The willingness of staff to work together, to support each other and problem solve together, was important to all participants. The culture of the organization, including the board of directors, as being open and approachable, is very much appreciated.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

The surveys completed by clients, families, staff, and community partners demonstrated a number of common themes, which are listed as the priority areas below.



The participants discussed this list of priorities and confirmed that these were the current organizational priorities. After confirming these priorities, participants moved into five different groups, and were asked to identify potential actions for CMHAFF to move forward. These actions are summarized below, under each priority area. The actions identified by more than one group are captured in the numbers in brackets.

NEXT STEPS

Senior leadership will work with frontline staff to operationalize the priorities identified from the surveys and confirmed in the strategic planning day, and collaborate with the Board of Directors to move the plans and priorities forward. They will track the progress of this work, and report back to both Board and staff on the successes and challenges, while remaining alert to additional opportunities and needs.

A WORD OF THANKS

An exercise like this Strategic Plan involves taking some risks, sharing thoughts both personal and professional, challenging beliefs and attitudes, and putting personal feelings aside to seek the good of the organization. Everyone who participated in the day did so with the people we serve and our community front and centre. It is that spirit of commitment that will help CMHAFF move to the future and achieve our vision and mission, while honouring our values.



Trudy McCormick
President



Charlene Strain
Chief Executive Officer



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✉ cmhaff@cmhaff.ca

f @CMHAFF

📷 @cmhafortfrances

🐦 @CmhaFort

CONTACT US:

Administration Office

P.O. Box 446
414 Scott Street
Fort Frances, ON
P9A 1H2
(807)274-2347

Programs & Services

P.O. Box 446
612 Portage Avenue
Fort Frances, ON
P9A 3M8
(807)274-2347