



Canadian Centre
on Substance Abuse
Centre canadien **de lutte**
contre les toxicomanies

Partnership. Knowledge. Change.
Collaboration. Connaissance. Changement.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement on Recovery Month in Canada

Ottawa, September 23, 2016 – The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) is pleased to join the many committed individuals and organizations across the country celebrating [Recovery Month](#).

Addiction touches everyone. As of 2013, one in five Canadians – six million people – met the criteria for a substance use disorder, causing harm and heartache among families in communities throughout the country. The struggle experienced by mothers, fathers, daughters and sons – their emotions of fear, guilt and shame because of stigma and discrimination against addiction – makes Recovery Day an essential day. It puts a spotlight on the illness, and the struggles and successes that come with recovery.

Together, at [Recovery Day events](#), we have the opportunity to inform the conversation with increased understanding of this health condition and to help overcome the stigma and feelings of hopelessness that prevent our family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues from seeking the help they need. Together we can defeat the stigma of addiction, celebrate recovery and increase hope.

One aspect of the problem has captured headline attention. The spike in fatal overdoses from the opioid fentanyl is characterized as a “death epidemic” across Canada:

- In British Columbia alone, the prediction is that about 750 people will die from an overdose by the end of this year. In fact, the number of overdose deaths has surpassed the number of deaths due to motor vehicle accidents. B.C.’s Chief Coroner stated that the number of people dying from illicit drug overdoses is higher than any other unnatural category.
- In addition, this year Ontario’s Office of the Chief Coroner has confirmed fentanyl as the leading cause of opioid deaths in Ontario for the first time since Canada’s prescription painkiller crisis began more than a decade ago.

In collaboration with the Canadian Community Epidemiological Network on Drug Use, CCSA monitors emerging drug use trends at the national level and publishes these results in [drug alerts and bulletins](#). Tragically, fentanyl is a recurring theme.

Cost to Canadians

The cost of substance use disorder and addiction is twofold – heart-wrenching impact to families and billions of dollars to our economy – in large part because it takes away from our communities those who would otherwise be working, volunteering or going to school.

Addiction Is a Complex Health and Social Issue

To address addiction effectively and to give it the attention it deserves, we must stop viewing this health condition as though it were a moral failing or a choice. Problematic substance use must be treated the same as any other serious health issue. People suffering from it deserve the same investment, level of care and support as those suffering with cancer or other chronic health conditions. It is a chronic illness that is preventable and treatable.

We are not there yet. There is a lack of understanding and there is an imbalance between the investment required to address this disorder and the burden of it on our society.

Recovery is possible. It is real, attainable and sustainable. The evidence exists.



What Is Currently Being Done?

Across the country, committed individuals and organizations are working together to change the conversation about problematic substance use and addiction by increasing awareness and understanding of the illness and focusing on what is possible.

To help shift recovery from invisible to visible, CCSA has established a National Recovery Advisory Committee (NRAC). It consists of leaders from across the recovery community.

Working with NRAC, CCSA is continuing to build evidence and promote awareness around recovery in Canada. For example, the Life in Recovery Survey is a project undertaken by CCSA and NRAC this year that we are all very proud of. The survey, the first in Canada, gathered information on the lived experiences of 855 individuals across the country in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. This number was twice the expected response rate.

The Life in Recovery Survey report will tell us through personal stories about the difficult journeys taken and the different pathways that exist for Canadians to capture the pride and the hope of recovery. In Canada, this will be the first time we will have access to such a detailed portrait of life in recovery. It will paint a picture of what it's like to be in recovery – what helps recovery and what stands in the way of recovery.

These important findings will be released when the detailed analysis is completed later this year.

What Can We All Do Now? How Do We Bring About Needed Change?

In communities across Canada during Recovery Month we are talking about the achievements of people in recovery, sparking a dialogue and praising what is possible. This month and, in fact, every day we have the opportunity to educate, to use the evidence and to bring about the needed awareness and understanding that it is a chronic condition.

With the right prevention services, the right interventions and the right treatments, long-term recovery and a person's return to family, community and the work place is both attainable and sustainable. With the science and the evidence that exist I'm hoping we go from stigma to compassion, compassion in the work place, compassion in our community and compassion in our families.

Our efforts must continue beyond Recovery Month so that when those who are suffering knock on the door of the healthcare system, they receive the quality of service and support they need and deserve. Recovery Month celebrates what is possible. Let's raise the volume on the recovery voice.

Prevention works. Treatment works. Recovery is real.

Let's do it together. We all benefit.

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RecoveryDayCanada.com has a wealth of information on events happening near you, wherever you are. CCSA will be speaking at this year's [Recovery Day Ottawa](#) event on September 24, 2016. We hope to see you there.



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The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse changes lives by bringing people and knowledge together to reduce the harm of alcohol and other drugs on society. We partner with public, private and non-governmental organizations to improve the health and safety of Canadians.

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