

Hamilton City Council Candidate Survey

Mental health has never been as important as it is now.

As a candidate for Hamilton City Council (HCC), we here at the YMHM Canada ask that you please complete the following survey to the best of your ability regarding mental health and what you would work to do to ensure mental health in Hamilton if you are elected this October.

Your answers as well as your name and ward, as well as your answers will appear on our website at ymhmcanada.ca/Hamilton.

Sections

1. Mental Health in Youth
2. Mental Health in Marginalized Communities
3. Mental Health in Seniors
4. Mental Health Supports and Services
5. Addiction Supports and Services

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Mental Health in Youth

A report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found that about 27% of students between grade 9-12 reported poor mental health and 16% seriously considered suicide in the past year. If elected, what are you going to do to ensure better mental health within not only highschools within Hamilton, but all schools?

I feel its important to have programs put into place where students are able to access support. Such as creating community outreach programs within the school setting. Individual or group gatherings are a very effective way of letting people speak freely about the way they are feeling. It also provides safe environments where students of any age can gain the knowledge of how and where to seek additional support outside of the school system.

If elected, what would you advocate for to better ensure the mental health of youth in Hamilton?

I would advocate for specific programs aimed at youth across the city that helps to end the stigma around mental health. And the importance of getting help and getting it early. More community events based on providing mental health information to our youth, designed in a way that reaches the youth.

If elected, would you support the recommendations for youth mental health and addictions set out by the City of Hamilton Youth Strategic Plan that was created by HamOntYouth?

(<https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/youth-strategy>)

100 percent

Mental Health in Marginalized Communities

Members of marginalized groups are at a higher risk for mental health-related disorders, suicide, and more. If elected, what are you going to do to help ensure the mental health of those in marginalized communities?

Community awareness events focused on marginalized groups. Making people feel comfortable to speak and address concerns without fear or judgment. I feel this is a great way to get the information out.

Indigenous rates of suicide can be as high as 9 times non-Indigenous peers, and LGBTQ youth can be as high as 14 times more at risk for suicide than straight counterparts. If elected, what are you going to do to reduce the rates of suicide within marginalized communities in Hamilton?

Work with community partners to help ensure we are creating the proper programs to help reach marginalized communities. Information is key and making sure we are getting it out to the residents who need it, will help us to work towards lowering those rates.

Mental Health in Seniors

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the Senior population and has led to more people having feelings of depression and loneliness. If elected, what are you going to do to ensure the care of seniors and their mental health?

I would like to create more social programs which are directed to seniors. Utilize our community centres to further enhance our seniors. I would also like to work with residents to see what specific needs are in each community. This way we can better create programs designed to reach seniors and ensure they are each getting the mental health they need.

Older adults, men in particular, have among the highest suicide rates in the world according to the WHO. If elected, what are you going to do to help ensure the reduction of senior suicide and self-harm in our community?

I feel this is where the importance comes in of making sure all residents are aware of how to connect to the services they need. Working with senior communities and families we can ensure that access to information and agencies is front and centre.

According to CCSMH, substance misuse and dependency among older adults is a growing but neglected issue. If elected, what are you going to do to help ensure the reduction of senior substance misuse and/or dependency that could possibly lead to an overdose in our community?

Working with community programs like SOPEN hamilton will help us to gain knowledge and experience to dealing with these issues. Education is key and paramount to addressing these issues. Working with different community agencies will allow us to get a further reach into the community, helping to identify problems. This way we can help residents access programs when they are in need. As well as better information and education before hand.

Mental Health Services and Supports

If elected, what are you going to do to ensure that hospitals are properly supported by the city to provide help to people seeking mental health treatment or programs?

Work with hospitals to ensure we have the programs and people in place to better address these issues. We need to make sure that we are bringing in qualified individuals that can make proper diagnosis to support our residents.

Wait times in Hamilton for mental health services can be as long as 710 days. If elected, would you commit to working with all levels of government to ensure that people within your ward and Hamilton are able to access services within a shorter amount of time?

Yes

The House of Commons has approved a National 988 Suicide and Mental Health Crisis Line (as of 2020). Do you support such a number and if elected, will you commit to working with all levels of government to help ensure such a number is implemented?

Yes

There are little to no supports for youth transitioning from youth mental health services to the adult sector. If elected, what will you do bridge this gap in service for young people?

I think we should work on a system that automatically transitions a youth directly into adult mental services. If a youth is using mental health services they shouldn't have to wait to continue. We can work with agencies to develop a transitional plan that would ensure youth are automatically transferred over without waiting.

If elected, would you commit to working with and listening to mental health advocacy groups in Hamilton to help aid in giving input into mental health policies for the city?

Yes

Addiction Services and Supports

If elected, would you commit to working with and listening to addiction and harm reduction advocacy groups in Hamilton to help aid in giving input into addiction policies for the city?

Yes, this is going to be the best way to ensure policies that are created are done right.

Do you support safe injection sites in Hamilton and/or in your ward (if elected)?

Yes, unfortunately I feel this is something we need city wide.

According to the Office of the Chief Coroner, in Ontario up to and including 2020 acute drug toxicity has been the number one cause of death in youth 15-24 years old since 2017. Education about overdose prevention and response with naloxone, harm reduction, and how to use drugs safely can reduce the number of overdose-related deaths in young people as they will have the knowledge and tools to make informed choices about drug use. If elected, how will you ensure that highschool curriculum includes better education about substance use in a non-judgemental safe space?

This is something I feel is very important not only to be taught in class but also implementing programs or groups based in school. This way students will feel comfortable coming forward and asking questions. The more comfortable we can make someone feel the better the chance they will ask questions they have.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

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