

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?

Through the Hamilton Board of Health, I will continue to advocate for additional funding and supports from the provincial government. I will work with our local public health department to ensure that our youth when in crisis can get immediate assistance.

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

We need to ensure that our youth when in crisis receive immediate mental health support. I am advised by local residents that the delays in treatment can be more than 12 months. This is unacceptable.

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>)

Yes, I will advocate to Improve access to mental health supports and increase supports for youth drug and alcohol abuse programming.

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?

We need to hear and work with marginalized communities to better understand their mental health needs and where there are weaknesses in the current programming. We need to better fund and improve our emergency mental health programing to lower the risks of suicides.

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?

We need to hear and work with these communities to better understand their mental health needs and where there are weaknesses in the current programming. We need to better fund and improve our emergency mental health programming to lower the risks of suicides. We need to eliminate any systemic discrimination or racism in our health care system.

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?

We need to hear and work with seniors and their families to better understand their mental health needs and where there are weaknesses in the current community health programming for seniors.

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?

We need to better understand the feelings and emotional states of our seniors. We need to ensure that all of senior communities, associations, and congregate homes know where to go for mental health help when their loved ones or neighbours are showing signs of depression and loneliness.

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?

I would advocate for public education programming about substance abuse in seniors. I suspect that most people would not realize the extent of this problem.

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?

We need to work with all of our partners to ensure that our community mental health partners are prepared to receive discharged patients. We need to expand our supportive housing programs to assist more residents, We need to collectively advocate for additional mental health and supportive housing funding from senior levels of government..

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, I commit to working with all levels of government to ensure that people within Hamilton are able to access services within a shorter amount of time.

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, I support a central crisis contact point for residents to call when in mental distress, who are actively considering suicide.

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

I will advocate to the provincial government to provide appropriate supports for the transition of youth mental health services to adult services.

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, I will continue to meet and work with mental health advocacy groups to improve mental health policies.

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.

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

I supported the safe injection pilot in Hamilton. I will also continue to advocate for drug rehab programing to help residents escape the pains of addiction.

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?

I will work with the Public Board of Health to advocate for such changes to the curriculum.

Additional

Is there anything else that you wish to add?

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