

Mental illness affects 1 in 5 Canadians; in Ontario, its burden exceeds that of cancer. Yet, our mental health services are fragmented and lacks standards to guide its improvement.

OMSA represents 3500 medical students, who voted to advocate for mental health services through a province-wide survey. As Ontario's future doctors, we believe that **all Ontarians should have timely access to quality mental health care**, and have made the following recommendations:

## SET STANDARDS

**Set standards and monitor wait times for children/youth accessing mental health care.**

### WHY?

- 70% of mental illnesses begin prior adulthood<sup>1</sup>
  - Children and youth wait up to 18 months for mental health care in Ontario<sup>2</sup>
- Mental health related hospitalizations among youth have risen by 60% in the last decade<sup>3</sup>

**Ontario currently does not publicly report wait times for mental health access.**

**Monitoring these outcomes is needed to evaluate and improve our health care system.**

### HOW CAN WE DO BETTER?

- 1) Set standards for province-wide access to mental health services for children and youth:  
**24 hours for emergent care, 2 weeks for urgent care, 4 weeks for scheduled care.**<sup>4</sup>
- 2) Regularly and publicly report health care outcomes in comparison to these standards.

## SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

**Improve the transition of mental health care between adolescents and adults.**

### WHY?

- Teens transfer to adult services at age 18
- This change involves wait times of 6 to 12 months, and affects youth most in need<sup>5</sup>
- Canada "lag[s] far behind the systemic improvements for transition age youth" compared to Australia and the UK<sup>6</sup>

**Current programs such as LOFT in Toronto provide mental health services for transition aged youth. Yet, these services are limited in scope and location.**

### HOW CAN WE DO BETTER?

- 1) Expand transitional age youth programs beyond Southern Ontario, with eligibility extending to all youth aged 16-25.
- 2) Report the number of patients who are "lost to follow up" to guide future initiatives.

## ENGAGE YOUR CONSTITUENTS

We encourage MPPs to speak to their constituents to discuss youth mental health concerns by **holding town hall meetings** and publishing an **open call for letters regarding mental health issues**. ...

**Access our full background documents at [www.goo.gl/\[insertlinkhere\]](http://www.goo.gl/[insertlinkhere]).**

**Sources and further reading:** <sup>1</sup>Government of Canada (2006). The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada. <sup>2</sup>Children's Mental Health Ontario (2017). Our Kids Deserve Better: ... <sup>3</sup>Warren M (2016, June 21). Mental health wait times a serious problem... *Metro News*. <sup>4</sup>Wait Times Alliance (2014). Time to close the gap:... <sup>5</sup>Rayar M. (2015, July 8). Lost in translation: the gap between child and adult services. *Healthydebate.ca*. <sup>6</sup>McGorry P, Bates T, Birchwood M. (2013). *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 202 s30-s35.