



Accountability Report 2021–22

Addictions & Mental Health


NOVA SCOTIA

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Accountability Report 2021–2022

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Contents

Accountability Statement.....	2
Message from the Minister of the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.....	3
Financial Table and Variance Explanation.....	4
Departmental Priorities and Actions	5
Supporting Greater Health Equity	11
Expansion of Services and Supports.....	12
Appendices.....	14
Appendix A: Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act.....	14
Appendix B: Health Outcome Measures	15

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the *Office of Addictions and Mental Health* for the year ended March 31, 2022, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the relevant sections of the *Department of Health and Wellness Business Plan* for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the *Office of Addictions and Mental Health* outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by *Office of Addictions and Mental Health* management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of *Office of Addictions and Mental Health* management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the relevant sections of the *Department of Health and Wellness 2021-2022 Business Plan*.

Original signed by:

Honourable Brian Comer
Minister, Office of Addictions and Mental Health

Original signed by:

Jeannine Lagassé
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister of the Office of Addictions and Mental Health

I am pleased to present the 2021-22 Accountability Report for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

This past year we continued to see resilience, a coming together of community, and a willingness to not only speak about mental health but to reach out without fear of stigma. Certainly, there are some who have been more deeply impacted than others. My hope is that they feel the support of their neighbours, their communities, and their province.

We also continued to see increased demands on our healthcare system, including mental health and addictions. I have repeatedly been inspired by those who work on the frontlines in our hospitals, community clinics, and community organizations. They never gave up on the people who need them most. And neither did we.

This report recounts and highlights our work of the past year, including the introduction of new options for care, work to improve trauma support for those who have experienced sexual violence, and expanded access to e-mental health resources for students.

The 2021-22 year also brought the establishment of the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, including the appointment of a dedicated minister. These changes provide greater opportunity to prioritize and collaborate across diverse services and sectors to improve mental health and addictions supports and overcome the associated stigma.

I look forward to continuing to build on the partnerships that have been established and to continuing with the work needed to ensure the improved wellbeing of all Nova Scotians.

Honourable Brian Comer

Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health

Financial Table and Variance Explanation

	(in \$000s)		
	2021-22 Estimate	2021-22 Actuals	2021-22 Variance
Program & Service Area			
Departmental Expenses:			
Office of the Minister	-	-	-
Office of Addictions and Mental Health - Admin	2,218	1,489	729
Early Intervention Services	17,813	18,130	(317)
Addiction Services	49,961	49,636	325
Mental Health Services	177,991	174,805	3,186
Total: Departmental Expenses	247,983	244,060	3,923
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	16,931	16,250	681
Fees and Other Charges	529	536	(7)
Ordinary Recoveries	5,108	4,884	224
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	22,568	21,670	898
TCA Purchase Requirements	-	-	-
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	15.00	13.06	1.94
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u>			
Variance mainly due to underspends in new Mental Health initiatives			
<u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u>			
Variance due to decrease in bilateral revenue			
<u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u>			
N. A.			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u>			
Variance due to vacancies and hiring delays			

Departmental Priorities and Actions

Increased Focus and Support on Mental Health and Addictions: Office of Addictions and Mental Health

The Office of Addictions and Mental Health (OAMH) works with Nova Scotia Health (NSH), IWK Health Centre (IWK) and community partners to:

- provide mental health and addictions education, prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.
- promote mental health and wellbeing.
- fund mental health and addictions services (outpatient, inpatient and crisis support).
- help make sure that addictions treatment and recovery is accessible throughout the province.
- reduce risks for youth and adults, including programs for pre-school age children with autism and children, youth and adults impacted by sexual violence.

The OAMH has three key priorities:

- helping improve recovery outcomes for people living with addictions and mental illness.
- expanding access to mental health and addictions care and services.
- improving wait times for mental health and addictions care and support services.

To support these priorities, the following outlines several initiatives the OAMH undertook in 2021-22.

Single Session Therapy intervention (Mental Wellness Service) program development and implementation

OAMH provided funding to NSH's Mental Health and Addictions program to plan and implement a Mental Wellness Service. The Mental Wellness Service will offer low barrier single session counselling to individuals, families or other concerned partners who feel isolated, alone, anxious, or distressed, or need someone to talk to who will listen with empathy and without judgement. The Mental Wellness Service is expected to be available in 2023.

Development of Addictions Withdrawal Management Hubs

The OAMH funded the NSH Mental Health and Addictions Program to develop and implement Recovery Support Centres (previously referred to as "Withdrawal

Management Hubs”). Outpatient withdrawal management is recommended as the least intrusive level of service for people with medically managed withdrawal needs.

The Hubs provide several complementary services including:

- an assessment of patient needs.
- outpatient withdrawal management.
- psychoeducation and recovery skills support.
- brief intervention and harm reduction support.
- support for family involvement in care.
- linkages and transitions to other services along continuum (including inpatient withdrawal management, if required).

In total, 10 Recovery Support Centres will be set up across the province over the next two years. To date, the two Centres scheduled to open in 2021-22 have opened:

- Queen Square (Dartmouth) - opened January 25, 2022.
- Aberdeen Hospital (New Glasgow) - opened February 14, 2022.

E-Mental Health and Addiction (e-MHA) services developed and implemented

The Nova Scotia e-MHA program aims to be an integrated and efficient e-Mental Health and Addiction system of services and supports among the core partners (Department of Education, IWK and NSH) that is grounded in user needs. The program will result in improved access to quality e-MHA services and supports across the continuum while and ensure that efforts are well-coordinated across all core partners in the interest of efficiency and effectiveness. The 2021-22 budget was \$5,780,000.

In 2021-22, the OAMH funded NSH to hire a coordinator to oversee this work, resulting in:

- The development and implementation of a province-wide evaluation framework supporting the procurement of leading e-MHA apps, services and supports to ensure Government remains at the front of emerging services for e-mental health.
- Signed new and expanded existing contracts including:
 - Togetherall was expanded to ages 16+ in Nova Scotia. Togetherall is an e-MHA tool that allows users to have online discussions and engage with peers around mental health and wellness, including anxiety, stress, depression, and grief. It is moderated by licensed clinicians and provides courses, resources and self-assessment tools. In 2021-22 there were 2,286 registrations.
 - Tranquility: is a newly launched internet-based cognitive-behavioural therapy (iCBT) program (uptake data is not yet available). Tranquility

complements the existing suite of online supports (such as Mindwell-U, Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), and Togetherall) made available through Mental Health and Addictions Program. Tranquility is accessed through Central Intake and provides opportunity for adults (18 years of age or older) needing support for mild-moderate symptoms and/or functional impairment related to anxiety and depression to receive care without needing to meet in person. Tranquility is available in English and French.

Creation of a 3-digit mental health crisis phone line

OAMH is tasked with championing the development of a three-digit mental health crisis line [9-8-8]. Work for the 2021-22 fiscal year included hiring a coordinator in January of 2022 to manage this work and the subsequent completion of a literature review investigating current three-digit crisis line precedents in the United States and Netherlands and understanding best practice research around the provision of distance crisis intervention services.

Additionally, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications completed a national engagement of Canadians on the need for a three-digit crisis line. This data was obtained by OAMH and analyzed for relevant information to help direct these efforts.

Enhanced Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line

The Provincial MHA 10-digit Crisis Line is part of a continuum of MHA services already offered to Nova Scotians. Staff provide brief, phone-based crisis assessment, including suicide risk screening to determine most suitable advice and intervention. Clients are counselled on the phone, working with a clinician to de-escalate symptoms.

In recent years there has been expansion and improvements in the Crisis and Urgent Care services and in 2021-22, funds were used to enhance Provincial MHA Crisis Line phone infrastructure and to hire two additional positions. Planning was also initiated to create a Provincial Virtual Urgent Care Team to provide after-hours coverage. This team will offer virtual services to EDs across Nova Scotia after local urgent care team hours, particularly evenings and weekends.

Negotiations of new Sexual Violence Trauma Therapy model of care underway

In October 2021, the OAMH announced a plan to establish a first of its kind in Nova Scotia, province-wide model for the delivery of therapy for survivors of sexualized

violence. This model will would more than double the number of full-time therapists from 11 to 24. The request for proposals was completed and Government began negotiations to establish the new model for implementation in 2022/23.

Partnership with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia to provide services for most vulnerable during COVID-19

In partnership with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia (MHFNS), the OAMH provided \$3.0 million in funding for the MHFNS to administer additional grants to eligible Community Based Organizations to provide essential mental health supports and programming to individuals and local communities, especially to underrepresented areas and groups throughout Nova Scotia. The focus was to help individuals and communities coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic by promoting overall community wellness and to, where appropriate, establish long-term core funding to empower organizations who provide mental health and addictions services and supports to Nova Scotians with a focus on persons from Indigenous, 2SLGBTIQ+, African Nova Scotian, Immigrant and Newcomer communities, and those with disabilities.

We will enhance community supports for children and adolescents by adding positions in community clinics to support child and adolescent mental health and addictions

In March 2022, the OAMH provided funding to seven youth programs across Nova Scotia to support their programming as they continued to work to support youth during COVID-19.

Implementation of Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Framework

The OAMH supports the Department of Health and Wellness' (DHW) Public Health branch in the implementation of a Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction (SPRR) Framework.

The OAMH has led the Health Systems Working Group under the SPRR Framework, which brought NSH, the IWK, and OAMH together to develop actions toward implementing the Framework's six Health System recommendations, as well as identifying opportunities for further progress. The OAMH sits on the Community of Practice group led by the IWK that connects Framework leads with other relevant organizations to share and discuss opportunities to implement SPRR activities and policies in Nova Scotia. OAMH maintains a seat on a national Suicide Prevention table connecting DHW to national efforts to reduce the risks and prevent suicide across Canada, based on [federal recommendations](#).

Reduce wait times for opioid use disorder treatment and other substances and the establishment of safe consumption sites

In 2021-22, the OAMH dedicated funding towards opioid disorder treatment (Opioid Use Disorder Treatment: \$5.05M):

- In partnership with the Federal Emergency Treatment Fund, DHW provides \$1.8 million annually for opioid use disorder treatment (OUDT) expansion through NSH Mental Health and Addiction Program, as well as the Halifax-based low threshold OUDT program, Direction 180.
- NSH Mental Health and Addiction Program operates 21 OUDT clinics across the province, including three new clinics in Shelburne, Yarmouth and Digby that opened in April 2022. Direction 180 also operates a low-threshold OUDT program in Halifax.
- NSH Mental Health and Addictions Program OUDT programs and Direction 180 combined, as of April 18, 2022, had:
 - 2,186 active clients receiving treatment across the province, an increase from 1,824 active clients in September 2017.
 - Five individuals on waitlists for treatment across the province, a substantial decrease from 248 individuals in September 2017.
- Consistently over the last year there has been no wait to access OUDT programs in Central and Northern Zones and the wait times fluctuate for Eastern Zone (between 1-7 days) and Western Zone (between 0-25 days).
- NSH Mental Health and Addictions Program OUDT programs and Direction 180 combined had 667 new registrations in fiscal 2021-22.

During the first wave of the Covid 19 pandemic, an emergency Managed Alcohol Program (MAP) was established by the North End Community Health Centre. This program predominantly serves the shelter/homeless population to:

- prevent alcohol use withdrawal, which can be lethal.
- prevent the consumption of non-beverage alcohol, which can be lethal.
- help reduce demand for health services such as emergency and crisis services.
- link clients to needed health and social services.

DHW provided funding between the periods of June to September 2021 to the North End Community Health Centre to continue to support the emergency MAP during subsequent waves of the pandemic with continued funding to come from OAMH. A one-time investment of \$194,590 was provided through Safe Restart.

Improved access through revised and improved Central Intake

DHW has provided MHA with funding to improve wait-time performance. This included an investment of \$1.3M for Central Intake (includes 6 FTEs) and \$9.5M for expansion of Community Based Supports (35 clinical FTEs, 9 clinical FTEs for First Nation communities).

In addition to implementing Central Intake and hiring additional staff, NSH and IWK have implemented:

- A standardized central intake process, a common intake triage assessment, and upgrades to the community-wide scheduling system now enable intake workers to book, change and update appointments in community clinician schedules across the province.
- Introduction and use of e-Mental Health tools and Virtual Care.
- Drawing on clinicians across the province who have surplus capacity to meet demand in other zones.

Be responsible for prioritizing and collaborating across Education and Early Childhood Development, Justice, Community Services, and other departments as required

The OAMH continues to work collaboratively across Government departments. The OAMH worked with Education and Early Childhood Development on the initial stages of development for addictions-related curriculum for high school students. The curriculum is set to come out in 2023. The OAMH also worked collaboratively with the Department of Justice and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism on the development of legislative amendments to the *Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act*. The OAMH is supporting the Department of Justice by sitting on the Criminal Justice Transformation Group and supporting a OAMH pilot project to improve police responses to mental health crisis in the community (discussed further below). The OAMH also works closely with the Department of Advanced Education to coordinate e-MHA initiatives.

Expand Mental Health supports

The OAMH, along with NSH developed and opened Nova Scotia's first ever Day Hospital. The Day Hospital helps to improve access to care for people experiencing intense psychiatric symptoms but who do not require 24-hour inpatient support, while helping to decrease the number of overnight hospital admissions, easing existing pressures on inpatient psychiatric units and within the broader healthcare system, without compromising patient care or clinical outcomes for people living with mental illness. Program data will be available in 2022/23.

Supporting Greater Health Equity

The Office is working to ensure equity-deserving groups are provided equal opportunities and systemic racism is both addressed and prevented in the health system.

- Work is underway to collect data for health equity indicators for Universal Addictions and Mental Health Care.
- In 2022, OAMH provided Tajīkeimik with \$2M to support the development of a First Nations Mental Health and Addictions strategy to support the vision of health transformation that has been established by the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. More importantly, this will enable the advancement of mental wellness priorities identified by Mi'kmaq communities.
- Investing in organizations working to advance health in diverse communities, including 2SLGBTIQ+, including:
 - \$91,000 to The MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning. The Centre empowers youth between the ages of 12 and 19 by connecting passion and purpose through the arts.
 - \$150,000 to Heartwood. Heartwood provides a unique and inclusive recreation experience for children and youth who would face barriers accessing other recreational spaces due to things such as: mental health challenges, financial make of families, language, and cultural barriers, having a noncompetitive space for their age.
 - \$100,000 provided to each of the following youth organizations supporting inclusive programming for diverse youth across the province:
 - Portal Youth Association (Kentville)
 - Pictou County Roots for Youth (New Glasgow)
 - LOVE NS – locations in HRM, Sipekne'katik, and Membertou
 - SHYFT Youth Services – outreach into Digby, Shelburne, and Yarmouth counties
 - Undercurrent Youth Centre, Glace Bay
 - Whitney Pier Boys and Girls Club, Whitney Pier
 - Clifford St Youth Centre, North Sydney
 - \$350,000 to support Eskasoni's Crisis Line- to assist to stabilize and strengthen existing services and to enable work with key partners to plan how to enhance service response to Mi'kmaw peoples across NS.

Working with our partners at NSH and the IWK, the OAMH provided access to addictions and mental health support to newcomers to Nova Scotia including:

- A formal Shared Care agreement in place with ISANS which supports an MHA Pediatric Nurse practitioner to work out of the ISANS clinic who can address medical and MHA needs.

- Invested in National Newcomer Navigation training for the shared care staff working with ISANS.
- Created a Care Path at IWK Central Intake and Emergency MHA service that triages and supports the unique needs of Newcomers who need MHA intervention.
- Collaborating with Mount Saint Vincent University and the YMCA to create a new program for 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers and refugees called “The East Coast Kitchen Party”, where participants facilitate cooking classes based on recipes from their home culture. The intent is to create connection, combat food insecurity and provide a venue for facilitated mental health chats.
- In December 2021, NSH Mental Health Promotion compiled a list of available resources for Newcomers in Nova Scotia.

The OAMH has worked collaboratively with the Department of Justice on a working group to improve police responses to situations involving persons with mental health illnesses. This group will also focus on equity seeking and deserving groups, and how best to serve these communities.

The OAMH recognizes the need for better access to mental health and addiction services and supports in Indigenous communities. An annual investment of \$1.14 million in funding was allocated to NSH to hire clinicians to serve 12 of the 13 Mi'kmaq First Nation communities. The OAMH provides funding to Eskasoni First Nation directly to hire up to 2.5 clinicians.

The current FTE complement includes:

- 6.5 Child & Youth MH&A Clinician FTEs have been hired under the NSH.
- 4 Adult MH&A Clinician FTEs as employees of NSH.
- 2.5 FTE service agreement with Eskasoni First Nation (1.5 child and youth and 1 adult).

Expansion of Services and Supports

Grant funding for Not for Profits working in Addictions and Mental Health

In March 2022, the OAMH provided over \$10 million in one-time grant funding to 16 community-based organizations in Nova Scotia that work in the fields of addictions and mental health. The funding was directed towards programming to assist Nova Scotians within their communities.

Support to address April 18/19 Mass Casualty Commission

In recognition of the impact of the Commission’s findings on the mental well-being of Nova Scotians, the OAMH has provided funding to 211 and Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia to address increased demand as the Public Proceedings commenced in February 2022. The OAMH also provided grant funding to MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning to support mental health and healing for youth in the Portapique community and surrounding area. This included providing summer and fall after school programming.

In 2021-22, OAMH provided:

- \$200,000 to Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia.
- \$270,134 to 211 Nova Scotia.
- \$91,000 to MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning for their work in Portapique.

Appendices

Appendix A: Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith. The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counseling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Office of Addictions and Mental Health:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2021-22
The number of disclosures received	None
The number of findings of wrongdoing	None
Details of each wrongdoing	
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	

Appendix B: Health Outcome Measures

Action for Health is Nova Scotia's four-year strategic plan that describes the actions and solutions to transform healthcare in the province. Transparently measuring success is an important component to ensuring accountability.

Key Performance Indicators to track the immediate effects of changes to the health system, as well as daily reporting on health system metrics, can be found at: [Action for Health \(novascotia.ca\)](https://www.novascotia.ca/actionforhealth)