



Manitoba Pandemic Support Guide

Taking Care of Yourself

“An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly.” - unknown

Key Priority for School/Division Staff: Establishing a Sense of Safety and Connectedness

Stress is a normal part of life. Adults and children alike have varying reactions to stress. Typically, predictable, short-term events are less stressful than events that are sudden and long lasting.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing event that can cause chronic stress. The uncertainty and changing nature of what we know about COVID-19 can contribute to the loss of a sense of safety.

The following are some of the many things we can do to take care of our mental health and reduce the impact of stress.

Developing Routines

We know how important routines are for children, but routines help build structure into everyone’s day, helping to bring a sense of control and predictability. Routines help to reduce the stress response, and they keep our body regulated. Create a routine that includes taking care of your physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health:

- **Physical:** Eating well, getting fresh air, taking breaks during the work day, and making sure to get regular movement and exercise—especially as a part of your daily routine—can help calm the physical body. Limit the use of alcohol and other substances, which can interfere with sleep. Practise good sleep habits (e.g., adhere to a consistent bedtime/waking time).
- **Mental/Emotional:** Practise self-kindness and remember that it is best to take care of yourself before you try to take care of anyone else. Finding a balance between work and home is important. Schedule time to do something you enjoy every day. It is also okay to distract yourself with books, movies, or hobbies. Identify the things that you can change and those you cannot. Recognizing things in life for which you are grateful can help shift your mindset.

- **Social:** Staying connected with friends, family, and colleagues contributes to resilience. We can still talk and listen to others while maintaining physical distancing, or we can use virtual technology. Appreciate that friends, family, and colleagues are important and let them know. We can reduce our stress when we find action helping others, such as advocacy or activism. Connecting with others can give us a sense of community, especially when we are all experiencing the same struggle. It helps us realize we are not alone.
- **Spiritual:** Maintain or create a connection to mindfulness, soothing music, meditation, nature, or organized religious practices.

Take time to check in with yourself to gain insight into where you may be struggling. Once you identify the issues, work to create a plan to address the issues you can control and let go of the ones you cannot. We are used to planning and being in control. It is okay if some things are outside of your control.

Have real conversations with friends, family, and coworkers about our mental health. This is now more important than ever. Most of us have never experienced anything like this before. We are concerned about getting sick, the health of our families, being isolated, and many other variables. Remember, we are not helpless during this time. There are options for dealing with the mental health impacts this pandemic brings. Your mental health and self-awareness are vital. There are many resources available to help you take care of yourself, get support, and find the calm you deserve.

Practise self-compassion. Remember to be patient and forgiving with yourself. We are all human and it is natural to struggle at times. If the stress becomes overwhelming, look for additional supports through your school/division's employee assistance program (EAP). Check out the following links for some additional ideas and supports. (Please see the free counselling and therapy programs available to Manitoba residents aged 16 and over, which are offered through Morneau Shepell and listed in the Resources and Supports section below.)

Resources and Supports

(Please also refer to [Manitoba Pandemic Support Guide: Resources for Students and Adults.](#))

Free Counselling from Morneau Shepell

Two free counselling sessions with a trained professional are available by video or telephone, as preferred. They are provided free of charge to Manitobans aged 16 and over by Morneau Shepell, through an arrangement with the Province of Manitoba. To schedule your first appointment, call 1-844-218-2955 (toll free).

AbilitiCBT Online Therapy by Morneau Shepell

This free, online cognitive behavioral therapy (iCBT) program is for persons experiencing mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety and depression due to the pandemic. It's confidential and accessible any time from home on your computer, smartphone, or tablet. AbilitiCBT includes a special program to help you address anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics: uncertainty, isolation, caring for family and community

members, information overload, and stress management. Participants will move through 10 self-paced online modules, with check-ins from a Morneau Shepell counsellor along the way. To learn more about this service, please visit <https://manitoba.abiliticbt.com/home>.

SAFE Work Manitoba

Safe Work Manitoba is dedicated to the prevention of workplace injury and illness and recognizes mental health is just as important as physical health and safety in the workplace.

- *Mental Health. A Part of SAFE Work.*
No matter what industry you work in, mental health matters.
www.safemanitoba.com/

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS)

MTS offers support to all its members and makes the following resources available:

- Lifespeak Wellness Platform offers supportive and preventative ideas.
www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2019/01/07/lifespeak-wellness-platform/
- The Educator Assistance Program offers confidential counselling sessions in French and English with its professional counsellors.
www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2016/05/24/educator-assistance-program/

Manitoba Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services (MFRNSS)

MFRNSS offers free telephone and online counselling to farmers and rural and northern Manitobans.

Toll-free: 1-866-367-3276

www.supportline.ca

Shared Health Manitoba Mental Health and Addictions

Programs and resources are available for individuals and families experiencing mental health, substance use, and gambling-related difficulties.

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/services/mental-health/>

Mental Health Commission of Canada

This is a leading resource for guiding policy and practice across Canada. It offers resources and training, including the following:

- *The Working Mind*, a program designed to promote health and reduce the stigma around mental illness in the workplace. Use the Mental Health Continuum to do a self-check.
<https://theworkingmind.ca/continuum-self-check>
- *Resource Hub: Mental health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic*
www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

Contact: 204-775-6442

Canadian Mental Health Association Service Navigation Hub

Specialists are available to help Manitobans find the best type of care or service to match their needs.

<https://mbwpg.cmha.ca/cmha-service-navigation-hub/>

Contact: 204-775-6442

Contact numbers across the province: www.mooddordersmanitoba.ca/contact/

Peer Support Line: 204-786-0987

CRISIS Resources

Mental Health Crisis and Non-Crisis Regional Contacts across Manitoba

This website provides a list of crisis lines across the province, as well as an interactive map to help you find your regional health authority.

www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/crisis.html

Klinic Crisis Line

Klinic provides free and confidential counselling, support, and referrals for people who are suicidal, in crisis, or struggling to cope.

<http://klinic.mb.ca/crisis-support/>

24/7 Crisis Line: 204-786-8686

Toll-free: 1-888-322-3019

Manitoba's Suicide Prevention and Support Line

This resource is open and available 24/7, 365 days a year.

Contact: 1-877-435-7170