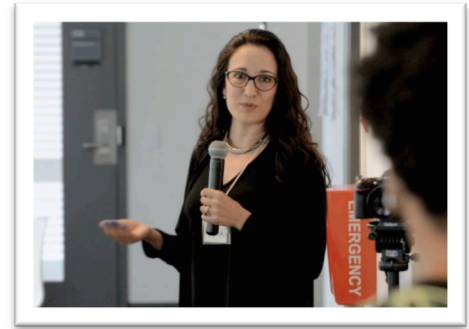


## Join us in advocating for an equitable healthcare system that supports whole families affected by mental illness



October 10<sup>th</sup> is recognized every year as **#WorldMentalHealthDay**. In October 2021, Professor Charmaine Williams and The Family Caregiving Project [launched a number of resources](#) to educate students, healthcare providers, and community members about family caregiving and its importance to mental health.

This year, in addition to the launch of more family mental health resources [which you can access here](#), we welcome you to contact the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Minister of Health, and your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to advocate for a more equitable healthcare system that support whole families affected by mental illness.

What do we mean when we talk about supporting whole families? Check out [this interview](#) with Professor Williams to hear more.

Keep reading below to see our sample letter to your MPP, contact information, social media posts, and additional resources from the team. If you would like to write your own letter from scratch, [check out this video outlining the components of telling your story with a purpose](#).



## Sample letters

We welcome you to copy and paste either of the letters below and send it to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Minister of Health, and your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). Don't forget to personalize it with details and information unique to you. You can also use it as inspiration to write your own letter; feel free to use any parts of it that work for you.

### Letter #1:

Dear Associate Minister,

As a **[person with mental illness; caregiver to a person/people with mental illness; healthcare provider]**, I am acutely aware of the urgent need for additional support for families impacted by mental illness. We need a healthcare system that is configured around the needs of whole families that foster support through mental health challenges; this will benefit not only those families, but our healthcare system and society as a whole. I urge you to consider the following points that will help to improve the lives of families affected by mental illness if incorporated into policy and practice:

- 1) Provide services in a way that cares for whole families, rather than valuing the current binary roles of caregiver and care-receiver;
- 2) Recognize the diversity of families and be inclusive of who an individual considers to be their family and provide care, regardless of biological or legal relation;
- 3) Increase access to mental health care for marginalized families and individuals by targeting the root of health inequities and disparities across Ontario.

***[Feel free to insert your story here to personalize this letter]***

There is no better time to address the urgent mental health needs of people living in Ontario. Please act today to improve the quality of care of individuals and families affected by mental illness during this critical time.

I look forward to hearing from you and would welcome discussion with you about this matter.

Sincerely,

**[YOUR NAME]**

**[ADDRESS]**

## **Letter #2:**

Dear Associate Minister,

I am writing to you today to share my experiences and concerns about the Ontario healthcare system as it relates to families living with mental illness, as well as suggestions to improve care.

As a **[person with mental illness; caregiver to a person/people with mental illness; healthcare provider]**, I am acutely aware of the urgent need for additional support for families impacted by mental illness. [COVID-19 has wrought havoc on our healthcare system](#) and has left many people living in Ontario affected by mental illness worse off than before; [youth, Indigenous people, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted during the Pandemic](#). Family members of marginalized, disadvantaged, and/or stigmatized groups face additional challenges and barriers to getting help and support, contributing to the unacceptable reality that many individuals and families do not have access to adequate care.

[We also know that caregivers shore up the current healthcare system and provide continuity of care that individuals with mental illness need in order to be supported in the community](#). Although caregivers are at times acknowledged for their critical role, their involvement in care plans and services, especially during moments of crisis, is still limited. In addition, family members who provide care may not be biologically or legally related, which can be overlooked by healthcare providers despite their importance. Current policies and services are built on assumptions that in a family, one person is always a caregiver, and another person is always receiving care. The reality is that many of us are not only caregivers or receivers of care, but occupy multiple roles in families as we support each other through the many challenges our society faces today. These must be updated to reflect the complexity of family situations where individuals often occupy many different roles that are all deserving of care.

***[Feel free to insert your story here to personalize this letter]***

There is no better time to address the urgent mental health needs of people living in Ontario. Please act today to improve the quality of care of individuals and families affected by mental illness during this critical time.

I look forward to hearing from you and would welcome discussion with you about this matter.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[ADDRESS]

## Contact information

### The Honourable Michael Tibollo

Associate Minister, Mental Health and Addictions

[Michael.Tibollo@ontario.ca](mailto:Michael.Tibollo@ontario.ca)

777 Bay Street

Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

### The Honourable Christine Elliott

Minister of Health

[Christine.Elliott@ontario.ca](mailto:Christine.Elliott@ontario.ca)

777 Bay Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

[Click here](#) to find the contact information of your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP).

## Show your support on social media

Let your friends, family and followers know that you sent a letter via social media, and encourage them to send one too! Use the hashtags #FamilyCaregiving and #WorldMentalHealthDay to amplify your message.

### Sample tweets

1) Providing support to whole families affected by mental illness is vital to a healthy future. Show your support of #FamilyCaregiving by sending a letter to the government today! Visit [www.familyguidetomentalhealth.com/family-caregiving-project](http://www.familyguidetomentalhealth.com/family-caregiving-project) for more information

2) Access to mental health care in Ontario has never been more important. Marginalized families and individuals impacted by mental illness experience barriers to life-changing care. Show your support of #FamilyCaregiving by sending a letter to the government today!

## Looking for more content to share?

Visit [The Family Caregiving Project website](#) for resources and information that you can use and share with your networks.

## Prefer to make a phone call to share your support?

**Michael Tibollo** | Associate Minister, Mental Health and Addictions

**613-995-0777**

**Christine Elliott** | Minister of Health

**613-992-4211**

[Click here](#) to find the contact information of your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP).

## Resources

### [The Family Caregiving Project](#)

The Family Caregiving Project exists because we believe that families have perspectives and insights that need to be heard by policymakers, educators, students, practitioners and other families who could learn from their experience. This Project explores the perspectives of families affected by mental illness so we can better understand how to improve policies and services to meet their needs and to deepen understanding of family mental health realities, challenges and ways to help in recovery.

For resources to use and share in your community or area of practice, [visit our website](#).

### [The Family Guide to Mental Health Recovery](#)

The Family Guide to Mental Health Recovery is an interactive documentary project that will provide new hope, insight and guidance to the whole family, as they begin a journey of recovery. Using peer-to-peer interviews, text resources and online community forums, we can share real life insight, guidance and experience from real families to help new families just starting their journey. The Family Guide to Mental Health Recovery is designed as a resource that can be accessed and used by each family member – so a process of enlightenment, learning, outreach and understanding can start immediately.

## Media and Press Releases

- [New resources to support families in mental health system](#)
- [Rethinking family caregiving: Q&A with Charmaine Williams, director of the Family Caregiving Project](#)
- [The Family Caregiving Project shares online resources to improve mental health care for families](#)
- [New video series from The Family Caregiving Project provides insight on how families navigate mental illness](#)

