

Wellness Support Line – FAQs for CMA Member Service Centre and PTMAs

When is the CMA winding down the Wellness Support Line?

- November 30, 2022.

Why is the CMA winding down this service?

- The CMA continually evaluates our work to ensure it provides value to our membership and is advancing a better future of health – for patients and the profession – at a national level.
- The CMA launched the Wellness Support Line in June 2020 as a pilot program, during the height of the pandemic, to provide additional mental health support and counselling to physicians, medical students and their immediate families in regions where this service did not previously exist or as complement to existing physician health programs.
- It was never intended to be a long-term program and was not part of our core member services.
- As Canada emerges from the acute phase of COVID-19, the CMA is returning to its core focus on fostering a new culture of medicine that supports physicians as people as well as professionals and advocating for a better future of health through system reform.

What if a physician still needs support and counselling?

- Many Provincial and Territorial Medical Associations (PTMAs) have a dedicated Physician Health Program (PHP) to assist physicians with support. Physicians have access to personalized service for a variety of issues and can be connected to the best resources for their needs.
- The CMA will continue to work with PTMAs to support the health and wellness of physicians and medical students.
- The CMA will launch a new physician wellness support page (cma.ca/support) at the end of the day on Nov. 30 which will include national crisis phone numbers and information about provincial physician health programs. We will set up a redirect from the existing cma.ca/supportline URL to this new support page.

*For CMA MSC staff members: direct to resource tip sheet to direct physicians to PTMA Physician Health Program in their province

What will replace the Wellness Support Line?

- The Wellness Support Line was designed to complement existing resources available through physician health programs across Canada.
- Many PTMAs still offer personalized, established support services for physicians, medical students and their families through existing physician health programs.
- The CMA will continue to work with PTMAs to support physician health and wellness.

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Why weren't members consulted about the wind-down of the Wellness Support Line?

- The Wellness Support Line was launched in June 2020 as a pilot program to bolster existing resources available through physician health programs across Canada at a time of unprecedented stress.
- It was never intended to be a long-term program and was not part of our core member services.
- As we emerge from the acute phase of COVID-19, the CMA is returning to its core focus – achieving bold changes in health, health care and the health workforce.
- The CMA consulted with participating physician health programs on the decision and will continue to work with PTMAs and other medical organizations to support the health and wellness of physicians and medical students.
- We continue to offer members wellness support and resources through our Physician Wellness Hub at cma.ca/wellness – including the Wellness Connection, a facilitated virtual peer support group, and the Pandemic Wellness Toolkit (see answer below on other health and wellness supports for more details on each program).

What will happen if a physician calls the Wellness Support Line after Nov. 30?

- If a caller has the 1-800 # for the CMA Wellness Support Line, they will be directed to a recorded message that will offer menu options to connect them to the PTMA physician health program in their region.
- Accessing the CMA Member Service Centre will also be a menu option.

Why is the CMA retiring valuable member programs and benefits?

- The CMA continually evaluates our work to ensure it provides value to our membership and is focused where we can have the greatest positive impact on the profession.
- The CMA launched the Wellness Support Line as a pilot program in direct response to the increased stresses the pandemic was placing on the medical profession.
- It was never intended to be a long-term program and was not part of our core member services.
- As Canada emerges from the acute phase of COVID-19, the CMA is focused on advocacy to stabilize the health care system and transform care for the future. The CMA also continues to foster a new culture of medicine where physicians are treated with the same compassion as their patients.
- As well, the CMA continues to offer update tools and resources on our Physician Wellness Hub at cma.ca/wellness, and to facilitate virtual peer support groups on our Wellness Connection platform.

What other health and wellness supports does the CMA offer physicians and medical students?

The CMA has numerous online tools and resources for physician health and wellness, including the:

- [Physician Wellness Hub](#) – a collection of original CMA content and curated resources, information and programs for physicians, residents, medical students and educators seeking guidance and wellness self-help. cma.ca/wellness
- [Wellness Connection](#) – free virtual peer support sessions led by trained facilitators that provide a safe space for physicians and medical learners to gather and discuss shared experiences, seek advice and help each other. cma.ca/physician-wellness-hub/wellness-connection
- [Pandemic Wellness Toolkit](#) – a comprehensive online guide to help you manage your wellness. The toolkit includes the Physician Wellness Hub and the Wellness Connection but also offers resources on how to deal with harassment, how to connect with peers and how to support your team and their well-being. cma.ca/physician-wellness-hub/pandemic-wellness-toolkit

What is the CMA doing to advocate for a healthy profession and a thriving medical culture?

- During the pandemic, health workers endured countless incidents of bullying and intimidation, both in person and online, that had a significant impact on their emotional and psychological well-being. In December 2021, after the CMA called for action to protect health care workers from this harassment, the federal government passed Bill C-3 – legislation that makes it a criminal offence to impede a health professional from performing their duties.
- The pandemic has also contributed to unprecedented health workforce shortages due to burnout. The CMA, along with the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), co-hosted two emergency summits to learn from nearly 40 health organizations representing nurses, physicians, respiratory therapists, personal support workers, psychologists and educational institutions how to support health workers and alleviate the health human resource (HHR) crisis.
- Information from these summits helped inform the development of eight HHR policy recommendations for the short-, medium- and long-term. In April, the CMA and CNA, in partnership with the College of Family Physicians of Canada, presented the recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.

What other ways is the CMA supporting physician wellness programs?

The Canadian Medical Association, MD Financial Management and Scotiabank – through their Affinity partnership – are firmly committed to supporting the medical profession and advancing health in Canada through targeted donations:

- \$15 million to 18 PTMAs/national physician organizations for wellness projects supporting members, including:
 - The Ontario Medical Association’s eight-week wellness education program Doc to Doc: Wellness Enhanced
 - Doctors of Nova Scotia’s initiative to reduce administrative burden and support organizational change.

- Saskatchewan Medical Association’s initiative to provide access to healthy food options for all medical learners during in-hospital learning.
- New in-person counselling program for members of the Yukon Medical Association.

Why did the CMA launch the Wellness Support Line?

- In June 2020, in direct response to the increased stresses the COVID-19 pandemic was placing on the medical profession, the CMA launched the Wellness Support Line as a pilot program with funding from Scotiabank and MD Financial Management.
- Our goal was to act swiftly to provide direct support to physicians, residents, medical students and their immediate families in provinces and territories where this service did not previously exist.
- To date, more than 1,000 people have accessed the Wellness Support Line.

Where was the Wellness Support Line offered?

- The Wellness Support Line was offered to physicians, residents, medical students and their families in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon and Nunavut – through partnerships with the provincial/territorial medical associations in these areas.

