



# BCRHN

British Columbia  
Rural Health Network

# Bridging the Gap: Navigating Seniors' Mental Health Resources in Rural BC

Mental health challenges can affect rural BC residents of any age. As we face an aging population in rural BC, it is crucial to address the mental health concerns that seniors may face head-on due to several factors including social isolation, losing friends and loved ones, physical changes, and health challenges. Join us as we navigate the landscape of mental health support tailored specifically for seniors, shedding light on tools and programs that empower older adults to face mental health challenges with resilience and practicality.

[The Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#) offers a 24/7 BC Seniors' Distress Line. Seniors facing a crisis as well as anyone who is concerned about an older adult can call 604-872-1234 to speak with a crisis responder. [Find your local CMHA branch](#) to inquire about local support and services for Seniors' mental health in the area.

[Seniors Centre Without Walls \(SCWW\)](#) aims to connect seniors to others in their local community entirely over the telephone or virtually through a computer, tablet, or smartphone. This service is available for older adults who are 65+. SCWW focuses on providing programs that benefit their participants' mental, social, and emotional well-being.

[Emotional Support for Seniors: Practical Strategies for Anxiety and Stress related to COVID-19](#) is an informational resource provided by Northern Health that addresses how to provide emotional support to seniors while maintaining social distancing and other COVID-safe practices and protocols.

Crisis Centre BC offers immediate access to barrier-free, non-judgmental, confidential support and follow-up to people of all ages through 24/7 phone lines and online services in English and French. Dial 9-8-8 to access the National Suicide Crisis Helpline. Dial 310-6789 to access the BC Mental Health Support Line. Dial 1-800-784-2433 to access the BC Suicide Prevention and Intervention Line. [Online chat](#) support is available from noon to 1 am.

To find mental health programs and centres in your community, visit the [Government of British Columbia's HelpStartsHere website](#).

[The Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health \(CCSMH\)](#) is committed to improving the quality of care and support for older adults throughout Canada. CCSMH works to provide information and resources for several areas of focus including anxiety, depression, delirium, substance use and addiction, wellness in aging, social isolation and loneliness, and suicide prevention.

Local seniors' support groups and organizations are an excellent place for seniors to build social connections and access mental health resources. Local groups and organizations can be found by visiting [BC211](#).

[Heretohelp BC](#) provides mental health information and resources, including information on [seniors and depression](#).

The Stigma-Free Society is a Canadian Charity with the mission of reducing the stigma around mental health. [The Stigma-Free Society](#) offers resources for seniors including informational resources on supporting seniors in rural communities, practicing gratitude for seniors, journal prompts for seniors, and more. The Stigma-Free Society also provides a [Rural Mental Wellness Toolkit](#).

[The First Nations Health Authority](#) offers culturally-safe services for Indigenous elders seeking support. [The Indian Residential School Survivors Society \(IRSSS\)](#) provides access to counselling, and cultural and emotional support services to Residential School Survivors and their families regardless of status.

[Healthy Aging CORE BC](#) is the knowledge hub connecting organizations that support and advance independent living for older British Columbians. They offer several informational resources on seniors' mental health and wellness through their website.

[Cooking Up Calm](#) is an e-booklet developed by Dr. Gail Low, Faculty of Nursing - University of Alberta, and the Living Well Research Team. It contains tips based on the six most effective mentally healthy living strategies to emerge from a research study conducted during COVID-19 when social distancing restrictions were lifting. It also contains some easy-to-follow meal recipes.

Physical activity can significantly improve your mental and physical health regardless of age. Low-impact activities including walking, swimming, and water aerobics classes are great options. [HealthLink BC](#) provides several informational resources on physical activity for seniors.

Social connectedness is key! Local libraries, seniors' groups, rec centres and community groups often offer programming and activities for seniors in the community. Reach out to one of your local service providers to learn more.

[United Way BC](#) offers several resources and programs that support the mental and physical health and wellness of seniors across rural BC including [Better at Home](#) and [Men's Sheds](#). You can see a full map of United Way's programs across BC [here](#) to identify what is available in your community.

[Wellness Together Canada](#) provides high-quality mental health and substance use support and resources for everybody. They offer several resources specifically for seniors, focused on [optimal aging](#).

[The Fountain of Health](#) is a national non-profit initiative dedicated to sharing the science of brain health and resilience and translating that knowledge into practical action. They provide paper and app-based tools for supporting health behaviour change in 5 key health areas known to support long-term well-being.



**United Way**  
British Columbia

Working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland, Central & Northern Vancouver Island



**British Columbia Rural Health Network**

*The voice for rural health solutions™*