



# **THE ISSUES AND THE WORK OF THE AAMIMH**

**(Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health)**



### ***Alliance Statement of Priorities***

*The priority for the Alberta Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health (AAMIMH) is to advocate for quality mental health service with equitable access, quantity and affordability for all Albertans in accordance with the directions given provincially through the Alberta Mental Health Plan and federally through the Kirby Report – “Out of the Shadows at Last.”*

*AAMIMH will seek accountability for effective mental health services across Alberta and will provide counsel to assist in identifying service*

## **Background**

The AAMIMH was created in 1999 as a result of a perception held by many individuals and organizations representing consumer and families, as well as various professional caregiver organizations, that decision-makers of mental health services in Alberta appeared to be enhancing institutional services without a review as to the appropriate need for such services. As well, there was a concern that there appeared to be less emphasis on enhancing community mental health services. The purpose of the AAMIMH was to try to develop a common position on these concerns and then speak as one in an effort to be better heard by government.

Through a grant from the Muttart Foundation, sufficient funding was obtained that a part-time employee could act as the formal secretariat to this new organization, while funding for this organization was flowed through the CMHA Alberta Division – considered the host agency.

The grants which were the source of funding that allowed for the part-time employee in the first several years are now gone. Being a coalition, not incorporated, makes it difficult to acquire additional core funding. As a result, increasing volunteer time by certain members and the loaning of the CMHA Executive Director’s time to support the Alliance, places increasing burdens on these individuals and CMHA.

## AAMIMH Successes

- A. In February 2000, the AAMIMH released the discussion paper, ***Good People . . . Good Practices . . . No System***. The paper provided an historical review of mental health service delivery in Alberta and provided five recommendations to address current concerns. The recommendations called for:
- The Government of Alberta declares its support of a contemporary plan for a community-based mental health system.
  - Provide adequate funding in order to alleviate lack of access to psychiatric acute care beds and community-based services.
  - Review of the roles of the larger provincial hospitals within a contemporary system of mental health care.
  - Any funding spent on provincial hospitals should be matched on a 2:1 ratio with funding toward community services.
  - AMHB should continue to demonstrate policy and funding commitment to enhancing children's mental health.
- B. In 2002 the AAMIMH made a presentation to the government's Standing Policy Committee. The Minister of Health and Wellness heard and supported the request by the AAMIMH member organizations that, in planning mental health service delivery in Alberta, the consumer and their family are critical people who must be involved in the planning process. Consequently, the AAMIMH was invited to sit as an equal partner, along with representatives from the RHAs, AMHB, AMA and the PAA on the Steering Committee for the development of a Provincial Mental Health Plan.
- C. In March 2003, the AAMIMH released the document, ***Partnership, Participation, Innovation . . . a Blueprint for Reform***, which was "intended as a guide and tool for all concerned with the reform and improvement of mental health care." It was designed to assist health care providers in assessing their own respective organization's performance and capacity to deliver mental health services.
- D. The AAMIMH released its strategic plan in November 2003, entitled ***From Passion to Action***. The document outlined the Mandate and Mission and provided four goals with objectives.

- E. In October 2004, the AAMIMH sent a series of briefing notes to candidates for the November 2004 Alberta Provincial Election. The intent was to create an awareness and importance of issues that have tremendous bearing on the mental health of Albertans. The notes addressed:
- funding for mental health programs and services
  - the necessity of retaining the Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB)
  - the need for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) programs
  - the importance of Diversion Programs
  - commitment to housing is needed
  - integration of mental health services in primary care
  - the need for AISH to be strengthened.
- F. The AAMIMH released on March 31, 2005, a review of the strategic plan up to that date.
- G. The AAMIMH also held two Provincial Conferences in 2003 and 2004, attended by well over 200 delegates from government and government-funded organizations and health researchers across Alberta:
- Conference 2003 – ***Partnerships, Participation and Innovation***
  - Conference 2004 – ***From Passion to Action***
- H. In late 2005 and early 2006, the AAMIMH has been approached by government and government-funded organizations to provide input on a number of diverse issues, such as:
- Review of the Forensic Program – (AMHB)
  - Restructuring of AHE – (Capital Health Authority)
  - Provincial Psychiatric Bed Review – (AMHB)
  - Dual Diagnosis Committee – (AADAC)
  - Provincial Mental Health Network
  - Advocacy (national and provincial) for governments to support the recommendations in Senator M. Kirby's report, *Out of the Shadows at Last*.