

# FIT CITY NEWS

Physical and mental health enhancement information for employees

## Canada's new 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline

Sensitive content warning: This article discusses suicide.

As of November 2023, people in every province and territory can call or text the [9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline](#) to access immediate and real-time support. Similar to 9-1-1 for accessing fire, police and medical emergencies, 9-8-8 is a short, easy-to-remember number providing an immediate response, 24/7 and free of charge. Callers will receive bilingual, trauma-informed culturally appropriate support from trained responders.



When someone calls 9-8-8, they are first presented with a menu. Children, teens and Indigenous people are among those who can choose to access services specifically geared to them. Kids Help Phone and the Hope for Wellness Helpline are both options that callers can be connected to. A responder listens, responds with empathy and compassion, and stays engaged as long as needed. 9-1-1 will be activated if someone is at immediate risk of harming themselves or someone else. The 9-8-8 responder will stay connected to support the person while they wait for help to arrive.

While the service is designed to respond to those at risk of suicide, no one will be turned away. Those seeking to access other mental health supports may be directed to other services in their area. Everyone who reaches out will be assisted, but 9-8-8 is designed to keep someone safe at the moment - it is not meant to help navigate the mental health system. Instead, 2-1-1 can be called for information about government and community-based, non-clinical health and social services.

## Raise awareness and reduce stigma

Suicide remains a significant public health concern in Canada, affecting individuals of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. It also disproportionately affects certain populations including survivors of suicide loss and suicide attempts, those from the LGBTQIA2S+ community, men and boys, and some First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, especially among youth. According to Statistics Canada, about 4,500 people in our country die by suicide every year, which is around 12 people a day. And for every person lost to suicide, many more experience suicidal ideation or attempts.

Stigma around mental health challenges, and suicide in particular, contributes to an avoidance of discussing this important topic. In workplaces, creating a culture of care and actively working to reduce stigma helps to encourage individuals to seek support and speak to trusted colleagues about thoughts of suicide or self-harm. If someone is talking about suicide, it is a strong indication that they want help. Do not be afraid to engage with them about what they are sharing with you - assist them in the moment by connecting to appropriate resources or calling emergency services if it is a crisis situation.

Visit the Mental Health Commission of Canada's website for the full [article](#) and additional resources.

## City-specific resources

Scan this QR code to find out more about the [mental health and well-being resources](#) available for staff, including information about using a Mental Health First Aid approach, our Employee Family Assistance Program, and low-cost community mental health resources.



## SMART goal setting as a tool for personal and professional well-being

January is often considered a popular time to brainstorm personal and professional goals and to incorporate lifestyle changes. Setting meaningful, achievable goals helps maintain our well-being and motivation throughout the process. One way to do this is by using the S.M.A.R.T framework.

<b>SPECIFIC</b>	Be specific about what you'd like to accomplish and how you will do it. Consider why achieving the goal is a priority and who, if anyone, needs to be involved.
<b>MEASURABLE</b>	Choose measurable indicators that will help you track progress.
<b>ATTAINABLE</b>	Consider whether fulfilling the goal is realistic and whether you have the appropriate skills and resources available to achieve it. Improvise if needed.
<b>RELEVANT</b>	Think about what aspects of the goal are important to you and why you want to achieve it now. If it is work-related, ensure it is aligned with your performance plan, team, department, or organization's objectives.
<b>TIME-BOUND</b>	Reflect on your timeline and whether it's realistic. Identify an accountability resource or partner to motivate you in staying committed.

To get started, consider the five W's:

Who: Who is involved?

What: What do I want to accomplish?

Where: Location?

Why: What's the specific reason, purpose, or benefits for accomplishing the goal?

When: What's the time frame?

As you embark on your goal-setting journey, remember that change takes time and to be kind to yourself. Celebrate small steps towards your goal as this is progress in the right direction and can be motivating. As priorities naturally shift, you may need to revisit and reschedule certain goals occasionally. If you are in need of support along the way, you may consider connecting with a coach or a counsellor from [Homewood Health](#), our Employee Family Assistance Program provider.

## Track your savings for a chance to win

Focus on your financial health this year by participating in the Financial Savings Challenge on GreenShield's [Change4Life](#) platform. Each time you input your savings in the Savings Tracker, you're automatically entered for a chance to win a \$200 gift card. Determine your goal, set up reminders and update your savings each day. If you want to do more than track your savings, there are many [financial resources](#) available on Change4Life including "Ask the Expert" videos and 30-day challenges. And you can do all this while accumulating points to bid on Fit City Incentive Program prizes!

Available to City employees who receive health and dental benefits, [Change4Life](#) supports you in achieving your health and wellness goals. You can access Change4Life through [gsceverywhere.ca](#). On the desktop, it's within the "GS Offerings" menu above the dashboard, and on the mobile app, it's under "More" and then "GS Offerings."

Prefer to work with a professional? Call 1-800-663-1142 to access Homewood Health's [Financial Coaching](#). You can also visit [Homeweb.ca](#) for access to their e-course, Taking Control of Your Money.

