

Canadian Avalanche Association Mental Health Vision 2023–26

The CAA is dedicated to psychological health and safety for our employees, members, instructors, and students. This includes feeling safe to communicate one’s needs in a non-judgmental forum, and normalizing mental well-being and overall health, thereby creating a culture of inclusion, openness, and respect. This document outlines our vision for mental health and is supported by a proposed workplan that is undergoing review.

We strive to provide supports that promote well-being, prevent harm during incidents, intervene post-incident, and provide trauma-informed approaches in our work.

The CAA understands that psychological health and safety is embedded in the way employees, contractors, members, and students interact with one another. We must structure our working conditions and management practices around an environment that prevents psychological harm and promotes the psychological well-being of all our employees, members, instructors, and students.

This mental health vision was developed by our leadership team to support our ongoing commitment to the well-being of our employees, instructors, students, and members. It is an evolving document, and therefore this strategy and action plan will be continually reviewed to continue to support our community.

Vision: Health and well-being for employees, members, students, and instructors.

Our focus:

Employees

The CAA ensures a healthy, safe, and inclusive workplace where workers can thrive.

Members

The CAA leads the industry with a healthy and thriving membership that are supported in their mental health needs.

Students

Successful and supported students

Instructors

Resilient instructors that have adequate resources to deliver courses and support students.

Stakeholders

Collaboration and engagement of our industry stakeholders for mental health.

Primary objectives:

- Provide organizational systems and team supports such as policies, procedures, and training that will ensure we can lead the industry and support our employees, instructors, members, and students at the same time.
- Provide supports for the industry to support each employee, member, and coworker on the team through leadership training and tools.
- Engage with industry stakeholders to provide the best supports for the well-being of the avalanche workforce.
- Normalize the culture within the avalanche industry to recognize mental health as part of overall health.
- Create and provide resources that support well-being and thriving workers.
- Provide training and tools for mental health and well-being through four key stages: prevention, critical incident, post-incident, and continued support.
- Address diversity, inclusion, and harassment issues through training and supports for employers.
- Update curriculum, ITP operations, and instructor training to include mental health.
- Develop regular engagement for organizations and employers regarding mental health supports.
- Examination of funding for mental health supports.

Actions

Continued Support

Policies and resources to ensure people have access to the supports they need.
 Professional resources and referrals available.
 Instructor training on trauma-informed education.
 Member, student, and employee check-ins integrated into the workplace.
 Normalize the culture of addressing mental health needs and accessing supports.
 Contribute to reducing stigma and normalizing mental health.

Post incident

Resources available, and reduced barriers to accessing them.
 Training for post-incident intervention.
 Systems in place to ensure workers do not have to return to work prematurely after an incident.

Prevention

Policies for well-being and psychological safety.
 Integrate mental health awareness tools into curriculum.
 Increasing wellness checks.
 Education around burnout, fatigue, stress injuries, and resiliency.
 Promotion of work/life balance and being able to refuse unsafe work

Critical Incident

Peer support (CISM).
 Training on responding to those in need.
 Training on mental health first aid.
 Integrating mental health into avalanche incident response.
 Create toolkits in advance for how to deal with increased stress in an incident.