

AN ACTION PLAN FOR CANADA

Mental health and criminal justice

CIPSRT Conference 2025
May 8, 2025



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada



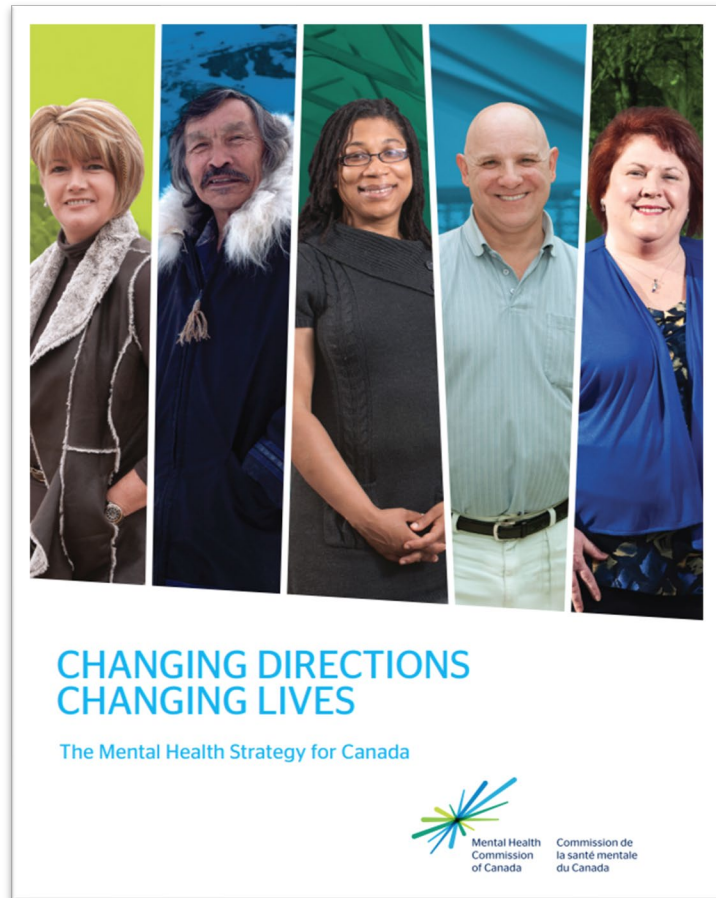
Today's agenda

- What's the issue?
- What are we doing?
- What's next?
- Q&A

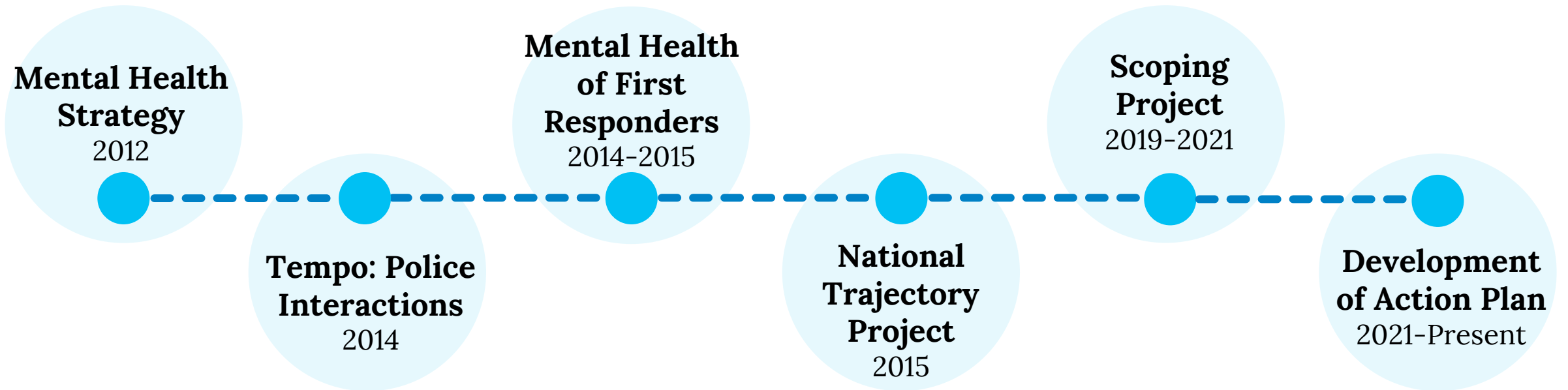
Mental Health Strategy for Canada

Priority 2.4:

Reduce the over-representation of people living with mental health problems and illnesses in the criminal justice system, and provide appropriate services, treatment and supports to those who are in the system.

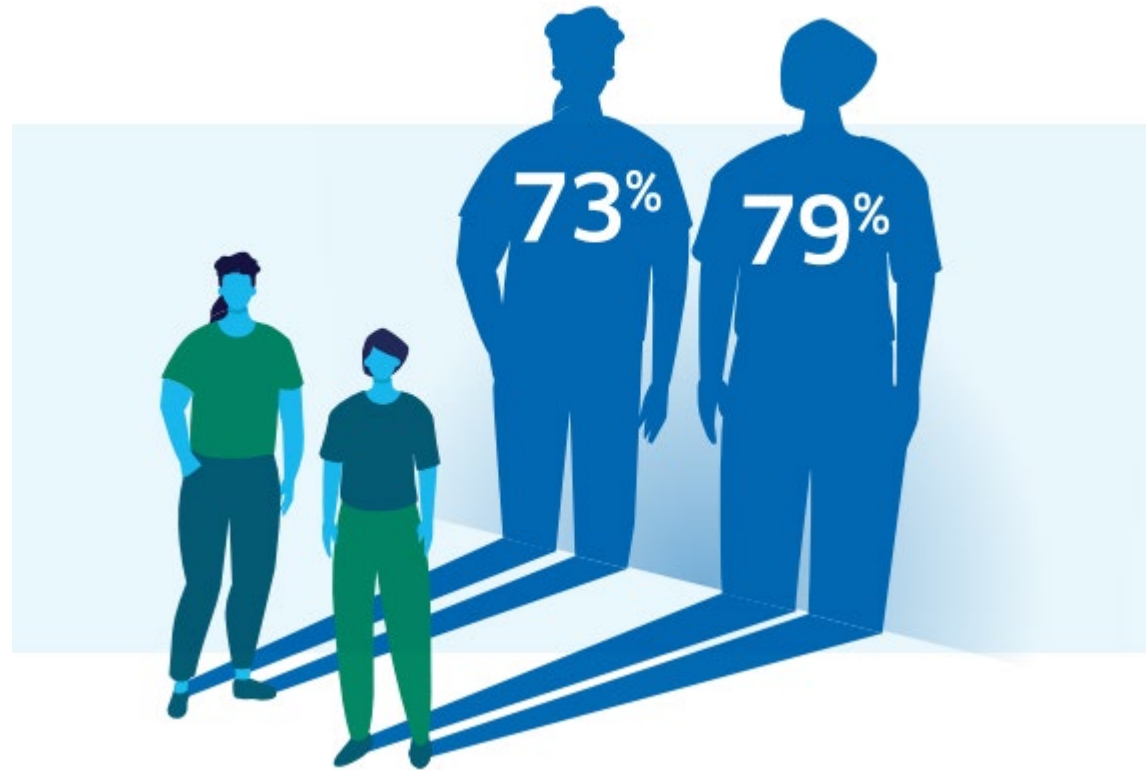


MHCC's work related to mental health and the law



What is the issue?

In Canada, there is an overincarceration of people living with mental health concerns and illnesses



What is the issue?

4.5x

People who work in the criminal justice system experience unique health and safety concerns



“I've been doing this for
15 years...

People ask for me for my
opinion, What can we do to
make things better?

... And then it sits on a desk,
and it stays in a report.

**I just want to see action.
I guess,
I just want to see change.”**



Mo Korchinski
Executive Director
Unlocking the Gates Services Society

Developing an action plan



Audiences

Primary focus:

- Justice-involved individuals
- Individuals working in the criminal justice system

Not losing sight of:

- Victims and survivors of crime
- Families

Goals

1. Divert from the criminal justice system
2. Support the mental health of justice-involved individuals
3. Provide continuity of care and support post-release
4. Support psychological health and safety of those working in the system
5. Address legislative and other system-level changes

Development Advisory Committee



A word cloud centered around the theme of mental health and criminal justice. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the largest words in the center and smaller words towards the edges. The colors are primarily blue and green.

Mental health

Criminal justice workers

Researchers

Unions and employee associations

Priority populations

Advocate bodies

Academia

Police organizations

Federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments

Indigenous Peoples and organizations

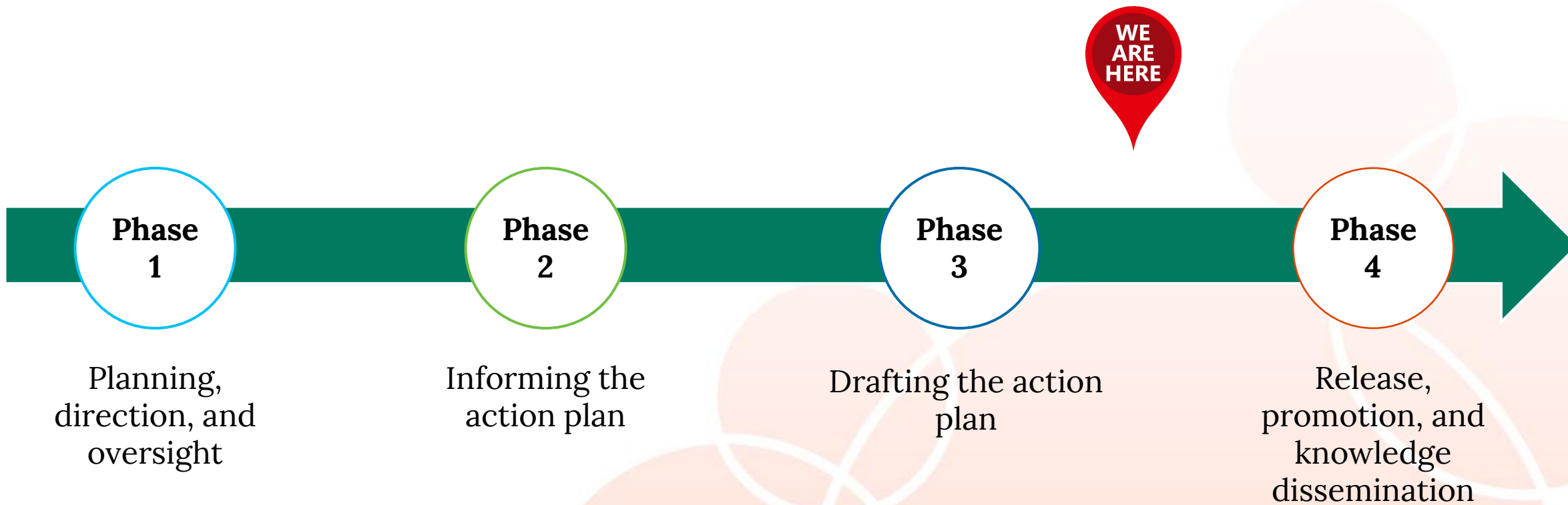
People with lived and living experience

Subject matter experts

Victims and survivors

Social service agencies

Action plan development



Sources of information

Academic and Grey Literature

Research report
– Justice
involved
individuals

Research report
– Workers in
the system

Law reform
scan and
analysis

Additional docs
to address
anticipated gaps

Engagements

National
survey

Committee
meetings &
working
groups

Knowledge
exchange
opportunities

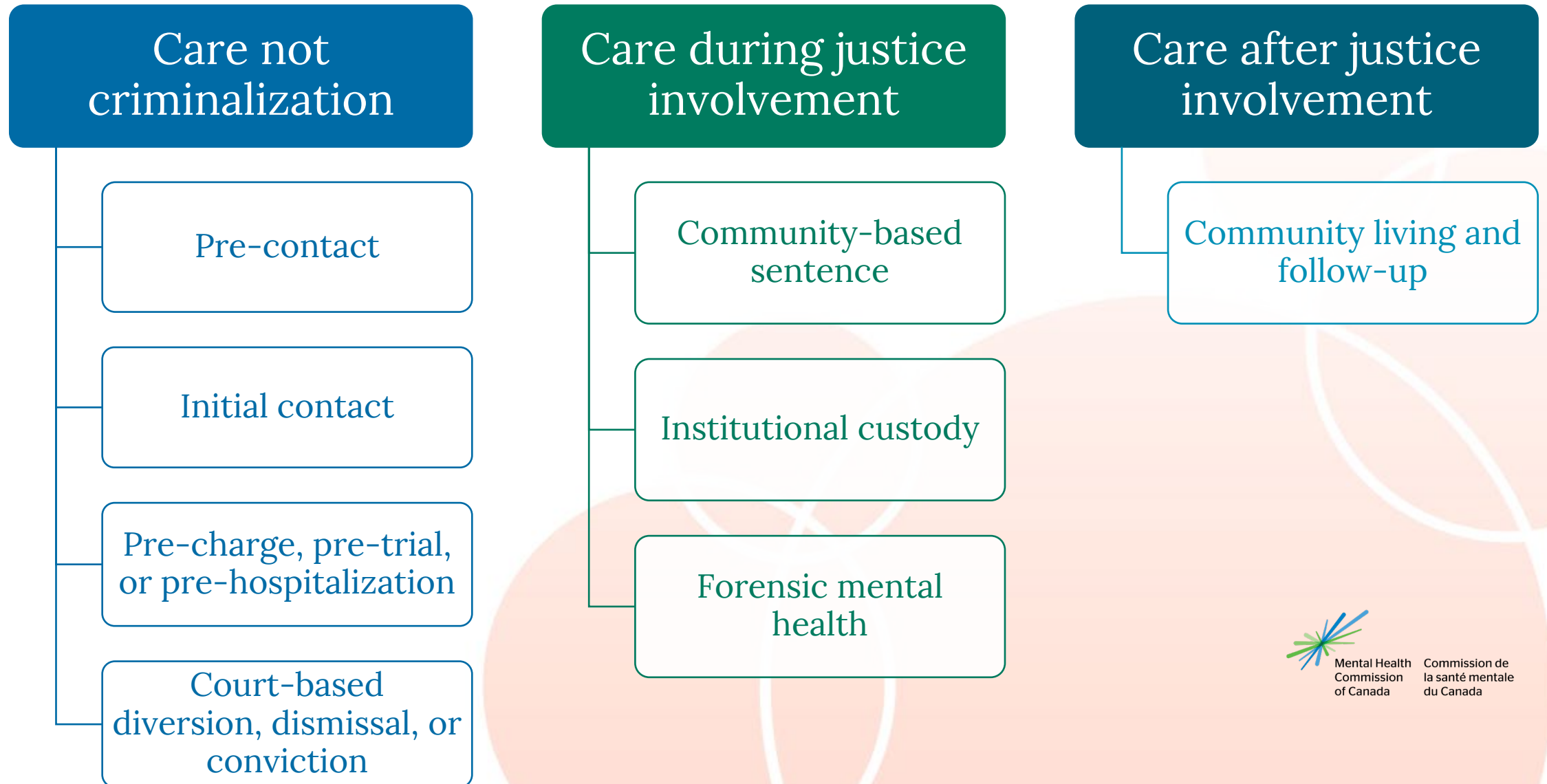
Draft action plan



Strategic Pillars

1. Care not criminalization
2. Care during justice involvement
3. Care after justice involvement

Junctures



Common themes: Justice-involved individuals

- Trauma-informed care & prevention
- Barriers to accessing services
- Need for distinctions-based services
- Need for more “off ramps”
- Data and metrics

Common themes: Criminal justice personnel

- Mental health training
- Services and supports are needed
- Workplace culture → trauma as “part of the job”
- Workplace programs not enough
- Need for system-level strategies

Sample *draft* issue & recommendation

Pillar: Care not criminalization

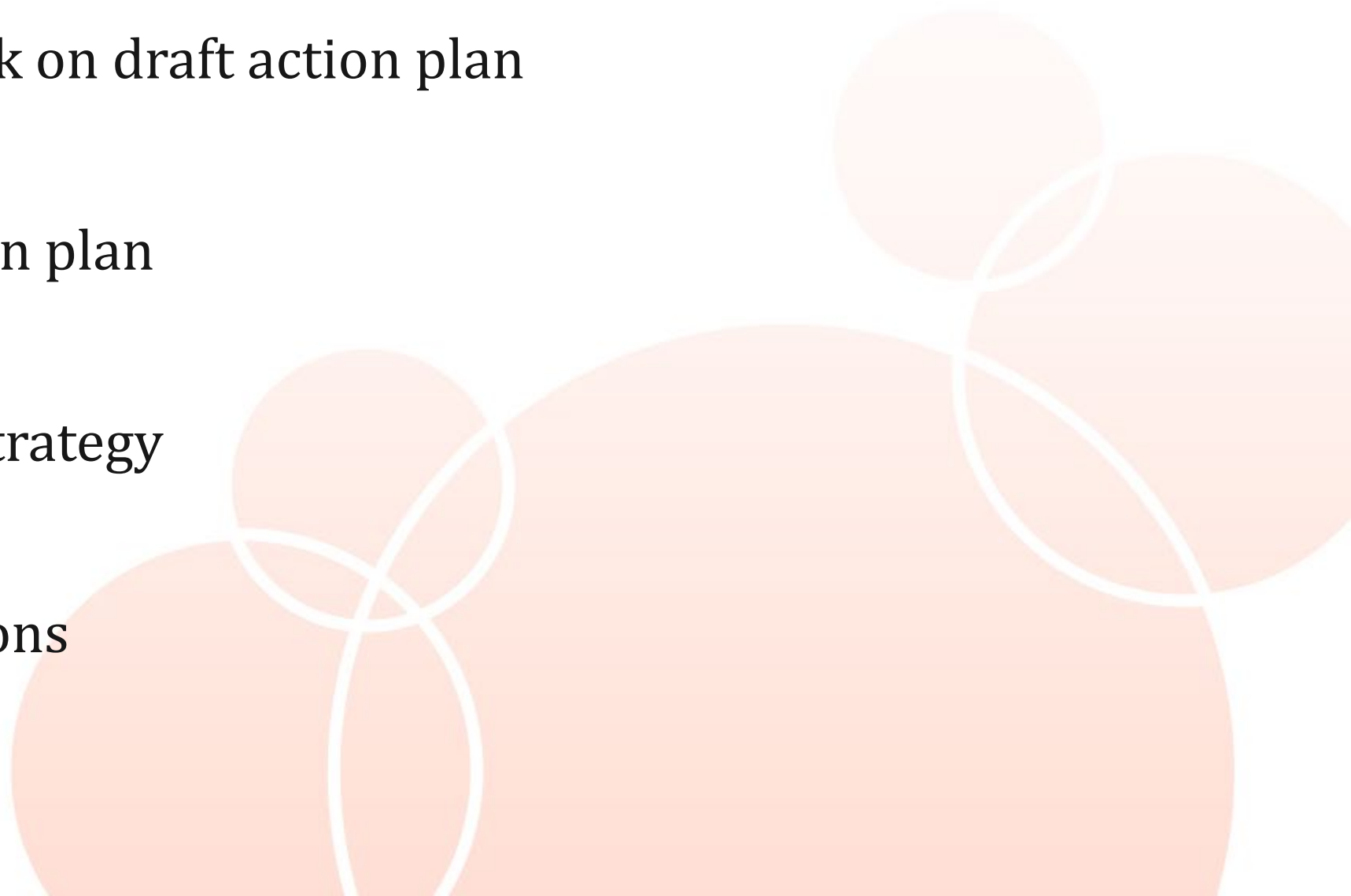
Juncture: Pre-charge, pre-trial, or pre-hospitalization

| Issue | Recommended action | Conditions of success | Measures of success |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lack of timely mental health screening, assessment and access to pre-trial diversion programs | Expand access to expert pre-trial assessments and ensure routine early screening. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased # of mental health professionals• Clear pathways to refer to diversion programs and supports | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in the number and timeliness of mental health screenings and assessments conducted pre-trial• Increase in the rate of successful diversions and reduced recidivism for individuals referred to mental health supports |

What's next?

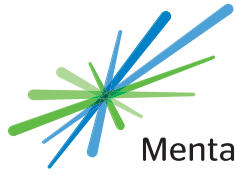


Priorities

- Reviewing feedback on draft action plan
 - Finalizing the action plan
 - Communications strategy
 - Government relations
- 
- A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping circles in a light peach or salmon color. Some circles are solid, while others are defined by white outlines, creating a layered, abstract effect.

Q&A and discussion





Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada



Thank You!

Contact us:
justice@mentalhealthcommission.ca

Scan the QR code to
stay informed



/theMHCC



/Mental Health Commission of Canada



/1MHCC

Financial contribution from



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada