



Supports Available to VSTA Members

Health and Wellness

is an emerging area of concern for the teaching profession. The CMHA reports that 20% of all Canadians will struggle with mental health at least once in their lifetime. The BCTF reports that 46% of our members on leave are struggling with mental health. Although discussions around mental illness have become more common, there is still stigma attached to the notion that we might be suffering from mental health issues. Even if we ourselves are not facing a mental illness, all of us are, or will be, directly affected by those who do. Teachers in particular would appear to be facing higher than average cases of anxiety and depression, in part due to greater challenges in our working conditions. We have listed supports available to us below:

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) – paid for by the employer. Confidential and voluntary, this program offers short term counselling, resources for parenting and care giving, financial counselling, addictions support and health and wellness support. Phone 24/7 1-800-387-4765.

<https://www.workhealthlife.com/>

BCTF Health and Wellness

Program – We all pay into the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP) to provide short and long term disability coverage. Through the Health & Wellness Program, the BCTF assists members who are unable to maintain, or return to, their teaching positions due to a medical illness or disability by funding an early intervention rehabilitation program. This is a voluntary program that can happen by self-referral, referral through the VSTA office, referral by the employer or by the BCTF SIP.

<https://www.bctf.ca/SalaryAndBenefits.aspx?id=4788>

Starling Minds - Starling is an online program that provides education and a mental health toolkit to manage stress and prevent depression and/or anxiety. Using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy tools, the online modules help you manage your own depression and/or anxiety as well as your understanding about what is triggering your depression and/or anxiety. This is free and voluntary and has had very positive feedback from teachers who have engaged with it.

<https://bctf.ca/SalaryAndBenefits.aspx?id=37000>

The BCTF has developed the following workshop for teachers. It can be requested for your school by your Pro-D chair and is free of charge.

Staying Well at Teaching

Teaching is complex. High public expectations, class composition, educational cutbacks, and increased accountability affect schools, teachers, and students. BCTF surveys identify increased workload and stress as significant concerns for teachers. This workshop helps teachers stay well. Setting boundaries around workload, self-care and smart choices, and destressing are key themes. All focus on building shared solutions to both the demands of the work and the isolation of teaching.

Participants will reconnect with colleagues, laugh, and tell stories as they assess their work life balance and explore staying well and creating a healthy workplace. Skilled teacher facilitators will design the session to suit the needs of each school staff.

For further study and exploration, the **Mental Health Commission of Canada has created a Mental Health First Aid program**. See <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/initiatives-and-projects/mental-health-first-aid> for more information.

See Teacher Supports and Resources on reverse...

If you know of someone who is struggling in the classroom, there are supports for them. Both are confidential and voluntary.

TEACHING SUPPORTS

BCTF Peer Support Service –

If you have ever hit a tough patch in your teaching career, you may have wondered where to turn to for help and coaching. Who can you call? Where are the resources? When is it safe to admit you could use some colleague support? Who can actually help with the classroom practice questions you have?

The Federation has such a service to support teachers with their teaching practice. This Peer Support Service (PSS) is designed to provide direct, individual assistance to active teachers who are experiencing difficulty with their teaching practice, and may be on plans of assistance or personally concerned.

<https://bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx?id=36999>

TEACHING RESOURCES

The BCTF has a number of resources available to enrich teaching across the curriculum. See Teach BC at

<http://teachbc.bctf.ca/> for a searchable database of unit and lesson plans. These are resources created by the BCTF and/or teaching colleagues in BC. You can search by grade level or subject area. For general resources, see <http://bctf.ca/TeachingResources.aspx> for links to the BCTF lending video collection, IRPs and other relevant sites for teaching in BC.

The Vancouver School Board subscribes to the Critical Thinking Consortium, a not-for-profit based in Vancouver. Once you've created your account (for free), you can search by grade level, subject area or skill area for lessons and units across the curriculum. There is a growing collection of resources in French as well. <http://tc2.ca/>