



**Submission to the Federal Government's  
Development of Canada's First Men and Boys' Health Strategy**

**May 28, 2026**

## **About the CPA**

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is the national voice for the science, practice, and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. With over 7,000 members, the CPA is Canada's largest national association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators, and researchers, and students.

Psychologists are one of the largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers able to diagnose and treat mental disorders, making our profession a key resource for the mental health treatment the people of Canada need. Trained extensively in research, psychologists are an expert resource for evidence-based decision-making and contributing to the country's potential and future prosperity.

## **Vision**

The CPA envisions a society that values and applies psychological science for the benefit of persons, communities, organizations and peoples.

## **Mission**

We will serve the public and the CPA's membership by advancing psychological science, practice and education through research, advocacy and collaboration.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.cpa.ca](http://www.cpa.ca).

## Background

On February 23, 2026, the federal government announced it was launching a national conversation on men and boys' health. Input gathered through this conversation/questionnaire would inform the development of Canada's first Men and Boys' Health Strategy – which will be released later this year.

## Opening Statement

An effective health strategy for boys and men should balance embracing the positives of being boys and men (e.g., engaging with and figuring out one's place in the world, learning responsibility, thinking about the sort of man one wants to become, contributing to society, interacting with others) AND supporting them through life's transitions and challenges AND complement strategies to address the distinct health risks and inequities women face. It should focus on specific groups of "at risk" boys and men such as farmers, widowers, marginalized and Indigenous men, emergency responders, veterans, those who are homeless/at-risk of homelessness, those who are incarcerated or engaged with the criminal justice system, and address such outcomes as anger management, racism, suicidality, substance use, and violent and criminal behaviours.

### Question 1: How can we support boys and men in understanding and dealing with traditional ideas about masculinity in healthy ways?

An effective health strategy should not take a pathologizing view of boys, men, and masculinity. Supporting boys' and men's health involves fostering emotional literacy, promoting mentorship, encouraging critical thinking to deconstruct harmful norms like the "toughness" stigma, and understanding the impacts of the social determinants of health in shaping health outcomes. Key strategies include encouraging boys and men to identify, manage, and express a full range of emotions; validating the full range of one's feelings and identity; helping boys and men to learn self-sufficiency and ways to cope with life's challenges; creating spaces for critical thinking, listening to others, and dialogue about societal expectations and one's life experiences; highlighting positive role models and mentors who demonstrate vulnerability, nurturing, respectful, and help-seeking behaviours; teaching empathy and emotional awareness; promoting healthy eating, bodies, and relationships; teaching boys about restrictive and harmful aspects of toxic masculinity and misogyny; and celebrating characteristics such as strength, fidelity, self-sufficiency, protectiveness, competitiveness, trustworthiness, diversity, helping others, intelligence, pragmatism, reliability, and having a capacity for play and fun.

### Question 2: How do we help men build healthy relationships and adopt healthy habits that improve their overall well-being?

This involves a balance of reactivity, proactivity, and building foundations for long-term well-being and strong relationships. Key strategies include fostering open communication; embracing vulnerability and emotions as strengths; promoting proactive and small-step lifestyle changes; cultivating social connections (e.g., whether with others, nature, pets); nurturing intimacy; encouraging boys and men to maintain positive friendships and engage in positive hobbies and activities; promoting volunteerism and community engagement; exploring different ways of resolving conflicts (e.g., sharing viewpoints and feelings, removing oneself from the situation); and prioritizing mental health through supportive networks, professional resources, stress management, and physical activity.

Highlighting male role models, mentors, and community leaders who exemplify these strategies can play a key role in shaping healthier norms. Whether through intentional role-modeling, media

representation, community dialogue, digital media, or educational programs, it is important to encourage men to: express a full range of emotions, use “I feel” language to share their emotions, seek help, see men in caring roles, celebrate equitable sharing of household work and childcare, challenge harmful jokes and behaviours within their peer groups, recognize teamwork and empathy, and support initiatives that promote respect, non-violence, and equal rights for women, gender-diverse, and marginalized individuals.

### Question 3: How do we help men seek out the care they need?

Helping men seek care involves breaking down stigmas, normalizing conversations, and reframing help-seeking as both an act of courage to admit that one is struggling and a proactive and wise strategy to seek help when not doing well to overcome difficulties. Key approaches include listening without judgment, utilizing male-focused resources and male-led peer support, encouraging professional help, highlighting role models, recognizing signs which may indicate a need for help, promoting problem-solving techniques, encouraging self-care activities, creating environments in which men can share what helped them, and tailoring mental health services to create safe and proactive environments in schools, gyms, recreation/sport facilities, workplaces, and communities.

### Question 4: How do different life stages shape men's well-being?

Marked by various social and economic factors, health behaviours, relationships, life aims, and experiences, different life stages can significantly shape men's well-being in different ways, such as by altering physical health, mental health priorities, social roles, responsibilities, and feelings of life satisfaction. *Adolescence* is often marked by going to school, studying, making new friends, having fun, developing hobbies and interests, engaging in risky behaviours, starting to have romantic interests in others, and trying to figure out how to navigate puberty and challenging social situations. *Early adulthood* is often about planning for a career, developing skills, cultivating friendships as well as romantic relationships, and looking ahead to the future. *Middle-age* is a stage marked, in part, by building a stable life (family/relationships, home, possessions), career advancement and social position, and potentially some declines in physical health. *Older adulthood* is typified by finding a way to maintain (and accept) one's sense of self amidst changes and transitions (physical, interpersonal, financial, employment-related), negotiating intergenerational change (one's own children, one's parents), health issues for one's self and one's partner (if partnered), grief and loss of friends and loved ones, and contemplating issues of generativity and what comes next (including end of life decisions).