



**STARLING MINDS CASE STUDY**

# **86% of Teachers Improve Mental Health with a New Online CBT Program**

British Columbia Teachers' Federation



With Starling, our teachers feel understood and supported. Many teachers have shared that this is the best initiative we've ever offered.

- Michael Kimmis, Director of Income Security



Established in 1917, the **British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF)** is the union that represents 41,000 public school teachers in the province of British Columbia, Canada. The BCTF is a leader in offering evidence-based solutions that assist teachers with their mental health and wellness. The organization offers a wide range of workshops, programs, and services for members to enhance the profession. A large part of BCTF's role is to support teachers on short and long-term disability. This comes in the form of financial support, practical support, and emotional support. Support is also provided by trained case managers and rehabilitation consultants who help teachers with their disability claims and provide guidance on the many resources that are made available to them.

# The Challenge: Stigma & Access

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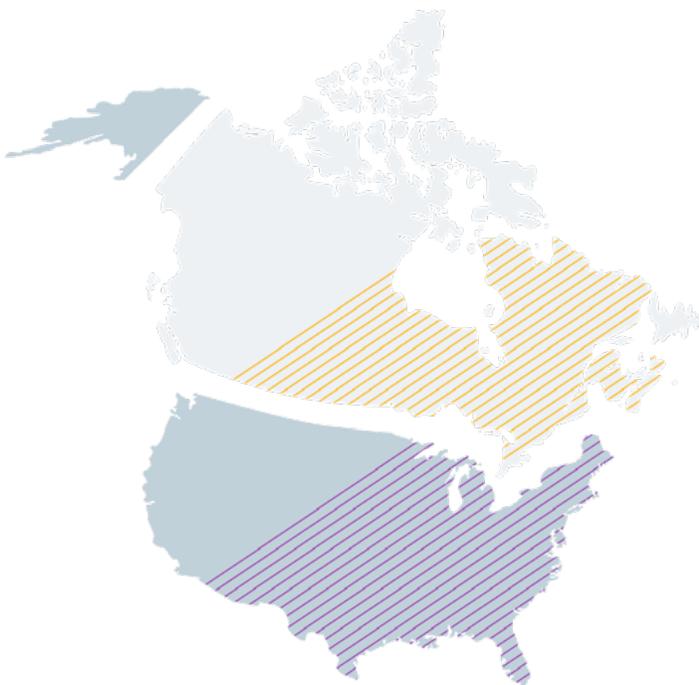
Over 20,000 B.C. teachers will struggle with their mental health before they reach age 40 and hundreds of teachers are unable to teach each year due to anxiety and depression.

Mike Kimmis, a former teacher and Director of the Income Security Division at BCTF adds,



“From our data, we know that **nearly 50%** of teachers on disability are unable to work every year due to mental health diagnosis.”

As a result, the BCTF takes a preventative approach to addressing teacher mental health. The professional union’s Health and Wellness Program helps teachers access proven treatment services like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) so that they can return to work with the resilience to succeed. Dr. Andrew Miki, a trained CBT psychologist as well as the Founder and CEO at Starling Minds, is a key resource for B.C. teachers on disability who experience anxiety and depression.



**49% of Canadians  
and 56% of Americans**  
who report mental health symptoms  
do not receive treatment  
(CMHA 2018, MHA 2018).

Over the past 10 years, Dr. Miki has cared for nearly 200 B.C. teachers using CBT. Given his success rates with one-to-one therapy, the BCTF asked Dr. Miki to facilitate group therapy sessions to reach more teachers. Group therapy proved to be equally successful with an added benefit of helping teachers recognize that they were not alone. Yet, the BCTF still faced the challenge of offering mental health support to an estimated 10,000 teachers in remote areas. They also faced the challenge of mental health stigma recognizing that this is a large factor that explains why nearly 50% of teachers do not receive treatment.

To address this, the BCTF sought out an innovative digital solution that would educate teachers about mental health and strengthen their mental resilience using evidence-based practices. Mike Kimmis and his team predicted that if teachers had a tool that would help them become more resilient to the growing stressors in the profession, they could help reduce the costs associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover.



Studies show that anywhere from  
**23–42% of teachers will**  
**leave the profession**  
in the first 5 years of their career  
given a combination of job stress, low  
autonomy, low pay, and low recognition.

Due to this, it is estimated that high  
teacher turnover costs U.S. schools  
**\$7.3 billion annually**  
(The Pennsylvania State University, 2017).



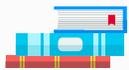
“We knew if we could provide some form of intervention early on in teachers’ careers, we could prevent them from going on disability years later, or leaving the profession altogether. We also know that the majority of our workforce will soon be millennials, so we sought to find a digital solution that would resonate with them.”

- Michael Kimmis, Director of Income Security

# The Solution: Starling Minds to Improve Mental Health

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In 2013, Starling Minds became available to 41,000 BCTF teachers across Canada to help them build and strengthen their mental resilience in order to successfully manage growing stressors at work and at home. Today, Starling Minds helps B.C. teachers:



**Become educated** about mental health and evidence-based solutions for improving their own.



**Access CBT support** when they need it most from the privacy of their own homes.



Understand that they are not alone with a safe and secure place to learn and share with others like them in an **online community**.



**Track and reflect** on their mental health via regular assessments and a mood tracker.



**Set realistic goals** for their professional and personal lives with a built-in goal setter.

Kimmis shares, "as a former teacher myself, I know that the profession is not always easy and I think any teacher will attest to the toll it can take—with Starling, our teachers feel understood and supported."



The BCTF sees the far-reaching ripple effect that occurs when teachers are mentally healthy. Gallup research shows that happy and healthy teachers result in higher student performance and students who adjust better to the social setting of a classroom. Furthermore, when teachers are well-educated about mental health, they can offer better guidance for the growing number of youth who are struggling with mental illness.



This is the best thing our Teachers' Federation has ever done for me.

Starling Member 337 | January 23, 2015

I wish this had have been offered to me after my first incident at work.

Disability Claim Member 5,245 | March 21, 2016

## About Starling Minds

Founded by Dr. Andrew Miki in 2013, Starling Minds is a diverse group of people unified with a common mission: to improve the well-being of others by making evidence-based mental health support available for everyone. Today, over 150,000 people have access to the Starling platform through their organization so they can build mental fitness and learn new skills that help them become more resilient and confident.

**Starling** Build Resilient Minds.

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