
POSTER ABSTRACT

Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario: A Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Learning Health System

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Problem and Context. The need for youth-friendly early intervention services to meet the mental health, substance use, primary care, and other social needs of adolescents and young adults is well-documented. Clinicians and researchers in child and youth mental health have been calling for better integration of child, youth, and family-facing systems (e.g., health, mental health, child welfare, youth justice, education), as well as increased attention to holistic services that reflect the developmental, cultural, social, and health realities of children, youth and families. Integrated youth services are designed to address the gaps in youth mental health by providing youth-friendly, comprehensive services for youth ages 12 to 25, in a one-stop shop model of service delivery.

Who is it for? Service providers, researchers, clinicians, youth and families.

Who did you involve and engage with? A fundamental contribution of YWHO is the inclusion of meaningful youth and family engagement processes in service design, delivery, and evaluation. YWHO has youth and family advisory councils both at the provincial and local levels who contribute to planning and operations, including service planning, governance, training, evaluation, communications, and funding-related decision-making. A decade of research has supported the development of integrated youth services for youth mental health.

What did you do? This presentation will describe Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario, a province-wide initiative in Ontario, Canada to build and implement a one-stop-shop model of integrated youth services. The presentation will also describe the model's values, core components, and services.

What results did you get? What impact did you have? The demonstration phase of Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario was initiated in 2017-2018 with the implementation of 10 sites. In 2022, 22 IYS networks have been established. Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario is co-created with youth for youth aged 12 to 25 years old across diverse community contexts. Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario centres engagement and equity, and offers developmentally-appropriate services in an integrated, community-based walk-in format. As an initiative committed to continuous learning and quality improvement, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario offers evidence-based and evidence-generating services, and measurement-based care. Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario is supported by backbone resources with expertise in implementation science, health equity, Indigenous practices, youth and family engagement, evaluation, and knowledge translation.

What is the learning for the international audience? Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario demonstrates the feasibility of integrated mental health and substance use early intervention services, offered in the context of a broad range of health and social services.

What are the next steps? Future directions include continuous learning and evaluation of the YWHO model in communities.