



Youth Mental Health Initiative

Impact report

April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

Within the Youth Mental Health Initiative's (YMHI) second year, CHSSN supported 27 community organizations with over 373 partnerships across 12 regions of Quebec including three provincial organizations, with the central goal of improving the access of mental health services and resources to Quebec's English-speaking youth between the ages of 15-29. Each organization has worked to identify gaps in youth mental health services; engage youth in program design; partner with local schools, public health services and other community organizations; adapt, translate, and produce resources; and offer activities and programs for young people to help fill some of the gaps. Through a community of practice and individualized support, CHSSN helped community organizations to build their knowledge, network with each other and problem-solve on program implementation.

Youth Outreach & Engagement Survey

In March 2023, the Youth Outreach & Engagement Survey was conducted among the 27 community organizations of the YMHI. 26 responses were received. Intended as a self-reflection tool, the survey enabled organizations to review their outreach to equity-deserving subgroups of English-speaking youth and examine their youth engagement practices.

Youth Diversity & Outreach

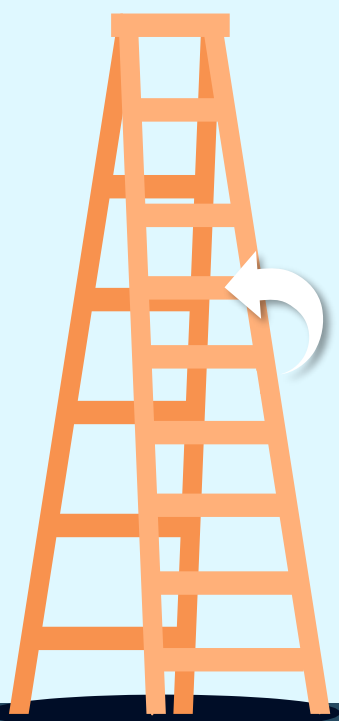
Nearly all the community organizations work with high school aged youth (15-18), but most also engage youth in their 20s. 81% of community groups have participation by white youth in YMHI, 77% by racialized youth, 62% Indigenous, 50% newcomer and 47% trans and non-binary youth. 63% of community groups report that the diversity of the youth reached by their project is a good reflection of the diversity of the population in their area, but fully 48% believe they could reach a more diverse group of youth. Community organizations would most like to increase participation by youth who are: male, parents, newcomers, Indigenous, non-students and those who have been in the youth protection system.

Youth Engagement Practices

The practices where community organizations reported that they were strongest were:

- authentic relationships
- accessibility
- communication with youth
- ongoing learning about youth engagement

Areas they reported being least strong were research, evaluation and co-development, which all relate to engaging youth early when creating a new initiative as well as throughout the process.



Impact

The second year of the YMHI saw a great deal of growth. Compared to Year 1, there were four times the number of mental health resources adapted and or translated into English. Two times the number of mental health professionals were involved, and 60% more partners were better equipped to reach English-speaking youth to support their mental health compared to the previous year. In addition, community organizations offered triple the number of youth activities (such as workshop series, support groups, info-sessions) and double the number of youth events (such as conferences, mental health promotion days, lived-experience discussion panels). Not only was this an increased opportunity to engage with youth but meaningful co-development work with youth tended to center around promoting mental health literacy and breaking stigma for their peers and community. This year, 49 young people aged 35 and under sat on the boards of directors of the community organizations, an increase of 16 over 2021-22. This is partly due to improved youth engagement in governance and partly due to the addition of a new partner that has an all-youth board.

The following bubbles outline the quantitative products and impact of the second year of the YMHI.

Activities
carried out
880

Youth
participants
in activities
2594

Youth
participants
in events
2079

Events
held
90



Resources
created and
disseminated

397

Partners better
informed to respond
to the needs of
English-speaking
youth

219

Youth under 35
on boards of
directors

49

Documents
adapted and/
or translated

183

Total youth
involved

5465

Partners
contacted

373

Youth involved in
identifying gaps
and barriers

793

Satisfaction rate
for activities and
events provided

84%

Mental health
professionals involved

123

What change looks like

Main impacts of the initiative across Quebec

- new programming offered to youth
- increased awareness and willingness to talk about mental health
- stronger youth engagement by community organizations
- access to English-language mental health resources
- expanded partnerships between community, schools, and public health services

In the words of community partners:

Increased support

“[The program] has become an essential part of the basket of services that the school intervention team can call upon. The teacher leads have seen some very meaningful cases of students who found a home in [our program] this year at a time when they really needed it.”

“[The local] school invited our organization to be present in school all 5 days. Being able to be present more often, more students and staff will be reached.”

“Although the schools already have a Pride Peer Support Group, we were able to bring even more kids (special needs, allies, BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+) together.”

“[Due to translation of resources,] community partners are more aware and better equipped to offer services to English-speaking youth.”

Policy and practice changes

“Students have identified the lack of connection to the school, the pressure, feeling rushed. The school will be making changes to schedules next year.”

“We elected a new board of directors, and 2 youth are now sitting on the board. This was a huge success as the majority of the BOD are older adults.”

“Positive outcomes include the opportunity for youth to identify gaps in school and community-based mental wellness activities and participate in developing solutions to address the gaps. Year two was a phase where we absorbed lessons, including the importance of recognizing power dynamics between youth and adults, specifically in groupings.”

Stronger Collaborations

“We have made very successful partnerships with the organizations locally who support youth in the region. We have plans to move forward on several initiatives and really take the approach of not duplicating work, rather complimenting each other and work as a team to best serve the youth of our [remote region].”

Reduced Stigma

“This [workshop on anxiety] was a huge success. Students asked questions, talked openly about some of the issues they are facing. They were asking for help.”

“We saw a big increase in [youth] talking about their mental health realities and sharing in a group environment. From the workshops, [youth] are gaining the words and concepts to express their emotions and experiences.”

“The frequent activities, resources, and open communication around mental health helped combat the deeply ingrained stigma around mental illness for local youth.”

