

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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Enhancing access to youth mental health programs and resources

What you need to know:

The most popular youth mental health (YMH) services are mental health promotion and mental illness prevention programs. Youth and their families are increasingly seen as partners and working together with them in care is key to meeting the needs of youth.

What is this research about?

This literature review highlights smart practice recommendations from scholarly and grey literature for YMH and mental health in general to enhance access to programs and resources for youth and their families focused on prevention, early intervention and therapeutic supports addressing mental health and well-being. For the purpose of this review, “youth” is defined as ages 12-24.

This research supported an evidence-based analysis and decision-making process for the Children’s Health Foundation of Vancouver Island’s *Youth Mental Health* impact area.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers gathered, synthesized and presented the relevant research, gaps and smart practices identified in the literature.

The researchers searched Google, Google Scholar and the University of Victoria (UVic) Summons databases and references of sources found to gather academic and grey literature. Sources were published in English and in the past 17 years.



UVic researchers reviewed literature to support an evidence-based decision-making process for the Foundation’s impact area “Youth Mental Health” (Photo credit: Free-Photos from Pixabay).



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What did the researchers find?

The search results were scanned for relevancy and 108 articles were reviewed to identify the following themes:

- An emphasis on mental health promotion
- Population-level approaches that match service intensity with need, such as using community-based instead of acute care interventions where appropriate
- Involving youth and families in treatment planning
- Collaboratively working in networks to better meet youths' needs
- Offering more community-based services
- Supporting access to and navigation of the YMH system
- Expanding culturally-appropriate services for Indigenous youth

New and promising services are emerging, which complement the many services already available. The literature recommends the use of “performance measurement frameworks” (PMFs) to improve the quality of data available in order to improve services.

Collaboration is vital to meeting youths' needs, and engaging youth and their families in their care is key. Collaboratively sharing and disseminating knowledge is also an emerging trend, and there are many smart practices for doing so. Other examples of smart practices and specific measures were discussed to help guide service providers and organizations.

Future areas of research include online service provision; sensory rooms, which may be beneficial in moderating distress; developing Indigenous-operated funding models; and using nature-based interventions.

How can you use this research?

This review provides an overview of some of the main themes and trends for YMH and mental health in general, which will guide practitioners, service providers and organizations in decision-making for services and programs that make an impact for youth mental health.

About the researchers

Meghan Corbett is a UVic graduate student supervised by Dr. Kimberly Speers. The researchers conducted this research as part of a partnership facilitated by [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#) between the [Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island](#) and UVic.

Keywords

Child, youth or adolescent mental health; mental health promotion; mental illness prevention; and mental health services.

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