



8 ways to improve mental health care for youth

For the past two years, the Centre has supported child and youth mental health agencies across the province in consulting with youth. The goal was to ensure the youth voice was included and reflected in the development of community mental health plans and to help lay the groundwork for ongoing meaningful youth engagement. The result, 369 youth were consulted in 17 regions

Youth identified these eight priorities to improve mental health services:

Build mental health awareness in the community

Many of the youths' negative experiences with family members, friends and adults stemmed from a lack of awareness others have about mental health and how to properly work with youth who have a mental illness.

Clearly identify and advertise available mental health services

Ensure that individuals who interact with youth are knowledgeable about mental health and local supports available. Use language that youth can relate to and understand easily.

Invest in the relationship between youth and service providers

Give youth a say in deciding which service provider they are matched with. Let them request a new service provider (without penalty) if they feel it's not a good fit.

Make room for more personalized mental health care

Provide services or connect youth with mental health services that are culturally responsive.

Improve service setting and safe youth-friendly spaces

Create an inviting, comfortable space that is modern and not clinical or office-like where youth can feel safe and relaxed. Youth in many communities expressed interest in a local youth centre, as well as a place for students to go while at school to receive peer support and also to just relax.

Provide more in-school support

Position more mental health service providers in schools, and increase their visibility. Find ways to formally integrate conversations about mental health in schools (so all students have basic knowledge to help them deal with their own issues and guide others), and start the conversation with students at a younger age.

Expand access to services

Expand access to services so youth can get help when and where they need it (e.g. satellite locations, extended hours, mobile supports, other modalities of service such as online, phone-based supports and text-based crisis lines). If wait lists are unavoidable, have bridging programs that provide support to youth who are waiting.

Invest in peer support and group-based programming

Provide opportunities for youth to support each other. Youth across the province were in favour of joining other youth to establish regular ways of connecting to give and receive support. They pointed out the importance of connecting with people their own age with similar experience.

For more information on youth consultations and to see the complete report please visit:

http://www.excellenceforchildand youth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/st/st_yc_giving_youth_a_voice.pdf



Ontario Centre of Excellence
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Mental Health