

# Evidence Brief

## Seven Good Practices for Delivering Services Through a Hub Model

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### How Did We Compile This Evidence?

We searched YouthREX's Library for Youth Work, Google Scholar, and Google using the following key terms: "community," "youth," "hub," "one-stop shop," and "best practices."

### Summary of Evidence: Seven Good Practices

There are relatively few resources on best practices for delivering youth services through a hub model, given that this is a new model for service delivery. Much of the existing knowledge comes from practice and is focused on the delivery of mental health care in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

#### 1. Take a youth-centered approach.

Youth and families should be involved in planning, operations, and implementation of the hub in some capacity (Headspace, 2018; Salt et al., 2017; Savolainen, 2018); for instance, the governance model of Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario includes youth, family, and Indigenous advisory groups (Henderson, 2018). Engaging local youth ensures that services are responsive to their needs, both in design and delivery. An evaluation of New Zealand youth hubs commended efforts "to facilitate youth involvement at all levels of the organization, from imaginative efforts to collect user feedback to youth participation in board governance" (Communio, 2009, p. 19).

#### 2. Tailor services to community needs.

Recognize that each community is unique and that the most effective hubs are designed **by** the community **for** the community. Include local input and involvement at every stage of development – from interior design to service selection and evaluation. Consider conducting a community needs assessment in order to collect demographic data and identify gaps in services (Pitre, 2015). Ensure that the hub is responsive to changes in local need and empower staff to find solutions to local problems.

#### 3. Prioritize accessibility.

Consider access when making decisions about hours, location, cost, and eligibility for services, as well as the availability of staff and services within the hub (Headspace, 2014; Henderson, 2018; Social Market Research, 2017). Ideally, hubs should be centrally located in a safe area with good access to public transportation (Communio, 2009; Hetrick et al., 2017; Salt et al., 2017).

Operating times should be convenient for youth (e.g. after school or on weekends), with designated ‘drop-in hours’ when youth can get access to whatever they need, such as a meal or a safe place. Consider facilitating greater access through the provision of mobile, outreach, and satellite services that are available at times and in locations that suit local youth (Communio, 2009).

#### **4. Provide services that respect and reflect diversity.**

Hubs should be a safe space for young people. *Cultural competency* of staff is important – their ability to engage youth from different backgrounds and experiences and make them feel comfortable (Headspace, 2014; Henderson, 2018; Salt et al., 2017; Scott, 2015). Adults are often seen as ‘enforcers’ because they fail to understand youth culture and engage young people in positive ways. However, building relationships with youth is an important piece of service delivery, and staff are often a hub’s greatest strength (Communio, 2009; Headspace, 2014). A study of experiences with the mental health system in British Columbia found that young people prefer staff who are role models, honest, non-judgmental, and skilled at their job (Smith, 2013).

#### **5. Create strong, collaborative partnerships.**

Hubs work best when collaboration is *intentional* – in other words, when partners invest time and resources in fostering collaboration, rather than expecting it to develop organically (Langs, 2015; Skinner, 2017). Partner agencies should establish a clear governance model and a transparent decision-making process (Savolainen, 2018). Consider working together to build a common culture, developing joint programs/activities, creating a website for the hub, publishing a joint newsletter, or hiring a community hub coordinator (Langs, 2015). Strong partnerships are essential in coordinating care and ensuring the smooth transition of youth between services. Consider using a ‘*no wrong door*’ approach: assist every young person who seeks help by providing opportunities for support, either within the hub or through referrals to external service providers (Headspace, 2014).

#### **6. Involve youth in the design of the space.**

Evidence shows that the design of the physical space is an important piece of engagement and service delivery (Communio, 2009; Headspace, 2014; Henderson, 2018; Salt et al., 2017). Create a youth-friendly environment by considering the needs of young people and engaging them in the development process. This might mean incorporating colour and comfort, using an open concept design, or making space for informal interaction (e.g. common areas with pool tables and games). Being part of the interior design process can be empowering and foster a sense of ownership among youth.

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