



INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES  
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

# System Transformation

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## Table of Contents

- 01 / Acknowledgements
- 02 / Frayme's IYS Knowledge Series
- 03 / The Future of IYS
- 04 / System Recommendation #1: Truth and Reconciliation in Healthcare
- 04 / System Recommendation #2: Common Language and Accessibility
- 05 / System Recommendation #3: Expanding Capacity, Training and Skill Development
- 05 / System Recommendation #4: Funding
- 05 / System Recommendation #5: Improving Equitable Services
- 06 / System Recommendation #6: Research
- 06 / System Recommendation #7: Data
- 07 / About Frayme

## Acknowledgements

Frayme would like to acknowledge our network members as key contributors to the development of this document. Frayme consistently engages in important conversations with Canadian youth mental health and substance use stakeholders and then analyzes for insights and opportunities for knowledge sharing to create a more connected system. Our stakeholders are both knowledge sources and knowledge users and we appreciate their thoughtful engagement in the knowledge products Frayme produces and shares back to the system.

Frayme would also like to extend a special thanks to the panel members from the IYS Knowledge Series: Dr. Joanna Henderson, Shaleen Jones, Kendra Monk, Dr. Gina Dimitropoulous, Teegan McGavin, Shannon McGavin, Dr. Jai Shah, Dr. Karen Tee, AnnMarie Churchill, Andrea Foebel, Jennifer Wilkie, Aidan Scott, Anita Simon, Ervis Musa, Elana Ludman, Braeden Levac, Seren Friskie, and Dennis Stuebing.

## Introduction


### Frayme's IYS Knowledge Series

Integrated Youth Services (IYS) hubs are known as one-stop-shops that serve youth and caregivers within the communities they live. This model is gaining significant momentum across the country and many members of Frayme's national network are trying to implement the model within their own communities. Frayme has heard the impetus for such momentum around the IYS model is its ability to address long-standing concerns from across the sector, such as gaps in youth-focused treatment, gaps in supportive transitions between sectors and services, limited inclusion of youth and family voices in service development and implementation, lack of culturally appropriate care, and uncertainty related to data collection and sharing

**All of these concerns have been articulated in one overarching problem: our current system does not adequately serve our youth.**

With such hope and investment in the IYS hub model, the need to co-develop an aligned set of pan-Canadian recommendations to guide the next stage of national hub implementation became apparent. As a national knowledge mobilizer in the youth mental health and substance use (YMHSU) sector, Frayme was well-positioned to gather IYS stakeholders nation-wide to facilitate collaborative knowledge sharing as they continue to strategize and roll out models, share successes, identify challenges, and brainstorm solutions to expedite implementation efforts.

The inaugural IYS Knowledge Series was launched in October 2021 with compelling statements by Dr. Joanna Henderson, Dr. Jai Shah and Frayme to ignite dialogue with panels of diverse experts from across the sector and inform breakout discussions with over 200 participants.



View recordings from our IYS Knowledge Series [here](#).



The cumulative content from the statements, the panels, and the breakout discussions ultimately informed the recommendations held within this document. We know IYS has the opportunity to provide youth with mental health and substance use services and supports that are timely, effective and appropriate. It is a fluid and iterative model that can be reformed and adapted in various ways to properly serve communities, so long as certain contributing factors stay the same. Our hope is that the recommendations in this document will serve as a roadmap for the sector to collate efforts and next steps to make IYS hubs as impactful as possible in serving youth, caregivers and communities across this country.

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## The Future of IYS

There are a growing number of IYS hubs across Canada, and the consensus gathered from our Knowledge Series is that the sector would like to see this number continue to grow. That growth needs to achieve balance between national alignment and local contextualization to ensure all communities can be part of the IYS movement. System change through collaboration is no small feat, and while a shared vision and comprehensive strategy are great starting points, they can only get us so far.

To that end, if provincial and federal governments want to foster the well-being of our youth, Frayme proposes the following recommendations based on the collaborative discussions facilitated at the national IYS Knowledge Series, as well as ongoing conversations with IYS stakeholders. These recommendations will help guide Canada onto a path where the mental health and substance use system adequately meets the needs of youth, caregivers and their communities.

### #1: Truth and Reconciliation in Healthcare

Dismantle hierarchies and decolonize decision-making.

- First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples need to be properly compensated to provide leadership in developing culturally safe standards of treatment to guide practice, programs and frameworks across the sector.
- Service providers need to understand the complex and continuous effects of colonization in Canada in order to deliver more culturally appropriate care and early intervention strategies. All service providers should be supported to understand their role in truth and reconciliation and how to honour Indigenous peoples experiences and knowledge in service delivery. Integrating ceremonial spaces, traditional healing practices and elders into treatment programs for Indigenous youth to bolster culturally relevant care and practices is a recommended first step.

### #2: Common Language and Accessibility

Ensure language and terms used are commonly understood across the sector.

- The language used to describe complex and multidimensional aspects of the YMHSU sector are often interpreted and understood differently by diverse stakeholders. For example, even the term "youth" does not have a standardized interpretation. When we layer in additional concepts such as learning health systems, measurement-based care, quality services and standards of care, the lack of common understanding is a barrier to developing an aligned approach to tackling the issues and ceases any opportunities that could improve outcomes for youth and caregivers. Continued conversations with focused topics that are accessible to all stakeholders is critical to build this shared language and common understanding. Established standards, practices, and resources should be made available to the sector with open access to support alignment and impact.

*"Youth should have access to the right care at the right time, it should be psychologically safe and youth should only have to tell their story once. Often service providers want to put youth into boxes, or say nothing is wrong with them, and turn youth away. Youth just want to be heard... just because they don't fill the right boxes of questionnaires, doesn't mean they don't want someone to listen. Having the support on the ground— people to listen to what you have to say or a kind person to lend an ear might be the most important part of IYS. Solutions need to be created with youth, not for youth, and it's so important to keep family involved in care because when mine were, I realized I was no longer fighting the battle alone, I had a whole army behind me." – Teegan McGavin, Groundbreaker & IYS Panelist*

### #3: Expanding Capacity, Training and Skill Development

Enhance investments in training and education with a focus on creating a holistic and seamless system of care that integrates physical health, mental health and wellbeing.

- IYS hubs provide a promising platform for this integration to occur and as such, information about who IYS hubs currently serve, the various age-appropriate services provided, current stepped-care approaches to service, and what standards are in place to ensure quality of service can support further implementation efforts and capacity development. To best support service providers to continue quality improvement of IYS hubs, integration of holistic treatment approaches in education, training and certification programming is essential.

### #4: Funding

Determine funding priorities with diverse experts across the YMHSU sector, including lived experts, and include all funding sources.

- Identified priorities need to be supported with appropriate timelines for research to integrate effective evaluation, collection and implementation of data. Furthermore, funding needs to support the collection and implementation of data through investments into associated infrastructure that encourages collaboration across the sector.

### #5: Improving Equitable Services

Address the unique needs of communities by measuring service reach and impact for youth and caregivers with diverse identities, experiences and needs, and further implementing programming that is informed by their feedback.

- Implementation of measurement-based care frameworks is critical to improve services with timely data that reflects the diversity of need within communities across the country. Furthermore, service offerings need to consider the underrepresented and those made marginalized in communities by prioritizing support for demographic groups who often experience the most severe adverse outcomes.

*"It is vital for us to recognize how youth can be better served and how our current models can be improved. It is vital that we maintain a central and aligned vision; one voice that considers our national agenda and health learning system goals. Through taking a collaborative and co-designed approach, we can work together on an even playing field and build off the expertise of each other as well as the professionalism, knowledge, and experience brought by each person." – Ervis Musa, Groundbreaker & IYS Panelist*

### #6: Research

Realign power dynamics between researchers, service providers and end-users to ensure that youth, family and caregivers are included in evaluation, quality improvement, service, and program design as partners rather than limited data sources.

- Research funders need to implement funding standards that ensure capacity building around equitable and respectful partner engagement between researchers and youth and family partners is in place. Within active research, formal and standardized processes should be developed for shared governance and knowledge sharing, recognizing the importance of youth and family as end-users and disseminators of key research insights.
- Regular opportunities for youth, family and caregiver-led knowledge sharing and capacity building should be facilitated through national events to ensure researcher awareness of end-user interests and experiential feedback. Specific attention is needed in diversifying clinical and research leaders to ensure there are more equitable and culturally relevant lenses to knowledge synthesis, program design and execution.

### #7: Data

Standardize language, key data inputs, and evaluation expectations to ensure alignment and consistency in actionable research knowledge sharing objectives, data collection, and evaluation.

- Aligning around a manageable set of core indicators nationally is needed for a collective and collaborative approach to IYS hub delivery. Prioritizing equitable and public access to data and evaluation insights will ensure youth, family and caregivers have access to insights that feed the system and service optimizations.
- Cross-sector understanding of data collection is needed to address disparities in current practices. This includes establishing standards surrounding common minimum data sets, commitment to ongoing evaluation of data collection practices, and co-designing data with youth and caregivers.

*"While efforts are necessary to improve services and the mental health of young people in Canada and beyond, they are not by themselves enough. Knowledge and information is clearly required to understand what an individual youth's needs and concerns are, what interventions might be beneficial for them, and how services can iteratively adapt and improve themselves – and knowledge and information in turn depends on data." –*  
**Dr. Jai Shah, IYS Panelist**

### About Frayme

Frayme leads a national knowledge mobilization network of over 400 partner organizations that connects mental health, health and social services working with youth and young adults to accelerate the integration and implementation of youth care in Canada.

With our network made up of youth, families, caregivers, clinicians, researchers, policymakers, and service providers, Frayme acts as an intermediary between youth mental health and substance use organizations to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. By focusing on knowledge exchange to promote the use of youth-centered integrated services, Frayme serves as a needed bridge between lived expertise, research, policy, practice, and experience to improve services by facilitating local action, national collaboration, and knowledge mobilization.

### Our Vision

All youth, young adults, and their families have access to the help they need to be well, when they need it, in the context in which they live.

### What's Next?

The work is not done. We know that with these recommendations comes the responsibility to put them into action. We will need to work together to invite in additional perspectives from the system and listen to perspectives we have not heard yet. We need to collectively hold ourselves accountable to push the needle forward towards a system that can meet the needs of all youth, caregivers and communities. At Frayme, we will continue to facilitate access to information from across our network, hold ourselves accountable to equitable knowledge mobilization and convene conversations that drive these recommendations into practice.

Let's work together to build the YMHSU system we all want. If you would like to stay connected to Frayme to learn about next steps and other opportunities to learn and share together please join our network or subscribe to our newsletter.

Thank you,



Shauna MacEachern  
Executive Director, Frayme