

## FACTSHEET

# FOUR CONSIDERATIONS TO SUPPORT YOUTH TRANSITIONING TO ADULT MENTAL HEALTH CARE



This factsheet was developed from “I fell through the cracks”: Navigating the disjointed transition from paediatric to adult psychiatric services (2022) by Brianna Jackson, Kimberley T. Jackson, and Richard Booth in *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a stressful time that is linked with a rise in mental health challenges. This makes the transition from pediatric to adult mental health care critical for youth. However, this transition is often unsupported and disjointed for many young people in late adolescence and early adulthood (‘transitional-aged’ youth), as their eligibility for certain services changes depending on their age.

Here are four considerations to support youth transitioning to adult mental health care:



## 01. ACCESSIBILITY

Youth have found **limited availability** and **systemic barriers** to desired mental health services. For instance, many are denied continuous psychiatric treatment after turning 18. There is also a lack of consistency between care providers during the transition from pediatric to adult care, which means that youth have to repeatedly disclose sensitive personal information. This is described as “triggering” and “emotionally exhausting”; the fear of re-traumatization prevents many youth from seeking out or continuing with mental health support.

Private adult mental health services can be **unaffordable**, and there are often limitations regarding the type, frequency, and duration of treatment for those youth with insurance coverage. Publicly funded systems can also be inaccessible due to **excessive wait times**, **limited resources**, or healthcare professionals that **do not meet the unique needs** of transitional-aged youth.



## 02. COORDINATION

Youth have described a lack of communication from their healthcare providers during the transition to adult mental health care. Young people feel they **do not receive adequate guidance and support** during the transition process, and that their discharge from pediatric services is often abrupt, leaving them feeling ignored and abandoned. The lack of clarity and transparency from care providers can leave youth feeling unsure of what to expect from adult mental health services and where to begin their search for mental health support.



## 03. INDEPENDENCE

Many youth **feel invalidated** as users of pediatric mental health services, as care providers often show loyalty to parents and caregivers over protecting the privacy of youth, who become distrustful of mental health care providers and fear breaches of confidentiality.

However, upon turning 18, many youth feel that their newly-gained autonomy comes with **pressure and responsibility**. Youth often feel blamed for their mental health difficulties and that health care professionals and loved ones expect them to “fix” themselves.



## 04. SUPPORT

Youth have shared the **difficulties in finding a mental health professional who is a good “match”** – a care provider who is attuned to their needs. Due to condescending and ageist experiences with many mental health care providers, youth feel like their intersecting identities and lived experiences are not understood. This can result in youth not being able to honestly voice their feelings and emotions, in fear of hasty, extreme, and potentially unnecessary reactions from unsupportive care providers.