

PROJECT SUMMARIES

WAITLIST MANAGEMENT — INTERACTIVE WEBINAR ENHANCED INFORMATION AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION PLATFORM (HAMILTON)

PROJECT LEAD: LYNWOOD CHARLTON CENTRE

What's the issue? Families in Hamilton face a significant wait for specialized child and youth mental health services. Yet we know that early identification and intervention lead to better outcomes. As many as half of the children and youth on waitlists decline in their mental health, which can seriously impact their quality of life (e.g. aggression, school suspension, attempted suicide, etc.).

What's the innovation? The Lynwood Charlton Centre will focus on early intervention by delivering two interactive webinars a month — one targeting families, one targeting youth — over an 18-month period. A new resource hub (website) will host the live events and webinar recordings and will advertise for upcoming webinars.

What impact is anticipated? The goal is to decrease both morbidity and mortality associated with long wait times for mental health services. This innovation will support children, youth and families in managing their mental health struggles while they wait for in-person services.

THE JOYPOP APP: AN INTERVENTION FOR ADOLESCENTS EXPERIENCING CHALLENGE (TORONTO)

PROJECT LEAD: CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY TORONTO

What's the issue? Many Ontario youth do not seek mental health services despite reporting that their mental health struggles are affecting their day-to-day life. Adding to the complexity of the issue, they only have a narrow window of time to obtain pediatric mental health services and transition successfully into the adult mental health system.

What's the innovation? The JoyPop app will address the need for an easy-to-access, youth-oriented solution that prevents or buffers daily distress. It is grounded in positive psychology and focuses on building resilience and enhancing joy through improved emotion regulation and cognitive functioning. The app has been developed with important input from providers such as Kids Help Phone and youth advocates from Victim Services Toronto.

What impact is anticipated? It is expected that with regular use of the app, learned skills will become habitual and will increase the likelihood of long-term positive mental health as youth transition into adulthood.



eLEARNING FOR YOUTH BY YOUTH (HALTON)

PROJECT LEAD: REACH OUT CENTRE FOR KIDS (ROCK)

What's the issue? There is evidence of elevated risk of mental health issues and drug use among youth in Halton, a concern raised by the regional municipality in late 2017. Youth aged 12–17 have been found to be the most vulnerable, with mental health identified as the number one risk and drugs as a higher-than-average risk. Mental health services must also reflect the region's ever increasing cultural and linguistic diversity, with a third of children and youth aged 0–18 being South Asian.

What's the innovation? ROCK, in partnership with local young people, will co-develop an e-learning module for youth to access online mental health support. Youth with lived experience will be subject matter experts for content development, and local addictions and adult mental health agencies will act as project partners. The module will be available in English, French, Arabic, Urdu and Mandarin to better serve the community.

What impact is anticipated? The module will improve accessibility to youth mental health services, with a focus on services for transitional aged youth. This initiative will eliminate many barriers in terms of transportation, culture, time, expertise and anonymity — ultimately leading to increased access in rural communities.

E-WALK IN, A REMOTE, RURAL SOLUTION (RENFREW COUNTY)

PROJECT LEAD: PHOENIX CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

What's the issue? Half of the Renfrew County population does not have access to walk-in mental health services. Fourteen of the county's 17 municipalities are too small to offer such service and transportation barriers prevent rural families and youth from accessing existing walk-ins in Renfrew's larger municipalities.

What's the innovation? The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families will implement a virtual service model where families and youth from Renfrew's remote and rural communities can use either a phone or the internet to access single-session mental health services similar to those offered in local walk-in clinics. Additional resources will also be developed and distributed to patients for further support (e.g. psycho-educational materials, self-help books, etc.).

What impact is anticipated? Renfrew County's virtual walk-in clinic will enable children, youth and families from remote and rural communities to more easily access mental health services. The initiative, which will offer more anonymity when families and youth access services, may also increase help-seeking across the county.



INFANT MINDS (TORONTO)

PROJECT LEAD: YORKTOWN FAMILY SERVICES

What's the issue? The first three years of life have a significant impact on development, relationships and overall functioning throughout life. Many adverse outcomes — including neglect, substance abuse and delayed milestone achievements — can be prevented when parents are supported to be optimally responsive to their child's needs. While timing is critical for this type of support, there is currently no coordinated community-based infant mental health system in Toronto.

What's the innovation? Yorktown Family Services — in partnership with Massey Centre for Women, Adventure Place and The Hospital for Sick Children — will increase staff capacity across the city and implement an intervention designed to foster secure attachment between infants and their parents or caregivers.

What impact is anticipated? This project will generate evidence about an innovative, multi-partner, community-wide approach to improve care for families during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood. This intervention will strengthen parent-infant attachment — which is the foundation for regulation, resilience and healthy development.

BUILDING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN OUR CLASSROOMS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND GEORGE HULL CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (TORONTO)

PROJECT LEAD: THE GEORGE HULL CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

What's the issue? While many Ontario children aged 4–11 suffer from diagnosable mental health disorders, less than 25% of them receive mental health services. These disorders are associated with a wide range of psychosocial impairments, tend to be chronic and unremitting in course, and put children and youth at significant risk for other psychological disorders if left untreated.

What's the innovation? Since schools are the most common entry point for children and youth in mental health services, it is important that they offer good programming for students who would not present for treatment otherwise. The George Hull Centre for Children and Families will develop and deliver a socioemotional program to provide students with tools to address anxiety, increase student and staff awareness of mental health issues, and respond to students' mental health needs. The program will reflect the Canadian context, using language and ideas that resonate with diverse students.

What impact is anticipated? This prevention and early intervention program will help children and youth develop the social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive skills they need to combat anxiety and participate in their community positively. It will also support families in strengthening the acquired skills in the home environment. Through this program, both educators and parents will improve their mental health literacy and capacity to coach children.



RECOGNIZING THE EARLY SIGNS OF MENTAL DISTRESS IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE: BUILDING A TRAUMA-INFORMED GREATER SUDBURY (SUDBURY/MANITOULIN)

PROJECT LEAD: CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE

What's the issue? Community partners within the Sudbury and Manitoulin region have identified the need for trauma-informed services as many of the children and youth receiving services at the Child and Family Centre (CFC) have been identified as needing such services. Research suggests that undetected adverse childhood experiences and trauma can lead to misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment of symptoms. Other mental health issues might also be more difficult to treat when trauma is not detected early.

What's the innovation? The CFC will implement a two-pronged approach to address both early detection and provide "treatment while waiting" services for children and youth requiring trauma-related care. This will include the delivery of psychoeducational sessions for children, youth and families waiting for trauma assessment or treatment to guide them through an easy-to-use cognitive framework that promotes a healthy environment and successful recovery. The second prong will include training community members who work with children, youth and families in trauma-informed care, with a focus on recognizing the early signs of trauma.

What impact is anticipated? This project will increase the awareness of trauma and trauma symptoms in the Sudbury and Manitoulin region, which will lead to early detection and delivery of services to children, youth and families. This innovation will also pay close attention to the unique needs and strengths of the local francophone community.

