Youth Mental Health Promotion in Canada: Research and Action

CAMH Resource Centre
December 5th 2012
10:00 – 11:30 AM

Webinar Overview
1) Review key concepts relating to mental health promotion
2) Highlight findings from a scoping review on youth mental health promotion in Canada
   - Objectives
   - Methodology
   - Results and trends
   - Recommendations for future research and action
3) Hear from two youth mental health promotion programs included in this review: “YouthNet Ottawa, the Fourth “R”

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A Continuum of Programming

Mental Health Promotion

Mental illness prevention

Why focus on youth mental health?

Mental health promotion

“...the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to take control over their lives and improve their mental health. Mental health promotion uses strategies that foster supportive environments and individual resilience, while showing respect for culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.”

(Health Canada, 1997)

Mental illness prevention

“Focuses on reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors associated with mental ill-health, with the aim of reducing risk, incidence, and prevalence and recurrence of mental disorders, the time spent with symptoms, or the risk condition for a mental illness, preventing or delaying recurrences and also decreasing the impact of illness in the affected persons, their families, and society.”

(Lané-Llopis et al., 2006, 7)
Scoping Review Objectives

- To explore the range of youth mental health promotion programming in Canada through a scoping review using a youth engagement lens.
- To identify common elements and trends across programs that self-report success and to offer recommendations for future research and action.
- It was not an objective to appraise the quality of evidence reported by the programs in this review.

Scoping Review: Methodology

Inclusion Criteria
- Canadian programs
- Programs targeted at “youth”
- Have an element of meaningful youth engagement

Exclusion Criteria
- Substance misuse programs
- Programs targeted at educators, public health professionals or community leaders.

Scoping Review Lens: Youth Engagement

Ladder of youth participation (Adapted from Roger Hart)
- True participation
  - Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults
  - Youth-initiated and directed
  - Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth
  - Consuluted and informed (youth)
  - Assigned but informed (youth)
- Not true participation
  - Tokenism
  - Decoration
  - Manipulation

Scoping Review: Results

- Search yielded 24 programs:
  - 17 universal programs
  - 5 selective programs for “at-risk” youth
  - 2 programs could be classified as both universal and selective.
  - Majority (16) were school-based (3 programs combined school and/or community settings with social media and online content)
  - Variation in youth age range and evaluation methods

Scoping Review: Three Main Trends

1) A mix of mental health promotion and mental illness prevention approaches, supporting the notion of a promotion-prevention continuum for mental health;
2) Correlation between the age of participants and the types of youth engagement approaches used;
3) Six program outcomes which focus on emphasizing assets and developing capacities:
   1. Improving experiences and understandings
   2. Increasing positive feelings
   3. Reducing negative feelings
   4. Developing effective relationships
   5. Improving coping strategies
   6. Developing skills and awareness

Recommendations for Future Action & Research:

School-based Programming
1) Address critical transition periods, for example, from middle school to high school.
4) Target delinquent behaviours in school settings
5) Renew school-based programs to change attitudes and behaviours
6) Assess school-based programs for appropriateness.
7) Consider targeted school-based programs for at-risk and/or ethnic minority youth.

Web-based Programming
2) Use social media campaigns w/ youth-created content and/or feature individuals with real-life experiences of mental illness to reduce stigma.
3) Explore the potential of interactive, online web-based programs with additional in-person support(s) (e.g., in schools or communities).
Recommendations for Future Action & Research: Information and Content Preferences

8) Provide education, skills development (e.g., gender sensitivity), role modeling, safe spaces to test new skills (e.g., communication skills) and/or peer educators as part of an interpersonal and dating violence prevention program.

9) Optimize program formats.

10) Include realistic situations, contemporary styles and language, and age-appropriate discussions for topics.

11) Encourage sports and recreation activities to address behavioral challenges.

12) Employ speakers with previous experiences of mental health challenges.

Recommendations for Future Action & Research: Specific Populations

13) Research best practices to support homeless youth, prevent problem gambling and foster employment skills in at-risk homeless youth.

14) For homeless youth, mentors can provide support for mental health issues, while broadly, they can also provide support for homework, job searching and network development.

15) In terms of problem gambling, focus on developing coping skills, increasing knowledge about random events, highlighting the links between emotional responses and winning/losing and learning ways to avoid getting "tricked" by the adult game creators.

16) Provide employment skills training programming for an at-risk population and hire youth participants to work in community youth programs.

Youth Mental Health Promotion

...IN ACTION

Youth Net & The Fourth “R”

Youth discussion groups: Youth input on Scoping Review

- 4 discussion groups
- Total 34 youth (26 females, 8 males)
- 1.5 hours led by facilitators from CAMH Resource Centre
- Purpose: Review recommendations and find out what youth considered to be important actions for mental health promotion

Youth Mental Health Promotion: Programs and Services

- Universal and targeted approach
- By youth, for youth philosophy
- Offers alternative and/or complimentary mental health support options for young people between the ages of 13 and 20.

Youth Facilitators

- Between 20 and 30 years of age
- Represent the diversity of the Ottawa community
- Have a mix of lived experience with academics in a relevant background
- Intensive ongoing mental health training + ASIST certified
- Selected with the aid of the YAC

Youth Programs

- Focus Groups
- Interactive Presentations
- Engaging info booths
- Our various initiatives
- Short term counselling support
- YAC
- Co-op and student placement options
Our Initiatives

Programs and services 2011

Youth Engagement model
Volunteer hours
Crucial element of Youth Net and all major decisions
Ongoing community partnerships and collaborative projects
Co-op Opportunities

Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)

Located at CHEO

For more information

Located at CHEO

The Fourth R

Health promotion and violence prevention programming for youth based on the contention that relationships are the ‘Fourth R’ and as important to teach as the first three (Reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic)

Fourth R programs

• Skills-based
  • Address the triad of adolescent risk behaviours
  • Theme of relationships underlies everything
  • Emphasis on positive youth development
  • Attention to youth engagement
  • School-based versions are connected to curricula
  • School-based versions are taught by teachers (who receive training)

Adaptations and Extensions

• Grade 7 & 8 Health
• Grade 9–12 English
• Alternative Education
• Aboriginal Education
  • Peer Mentoring
  • Cultural Leadership Course
• Small Groups
• Healthy Relationships Plus
• Youth Safe Schools Manual
The Fourth R In Canada

Adaptations #1: Uniting Our Nations
Range of programs for FNMI youth
Adaptations and also new programs
How are they different from other Fourth R programs

Table: Adaptations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Perspectives</td>
<td>Grade 9 elementary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Grade 10 secondary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural secondary</td>
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<td>Variety informed version</td>
<td>Grade 8 Transition conference</td>
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<td>FNMI student advisory</td>
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Adaptations #2: Healthy Relationships Plus
Expansion of Fourth R small group program to include emphasis on mental health promotion and suicide prevention.
Worked with writer from mindyourmind.ca
Same approach to skill building – extends concept of being a good friend/partner to being able to recognize/respond to mental health problems – still use scenarios, etc.
Also expands on coping skills
Can be implemented in community organizations or school-based (although not linked to curricula)

Evidence Base
Post intervention Fourth R youth demonstrate better peer resistance and communication skills*
At 2 year follow-up Fourth R youth report less physical dating violence and increased condom use*
Fourth R provides a protective impact for youth with histories of cumulative experiences of child maltreatment†, and that protective impact is evident 2 years later‡
Education find it easy to implement and perceive significant benefits to themselves, their students and school culture#11
The Uniting Our Nations program increases youth engagement#
The Uniting Our Nations program improves relationships and sense of belonging, contributes to student success, and develops leadership capacity and confidence#

Alignment with Recommendations
#1 Critical transition periods
#2 Online-web-based programs with additional in-person supports
#3 Reorient school-based programs to change attitudes and behaviours (and not just knowledge)
#4 Consider targeted school-based programs
#5 Provide education, skills development, role modelling, etc.
#6 Include realistic situations and contemporary styles and language

References for Fourth R Research

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Thank you!

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References: