

Exploring Patient Navigation for Youth and Young Adults with Mental Health and/or Addiction Concerns in New Brunswick

Why is this project important?

- Canadian youth and young adults (YYA) have the greatest prevalence of mental health and/or addiction (MHA) concerns across all age groups and have the most unmet MHA needs.
- Barriers to accessing mental health and addiction (MHA) services include limited awareness and information, geographic barriers, insufficient outpatient and community-based care, poor integration, high out-of-pocket costs, and long wait times.
- New Brunswick's limited infrastructure increases challenges with access to, and coordination of MHA services.
- One promising solution to address the gaps in service access for YYA with MHA concerns is patient navigation (PN).
- The purpose of this project was to explore how PN could be delivered to best meet the needs of this population.



What we did?

- We conducted a needs assessment to identify gaps and opportunities for PN programs for YYA with MHA concerns in NB.
- Participants included 12 YYA (age 16-29) with MHA concerns, 7 informal caregivers of YYA with MHA concerns, 15 health and social care providers, and 11 decision makers/health administrators in NB.
- Cross-group thematic analysis showed consistency across groups about current system challenges and the potential value of patient navigation.
- Five key themes were developed: (1) fragmented and difficult-to-navigate systems of care; (2) need for individualized, relationship-centred, and developmentally appropriate care; (3) caregiver and family support is essential; (4) patient navigators as central connectors, advocates, and coordinators; and (5) need for accessible, flexible, and youth-friendly navigation services.

How will this help?

- The findings from this needs assessment will serve as the foundation for developing a structured framework for a PN program tailored to the specific needs of youth and young adults with MHA concerns, their informal caregivers, and health and social care providers in New Brunswick.

Who can I contact?

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