



youth wellness hubs
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NEWS RELEASE

CAMH, YWHO, ACCESS Open Minds and Foundry launch first-of-its kind initiative to help young people with mental health challenges find employment

Funded by the Future Skills Centre, project will provide support more than 700 youth in 12 locations

May 5, 2021

[Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario](#)

Canadian youth are in crisis. They are experiencing an increase in mental health challenges while also disproportionately experiencing higher rates of unemployment and disruptions in education due to the ongoing pandemic. In order to help support vulnerable young people through this challenging time, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's (CAMH) [Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health](#), [ACCESS Open Minds](#), [Foundry](#) and [Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario](#) are proud to launch a new initiative that incorporates personalized employment services into integrated support teams across Canada.

The project, called [What works for work? Employment integration in youth service hubs across Canada](#), is now available in two integrated youth service hubs in Toronto and Haliburton, and by late 2021, it will be offered out of 12 hubs across the country to more than 700 youth aged 12 to 25. The hubs, including integrated youth services developed as part of ACCESS Open Minds, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario and Foundry, already focus on youth mental health, substance use, physical health, and social support needs. This project strengthens these services by implementing and evaluating the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, which provides youth with personalized and optimized opportunities for employment, education and training.

IPS is an evidence-informed model of supported employment for people with mental health challenges and has been adapted to include education supports for youth. IPS is unique because it adopts a “place-then-train” approach instead of focusing on pre-employment training like traditional supported employment programs. In this model, the employment specialist is integrated into the mental health services team and works to help youth find, secure and keep meaningful employment. Low- or no-service barriers, competitive employment, meaningful job search and individualized support are a few of the key principles that make IPS successful among youth.

“Currently, vulnerable youth with mental health challenges generally receive mental health care through one agency and then have to go elsewhere for employment and educational support. It can be daunting and frustrating to have to navigate disparate agencies,” said Dr. Joanna Henderson, Director, Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth & Family Mental Health, and Project Lead for *What Works for Work?* “With evidence-informed services integrated into our youth service hubs, young people will now have the opportunity to access employment and education supports in a youth-friendly, mental health and social service environment in a one-stop-shop model for integrated support.”

A youth advisory team has been included in all aspects of designing and implementing *What works for work?* “This project has been really invested in youth involvement from the very start,” said Em Hayes, Lead Youth Advisor. “This is crucial because when services are informed by the people they’re designed for, they’re far more effective.”

On May 5, 2021, the [Future Skills Centre](#) (FSC) announced an investment of \$3.8 million to expand this program to more participants and additional locations. This follows an initial investment of \$2.32 million by FSC in June 2020, to make this initiative possible.

Quotes

“Assisting vulnerable youth to find pathways into the job market is an example of the programs supported by the Future Skills Centre that invest in building an inclusive workforce that includes future generations and leaves no-one behind,” said Pedro Barata, Executive Director of the Future Skills Centre. “This program can serve as a model that works, moving us closer to breaking long-term cycles of dependence on social assistance. Adding employment and education support to hubs that focus on mental health will help unlock the potential of young people so they can become independent, economically strong members of society.”

“Investing consistently in young people and the integration of services is critical to ensure the well-being of all of our communities in the future. This program takes the pressure off young people to navigate a complex system filled with short-term programs. It allows diverse young people to receive services that are integrated, youth-centred, and meaningful,” said Dr. Skey Barbic, Director of Research, Foundry.

The team is also excited to announce the development of an online IPS training system. This unique program will ensure that youth across the country have access to skilled employment specialists who are trained in IPS now and in the future. Canadian youth will be engaged in the development process to ensure that IPS training is responsive to and reflective of their needs.

“Finding and retaining employment or resuming and continuing education are essential aspects of recovery. They give young people a sense of purpose, agency and citizenship. *What Works for Work?* will help youth achieve these outcomes in socioeconomically, geographically, linguistically and culturally diverse settings across Canada. It could not have come at a time of any greater need than in the throes and aftermath of a pandemic,” added Srividya Iyer, the Scientific-Clinical Director of ACCESS Open Minds.

Partner Organizations

CAMH is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital and a world leading research centre in this field. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental illness and addiction. CAMH is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto, and is a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. For more information, please visit camh.ca or follow @CAMHnews on Twitter.

Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Graham Boeckh Foundation, ACCESS Open Minds is a youth mental health services research network of 16 communities from seven provinces and one territory across Canada. ACCESS Open Minds is hosted at the Douglas Research Centre (affiliated with McGill University) in Montreal, Canada.

Foundry is removing barriers and increasing access to health and wellness services for young people ages 12–24 and their caregivers across British Columbia. At Foundry, young people can easily access our integrated services by walking into a local Foundry centre, exploring our online tools and resources at foundrybc.ca, or connecting virtually through our provincial virtual services.

The [Future Skills Centre](#) (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Ryerson University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

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