

# Foundry BC App. Co-designing and successfully launching a purpose-built app for young people ages 12-24 years.

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## Introduction

Foundry is an integrated youth services organization in British Columbia, Canada, providing services for physical health, mental health, substance use, social supports, and family/caregiver and youth peer support. Foundry serves young people ages 12-24 years at 11 physical centres across British Columbia. However, many youth cannot access a physical centre due to geographic constraints or in-town barriers such as transportation, family, time, or perceived stigma. During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health constraints also limited in-person accessibility at Foundry centres. A need was identified for a province-wide, virtual option to access Foundry services.

## Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- 1) co-design and build an app with key stakeholders
- 2) launch the app for young people and families/caregivers across British Columbia.

## Approach

Foundry Virtual team used a co-design process with young people, families/caregivers, and service providers to 1) choose and 2) build technology for the app. The co-design process incorporated considerations for equity, diversity, and inclusion. To assess uptake and performance, data captured from March 2021-Jan 2022 in the Foundry data collection platform called Toolbox, which is integrated with the virtual Foundry BC platform, were analyzed.

## Results or Practice/Policy Implications

In March 2021, Foundry launched a co-created, cost-free app (Foundry BC app) to support young people. Users of the app can drop-in or schedule a virtual counselling appointment, find peer support, access primary care, get support with employment, access groups & workshops, or browse our library of tools and resources.

Since launching and as of January 2022, over 5500 unique young people and families/caregivers have signed up for the Foundry BC app, with over 8000 appointments booked through the app. Many (n=1767, 31%) reported that without the app, and attached service, they would have gone nowhere else for services or would not have sought help.

## Conclusion

The way young people and families/caregivers want to access care has changed significantly. It is critical that all youth health services consider ways to embed technology, youth engagement, and co-design methodology in planning moving forward to improve outcome and experiences of young people and families/caregivers. Future research and health services planning should consider the way that virtual services has created access for diverse and hard-to-reach populations.

