

Towards Consensus Standards for Integrated Youth Services Initiatives in Canada

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Introduction

As Integrated Youth Services (IYS) initiatives continue to grow globally and collaboration across initiatives expands, there is an opportunity to move towards the establishment of common standards for the delivery of IYS, rooted in common principles and a shared understanding of the core elements of these services. This would reflect a natural evolution of IYS, similar to the evolution of other types of health services that are delivered in multiple jurisdictions, and provide the basis for further development and expansion to address the needs of young people around the world.

Objectives

To lay the groundwork for establishing common standards for IYS globally, beginning with the development of common standards for IYS in Canada and collaborating with initiatives in other jurisdictions to build consensus on an international standards regime.

Approach/Methods

Foundry, an IYS initiative in British Columbia Canada, has been developing standards for aspects of its service model since the early days of the initiative in 2017. This included service specific standards for walk-in counselling and peer support. Beginning in the spring of 2021, work began to develop a comprehensive standards framework to address all aspects of the Foundry IYS model. This process included consultation with personnel from headspace in Australia who were involved in the development and implementation of headspace's Model Integrity Framework (hMIF). The hMIF is a well developed and mature standards regime that is now in its second iteration. Their experience and sharing of resources informed Foundry's processes for developing standards. This work also coincided with the formation of a Federation of IYS initiatives across Canada of which Foundry is a member and co-lead. The Federation's creation was intended to allow for collaboration and resource sharing amongst initiatives in order to further develop IYS nationally. A first draft of Foundry's comprehensive standards framework is nearing completion at the same time that a Delphi process to identify common principles for members of the Federation is being completed. Once complete, this work can serve as a model and starting point for establishing national and international consensus standards.

Results/Policy Implications

The draft standards will be presented in Sept 2022 at IAYMH.

Conclusion

The creation of shared standards and associated accreditation processes where the standards are applied is a common pathway for the development of specific types or models of health and human services that are delivered in multiple jurisdictions. It is common for public funders of these services or service models to set policies requiring accreditation by national or international accrediting bodies for organizations delivering these services. This approach supports consistency and helps to ensure that elements or aspects of these services or models that are viewed as best practice are implemented. While standards for IYS would support further development of the IYS model internationally, common consensus standards for the delivery of IYS do not exist. As part of the Federation of IYS initiatives, national consensus standards in Canada will establish a process for collaboration in standards development across jurisdictions that could be replicated internationally.

