

· FOUNDRY ·

Virtual Services

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Foundry commits to “Affirming that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such” and “Affirming also that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind.”

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Introduction

Virtual services increase the availability, convenience and geographic accessibility of confidential early intervention services for young people and families/caregivers who are unable to access in-person services or prefer virtual services. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Foundry's virtual services expanded ahead of schedule, both in Foundry centres and through the newly developed provincial virtual service, Foundry Virtual BC. Along the way, service providers, youth and families/caregivers discovered and developed many promising practices that can help centres build and improve their virtual services.

Virtual services within the Foundry network can be thought of as an umbrella, covering the following:

- **Foundry Virtual BC service & Foundry BC platform:** Youth and families/caregivers across the province can access services through the Foundry BC platform. The platform enables virtual services through a web portal, an iOS Apple app and an Android app, and it includes a portal for staff. Services are also available by phone. Co-created with and for youth with extensive support from Foundry centres, services include drop-in and scheduled counselling, peer support, primary care, employment services and groups, as well as tools and resources. Visit foundrybc.ca/virtual to learn more.
- **Foundry centres:** Most centres offer some of their services virtually, with usage varying across centres. Each centre has their own preferences for virtual services — depending on capacity, staff buy-in, technology infrastructure and their community's specific needs and choices.
- **The opportunity to look to the future (a hybrid that combines the Foundry BC platform and Foundry centres):** Through a pilot in Foundry Richmond in 2022, clinical, operations and technical team members explored how the Foundry BC platform can be integrated into Foundry centres' workflows, to create a seamless experience for young people to connect with in-person and/or virtual services within their Foundry centre community. Learnings from the pilot continue to inform next steps in making the platform available to more centres.

Benefits of Virtual Services

As Foundry centre teams and the provincial virtual services team gained experience with providing services virtually, they were able to gather feedback and discover a variety of benefits for youth and their families/caregivers.

The teams gained valuable insights into the experience of virtual services through their own day-to-day work, discussions with youth and families/caregivers, keeping up to date with research and being guided by the annual Youth Experience Survey (YES) and Family Experience Survey (FES). As part of Foundry's commitment to learning and evolving, this combined knowledge is continually put into practice to improve services.

The benefits of virtual services fall into three categories: geographic reach, convenience and comfort, and flexibility and choice.

Geographic Reach

Virtual services can expand Foundry's reach, providing access to support for youth and families/caregivers who don't live close to a Foundry centre or to other services. In rural and remote communities, transportation can be particularly challenging. When a centre starts offering virtual services, they create opportunities to connect with young people in outlying communities. Virtual services can fill a gap for populations across the province who may have barriers to accessing in-person services.

32% of youth had nowhere else to go and wouldn't have received help if Foundry Virtual BC and Foundry virtual services were not available.

Toolbox data, April 2022

19% of youth and 31% of families/caregivers said they can't access in-person services in their community.

Foundry's Youth Experience Survey 2021-2022 (n=34) and Family Experience Survey 2021-2022 (n=17)

Foundry's work includes ensuring we create culturally safe and respectful environments for equity-denied groups including IBPOC (Indigenous, Black and People of Colour) communities.

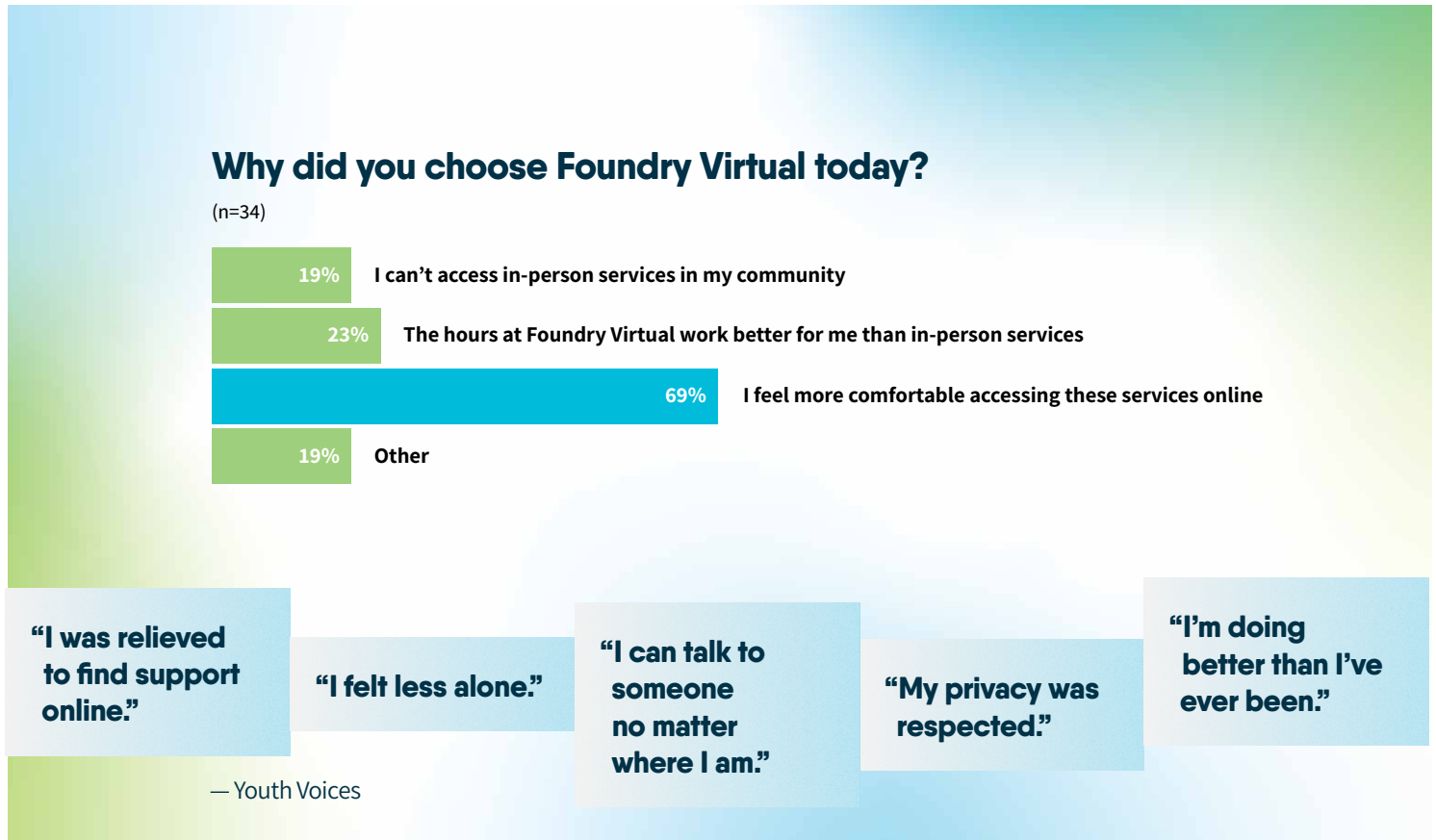
We recognize our role and responsibility as a white settler organization in calling out and dismantling colonialism and racism in the work we do.

Our journey includes committing to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action, the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and the recommendations of the report "In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care."

Convenience and Comfort

A key benefit for youth and families/caregivers is the comfort of starting their journey with Foundry through a manageable first step like a virtual appointment. According to the 2021–2022 YES, 69% of youth felt more comfortable accessing services online (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: FOUNDRY’S YOUTH EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2021–2022



Offering services virtually can save time for youth and families/caregivers and make it easier for them to access the support they want. If they don’t have to travel to a centre, they can have an appointment from their car, on their lunch break or anywhere they’re comfortable. For youth and families/caregivers in more remote communities, accessing services virtually can save considerable costs, like travel, parking, childcare and time off work. Convenience equals access.

For youth living with disabilities or chronic illnesses, accessing virtual services may be more about necessity than convenience. Foundry’s virtual services can be a vital link to supports that weren’t easily available before.

“Please keep virtual in some form after the pandemic comes to a close. I’m not sure if it existed pre-pandemic or plans to continue post (maybe both,) but I live out in Tsawwassen and am in the iron grip of a st job. Not having to commute to a physical location is what lets me make use of this resource. I can imagine that plenty of other people in positions similar to mine can greatly benefit from the ease of setting aside 45 minutes at home instead of planning an entire part of their day when it’s already so hard to muster the energy to make new or different plans a lot of the time.”**

Youth

Flexibility and Choice

Virtual services provide flexibility and choice for youth and families/caregivers by giving them options for how they access support. Foundry is committed to putting young people first and that includes empowering them to choose the virtual or in-person services that meet their individual needs. They may not necessarily choose the same access point every time — they could have a virtual peer support connection, an in-person physical health appointment and then join an online group.

Service providers have a role in supporting young people as they decide which methods of accessing care best suit their needs.

“We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.”

Call to Action 22, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Evolving Together

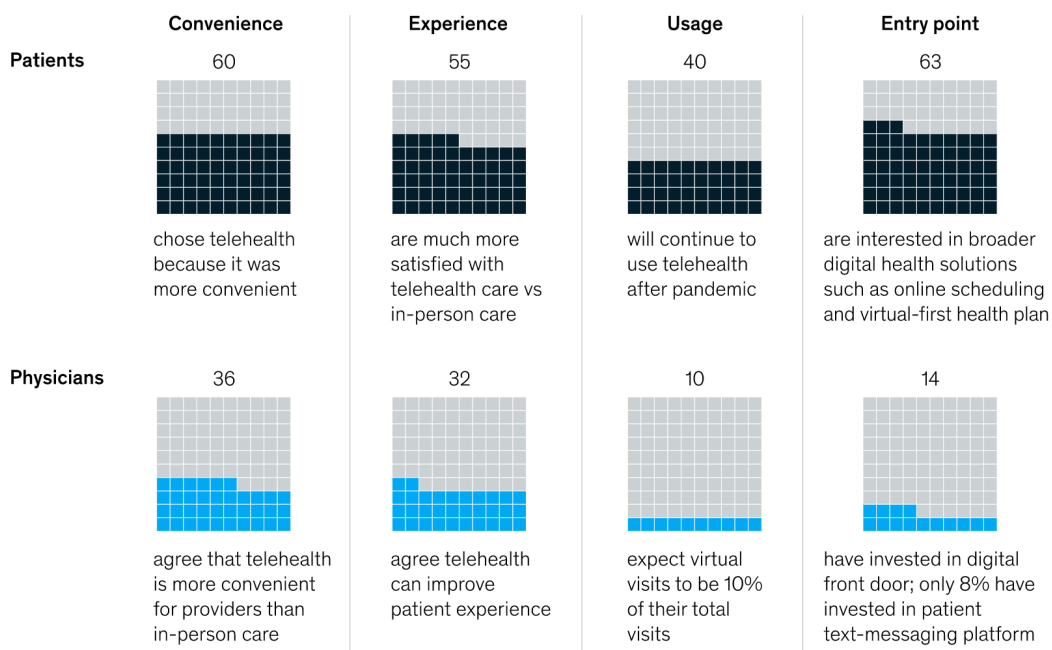
Across the health care sector, virtual services have become more common. In surveys of US physicians and adults ages 18+ in 2020 and 2021, McKinsey and Company found that a majority of patients are satisfied with the experience and convenience of virtual appointments, while fewer physicians had that perspective at that time (see Figure 2).¹

There is work to be done in closing the gap between the expectations of youth and service providers when it comes to offering virtual services. FCO, Foundry centres and the provincial virtual services team are here to support the change management efforts as teams learn and evolve together.

The graphs in Figure 2 show the beliefs among those 18+, and emerging research also shows an openness and acceptance about virtual services in youth populations.^{2,3} To ensure virtual services are available for those who want and need them, it is important to listen to the experiences and preferences of youth and balance them with the expertise of service providers.

FIGURE 2: BELIEFS ABOUT TELEHEALTH

% of respondents in agreement with this statement



Source: McKinsey Physician Surveys and McKinsey Consumer Surveys, 2020–21

“No longer just a convenient enhancement to in-person clinical care, virtual care is needed by patients, clinicians, care teams, and health systems alike.”

Offodile et al, 2022⁴

Principles

As centres consider and develop virtual services that complement their in-person services, the following principles should guide their work.

Engage youth and families/caregivers

We will involve youth and families/caregivers in decision making from the beginning, to make sure the virtual services we develop meet each community's specific needs.

Engagement takes time. We will make space for this work in a team member's role and take the time to honour the ideas, preferences and feedback of youth and families/caregivers.

Invest in technology

We will invest in technical expertise early as we develop a system that is easy to use for youth, families/caregivers and service providers. We will take our time creating a system that makes sense, where information flows seamlessly.

Tech support is a must. We will make sure service providers are supported and comfortable, so the youth and families/caregivers are too.

Provide a range of options

We will offer virtual services through chat, audio and video, as well as phone calls, to honour the needs and preferences of youth and families/caregivers and create a safe virtual environment.

Equitable access is not a given. We will work together to find innovative solutions when equipment, internet service or lack of private spaces are a barrier.

Invest in our team

We will support our staff as they adapt to offering virtual services, by providing ongoing training, the right equipment, appropriate physical spaces, time to connect with each other and opportunities to give feedback.

A healthy team has time to learn. We will build in time for training, and we will recruit staff who are open to technology and open to doing things differently.

Listen to feedback

We will create the best possible virtual service experience for youth and families/caregivers by listening to their feedback on what it's like to book and attend a virtual appointment and by committing to continuous improvement.

Communication is everything. We will ask questions, be open to new ideas, listen, learn and evolve.

Raise awareness about virtual services

We will promote virtual services in the community, so that youth and families/caregivers know they exist, understand how they work and feel that they are effective and safe.

Myth busting is needed. We will work with community partners, health and social services providers, governments and media to share our experiences and show what's possible.

Service Providers and Technology

Service providers bring a wide range of technology skills. Consider their different backgrounds, comfort levels and learning styles when planning training sessions and creating documentation, to make sure to meet service providers where they are. The following promising practices are recommended:

- Make sure new team members receive a full tech orientation.
- Set the expectation that teams continue to develop their tech skills.
- Practice together. Do mock virtual appointments to get more comfortable with the tech systems.
- Create superusers — team members who learn the tech systems inside and out and can support others with troubleshooting and training.

“Our guiding principle is a needs-based approach that retains the best practices of in-person visits while sensibly adapting to the unique characteristics of a virtual setting.”

Offodile et al, 2022

Core Services

Each of Foundry's five service streams can be provided virtually, with thoughtful planning and some modifications.

Every community has its own specific needs, so virtual services may look different from centre to centre. More virtual services can be added as centres build their capacity and increase their comfort level.

FCO will come alongside to support centres as they develop and deliver virtual services, through coaching, documentation and sharing experiences from across the network.

Lessons Learned About Specific Services

Service providers, youth and families/caregivers have discovered and developed many promising practices that can help other centres build and improve their virtual services.

For example, Foundry Virtual BC's peer support team has found ways to bring the casual, interactive parts of in-person practice into the virtual space, with activities like online games and colouring websites. They take advantage of the ability to share their screens, either for fun or as a way to guide their discussions.

In Mental Health and Substance Use, counsellors in Foundry centres have found that they may have less control of the situation when connecting with a young person virtually instead of in person. It can be an adjustment, with potential upsides and downsides. Counsellors have practiced setting boundaries at the start of a session, to make sure it is productive for the youth and the service provider.

For more details on what may be different about providing each type of service virtually, please see "Tools and Resources" on page 12.

"I'm meeting with young people who wouldn't traditionally access Foundry's in-person services – I love that we're broadening our reach."

Foundry Virtual BC Service Provider



Recognizing and Resolving Common Challenges

Receiving services virtually may be a new experience for youth and families/caregivers and connecting this way may be new for the service providers as well. Whether it's concerns about learning new technology, having access to private spaces or conveying empathy across a screen, teams have faced these challenges and have learnings to share. For more details, please see Tools and Resources.



People have become more comfortable with connecting virtually since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that this form of connection is a regular part of our lives for work, school and socializing, we have the opportunity to build on it to create better integrated youth health services.

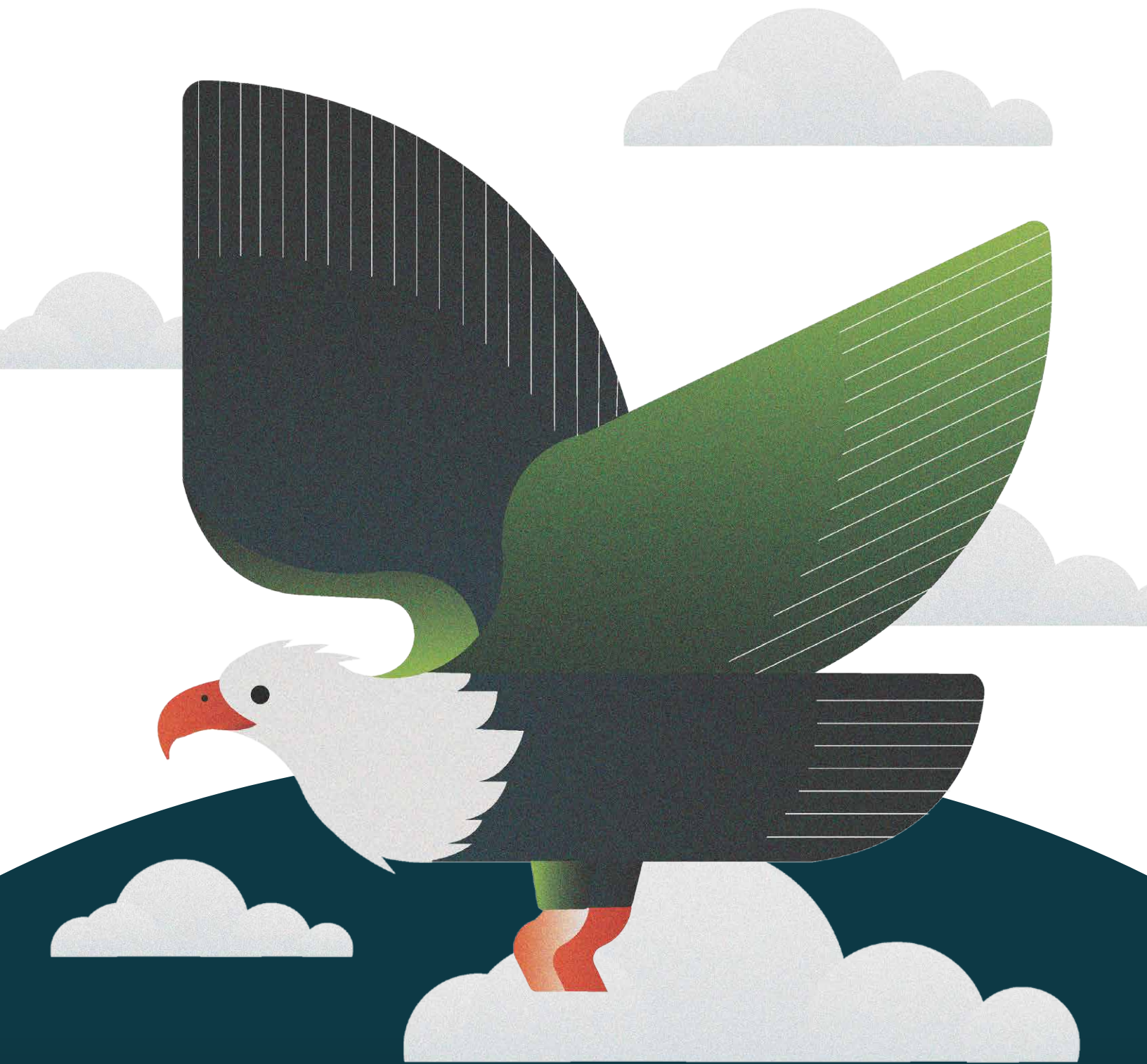
Tools and Resources

Visit [The Foundry Learning Centre](#) to access these tools and resources.

- Providing Virtual Physical and Sexual Health Care
- Providing Virtual Mental Health and Substance Use Services
- Providing Virtual Peer Support
- Providing Virtual Social Services
- Recognizing and Resolving Common Challenges in Virtual Services

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