

Practice #20: Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI) in French (Northwest Territories)

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ABOUT THE FACT SHEET

This fact sheet is part of the *Directory of Innovative Practices in Health and Social Services in Official Language Minority Contexts* (available at: https://www.grefops.ca/directory_innovative_practices.html)

The *Directory of Innovative Practices* (formerly the Handbook of Innovative Practices on the Integration of Official Language Minority Health and Social Services) is a complementary resource to the *Organizational and Community Resources Self-Assessment Tool for Active Offer and Social and Health Services Continuity*¹. It presents initiatives that have been put in place, most often at the local level, that respond to a community need and are perceived as innovative by the various actors involved in their implementation. The practices were identified, analyzed and classified according to an evaluation framework developed by the Health Council of Canada. This framework allowed us to distinguish between emerging practices, promising practices and leading practices. Some of these practices were suggested by the *Société Santé en français* and the provincial, territorial and regional French-language health networks, or other partners.

The reader is referred to the [Introduction and Method](#) document for information about the authors and collaborators, background on the project, a description of the methodology used to create the fact sheets, definitions of the following concepts:

- Leading Practice, Promising Practice, Emerging Practice
- Quality of evidence, impact, applicability, transferability
- Service coordination, service integration, liaison
- Active offer

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¹ The self-assessment Tool is available in English and French and can be accessed at the following Web address:
https://www.grefops.ca/selfassessment_tool.html (English version)
https://www.grefops.ca/outil_autoevaluation.html (French version)

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This practice contributes to improving:

- Community resources: the organization's collaboration with key players in the community.

The organization implementing this practice: The Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the program in the two francophone schools in the NWT. Funding and evaluation of the program is the joint responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT Department of Education.

This fact sheet is based on an in-depth case study of the TAMI program conducted as part of broader research on innovative mental health practices in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) and the Northwest Territories (NWT)². As part of this case study, six interviews with health authorities and professionals were conducted between January 20, 2020 and September 14, 2020. Other data sources including reports, evaluations, and web pages were used to compile the information presented in this fact sheet.

Background

TAMI is a mental health awareness program offered to students aged 12 to 18. The goal of TAMI is to increase awareness of mental illness, empower youth and address issues that may be related to mental health, including stigma.

The TAMI program was first implemented in Toronto in 1988 by a group of nurse managers working at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. The program was originally designed to meet the public's need for mental health information³. The early format of this initiative called for a rapid two-hour presentation to high school students on mental illness while allowing them to interact with people who had lived experience with mental illness.

With the success of this initiative, a coalition was formed in 1998 to create a network involving several partners such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Ontario Division) and the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario.

In 2002, the TAMI program was implemented in Durham, Ontario, to address the needs of youth in that region, develop resources and provide awareness programs related to the stigma of mental illness⁴.

² van Kemenade, S.; Bouchard, L., Savard, J., Savard, S., Oukouomi, G., Michel, J.N. (2021). *Pratiques novatrices en santé mentale pour les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador et dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest*. Research report from the Groupe de recherche sur la formation et les pratiques en santé et service social en contexte francophone minoritaire (GRFoPS), University of Ottawa, Ottawa. Available at : https://www.grefops.ca/uploads/7/4/7/3/7473881/rapport_pratiques_novatrices_sante_mentale_tnl-tno_20-05-2021.pdf

³ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2001). Talking about mental illness: A guide for developing an awareness program for youth. Teacher's Resource. Toronto, ON. : Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/guides-and-publications/tami-teachers-guide.pdf> (Retrieved on February 5, 2021)

⁴ Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI). (s. d.) Our Program—TAMI Durham. TAMI Durham — Talking About Mental Illness Website : <http://tamidurham.ca/our-program> (Retrieved on February 5, 2021)

In 2011, the TAMI program was implemented in the Northwest Territories (NWT) in English and in 2018, it was implemented in French in the two Francophone schools. This was a collaboration between the two mentioned departments and the Commission scolaire francophone (CSFTNO). Currently, École Allain St Cyr in Yellowknife and École Boréale in Hay River offer this program.

The socio-demographic context of the NWT played an important role in the implementation of the program. The population of the NWT region faces problems related to alcohol and other drug use. Life in the North is marked by poverty, a chronic lack of housing and access to employment, which has many consequences on family life, especially for children and youth, according to those interviewed.

Objectives

The primary goal of the TAMI program is to intervene with school-aged youth, particularly at the high school level, to raise awareness of mental health issues and increase mental health literacy. The TAMI program also aims to facilitate access to local literature and resources to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. In terms of specific objectives, the *Guide for Helping Professionals*⁵ outlines them as follows:

- Providing support, ideas and resources for teachers to deliver a new mental health related program;
- Providing an opportunity for high school students to learn from people who have experienced mental illness;
- Providing high school students with information about mental illness and local resources for support;
- Providing teachers and educators with the appropriate support and tools to enhance learning through the awareness program;
- Conducting awareness presentations at local high schools or other community facilities.

Features of the practice

In the two Francophone schools in the NWT, TAMI operated on a model that has two components⁶:

- a) **Student information sessions:** in these sessions, teachers facilitate and teach the TAMI program, which may also be an integral part of the academic curriculum (especially in the case of NWT).
- b) **Peer-to-peer sessions:** these sessions are provided by individuals who have faced mental health issues, are in recovery and want to share their experiences in order to serve as an example and to help combat the stigma of mental illness. The program's privileged approach is based on "peer support".

⁵ CAMH. (2008). Substance Use, Concurrent Disorders and Gambling Problems in Ontario: A Guide for Helping Professionals. <https://store-camh.myshopify.com/products/pzz93-pzz94>

⁶ Ibid.

Challenges

Both the health authorities and the stakeholders interviewed during the TAMI case study raised two obstacles that could affect its sustainability: the availability of resources in French and continuity of services. With respect to French-language resources, it should be noted that although the training teachers receive is in French, resource materials such as the Community Guide and the Teacher's Guide are available only in English. The second challenge relates to the testimonial component of the program. The Francophone population in the NWT is not demographically large⁷, and it is difficult to find appropriate and available individuals who would be willing to share their experiences at the required time in the program.

Two other issues related to administrative coordination between the responsible departments and the CSFTNO, and retention of trained staff may affect the continuity of TAMI. The case study identified a lack of permanent positions and a high turnover rate among teachers that may jeopardize the program in the long term.

Analysis⁸

Why is this practice considered innovative?

This practice stems from the need to make information on mental health resources accessible to young adults. In the NWT, the implementation of the French-language program is based both on a need for orientation and information, but also on the need to combat the stigma of mental illness in Francophone schools.

The innovative nature of the program is reinforced by the results of evaluations conducted in the NWT and elsewhere in Canada. Indeed, in 2018-2019, the NWT government conducted a pre- and post-intervention evaluation of the program to identify TAMI's impact in the short, medium, and long term.

Results identified a positive impact of the initiative on students, including: increased knowledge of positive coping strategies (self-care, stress management and self-esteem); increased awareness of the signs and symptoms associated with mental health issues; and increased recognition of the need for community support and resources for their mental health. In the medium term, students would be better equipped to deal with stress in their lives and more willing to seek help for mental health-related symptoms.

In addition, it should be noted that the Durham TAMI Coalition⁹ in Ontario, which has been promoting the program since 2002, has received several awards for its work with the program. In 2012, the Durham TAMI Coalition received an award from the Mental Health Commission of Canada in the Partnership category. In 2017, they received the Ontario Minister's Award for Innovation in Mental Health

⁷ The Francophone population represents 3.1% of the population of the NWT and is concentrated in the Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik areas.

⁸ This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada, available at: https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf and also outlined in the Introduction and method document.

⁹ The TAMI Coalition is a group of community partners who share a common mission and goal of bringing together community agencies, schools, youth, people living with mental illness and other community members to develop and deliver outreach programs to middle and high school students in Durham Region. [Our Program - TAMI Durham](#)

Promotion¹⁰. Finally, in 2019, the Coalition receives the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC)¹¹ award for positive impact and outstanding contributions to mental health education and anti-stigma activities that make up the scope of TAMI.

Emerging, promising or leading: A leading practice

Quality of evidence: Data from the program evaluations in the various schools where the program has been adopted are rigorous and reflect good results in terms of knowledge and skills acquired among young people in the short, medium and long term. Furthermore, the practice is well received by the NWT community and other communities where the program has been implemented. In the NWT, teachers from two French-language schools valued tailor-made mental health training, which allowed them to deliver the program in schools while feeling well equipped.

Impact: Approximately 200 youth attend TAMI training each year in the NWT. Available results show the initiative to be a key asset in promoting and preventing mental health issues early on with youth, while providing them with resources and referrals to more specialized resources. The program has the effect of breaking down isolation, shame, and stigma among youth with mental health issues. In short, TAMI is an effective intervention with positive repercussions in terms of promotion and prevention in mental health among young people and not very demanding in terms of budget.¹²

Applicability: At present, the practice is being implemented in French in the two French-language schools mentioned above. There are no other French-language schools in the NWT. However, TAMI could be adopted in other Francophone minority communities, whether through Francophone school boards or through other community organizations representing Francophone minority communities.

Transferability: There is an interesting potential in this program for its establishment in other French-speaking minority communities (e.g. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, etc.).

¹⁰ Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI). (s. d.) Our Program—TAMI Durham. TAMI Durham — Talking About Mental Illness Website: <http://tamidurham.ca/our-program> (Retrieved February 5, 2021)

¹¹ Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC). (2020). MDSC awards 2019 Jordan James Pickell Award to Durham Talking About Mental Illness Coalition (TAMI). Online: <https://mdsc.ca/mdsc-awards-2019-jordan-james-pickell-award-to-durham-talking-about-mental-illness-coalition-tami/> (Retrieved February 23, 2021)

¹² The cost of TAMI in the NWT is \$ 25,000 per year.