Directory of Innovative Practices in Health and Social Services in Official Language Minority Contexts

PRACTICE #26

Accès santé jeunesse Péninsule acadienne (ASJPA) (New Brunswick)

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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 complements the *Organizational and Community Resources Self-Assessment Tool for Active Offer and Social and Health Services Continuity*, which was also developed by the GReFoPS.[1] It presents initiatives most often implemented locally that respond to community needs and are considered innovative by the various actors involved in their implementation. The practices were identified, analyzed and classified using an evaluation framework from the Health Council of Canada and definitions from the Public Health Agency of Canada. This enabled us to distinguish between emerging, promising and leading practices. Some of these practices were suggested by Société Santé en français and the provincial, territorial and regional French-language health networks, or by other collaborators.

We refer the reader 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, and 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 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)

Practice #26: *Accès santé jeunesse Péninsule acadienne* (ASJPA) (New Brunswick)

This practice contributes to improving:

- The values and principles of your organization: innovation and offer of services in the user's chosen official language
- Active offer (reception and visibility; continuity of services in the minority official language)
- Relations with service users
- Community resources: the organization's collaboration with key community stakeholders

The organization implementing this practice:

The Centre de Bénévolat de la Péninsule Acadienne Inc. (CBPA) created the *Accès santé jeunesse Péninsule acadienne* (ASJPA)[2] program. The mission of the CBPA is to help promote and facilitate volunteer activities and to analyze socio-community needs within its territory. The CBPA develops and implements the resources needed to address these needs. The organization runs over fifteen community programs that range from helping older workers land jobs to youth and early childhood mental health.

The information contained in this fact sheet mainly comes from a telephone interview conducted with Martine Haché, Executive Director of the CBPA, and Christian Paulin, Co-Manager of the Program, on December 20, 2024. It was complemented by documentary research; the sources are cited in the references.

Background

The *Accès santé jeunesse Péninsule acadienne* (ASJPA) initiative is derived from the *ACCESS Esprits Ouverts* project, which began in 2017. The latter is a Canada-wide study that examines 14 communities and implements and evaluates a transformation model from mental health services aimed at youth aged 11 to 25, with a view to improving these services. The CBPA is one of three community partners selected in New Brunswick; it is also the only one that provides services to a remote rural Francophone population.

The original project ran from 2017 to 2020. Its objective was to develop and approach for building better mental health practices aimed at youth. A large portion of the funding came from the Graham Boeckh Foundation,[3] but there was also support from government sources, research funds and funds from other philanthropic organizations. The initiative that ran in the Acadian Peninsula was distinct in that it was implemented in a rural and isolated environment.

2 Originally named *ACCESS Esprits Ouverts Nouveau-Brunswick* (ACCESS EO NB).

3 The goal of this private foundation is to transform the mental health system and the available services by developing, funding, and helping with a series of strategic initiatives. For further information, visit the organization's website at https://grahamboeckhfoundation.org/en/what-we-do/transform-mental-health/integrated-youth-services-network-of-networks-initiative/

The funding ended in 2020. The CBPA wanted to continue the program and applied to Société Santé en français (SSF). Funding was granted for a two-year period, and the CBPA received support from the same research team at the Université de Moncton that had started the original project.

In 2023, the funding from SSF ended. The CBPA subsequently received funding from the Department of Health to continue it. The fact that youth mental health in New Brunswick had been studied and monitored by province-wide investigations undoubtedly made it easier to include the initiative into provincially funded services.

A 2024 investigation revealed that 50% of students from Grade 6 to 12 reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. It also stated that the situation had improved since the previous investigation (2022–2023), which had been conducted in the post-pandemic period,[4] but that there was still work to be done to continue improving youth mental health in the province. On this point, certain communities in New Brunswick are doing better than others. Indeed, certain factors can put youth at risk or have a protective effect. These include having a sense of belonging at school and in the community, experiencing loneliness and being bullied.[5]

Objectives

The objective of the first phase of the project (2017–2020) was to identify best practices that improve access to mental health care for youth aged 11 to 25.

The objective of the second phase (2020–2023) was to document and model the approach.

The objective of the third phase (2023–present) is to implement this approach in the Acadian Peninsula and ensure the program continues.

Features of the practice

Over time, the CBPA adapted the approach from the first initiative to the context of the Acadian Peninsula. One contact person indicated that the organization had gradually developed a unique approach that was more mobile and allowed workers to travel to meet with youth and address the specific needs of a rural community like the Acadian Peninsula. The long distances and lack of public transport made it difficult for youth to travel to the CBPA office. In response, the organization formed a team of workers who travelled to where the youth wanted to be reached. This enabled the workers to establish trusting relationships with them and to point them toward services using a more flexible approach.

The services provided by the CBPA became complementary to existing services in the region. There are clinicians who conduct assessments, who provide clinical and family accompaniment and who point youth to the best possible option for them. Youth may be referred to a community integration worker to help them navigate services. The worker can recommend that they attend a workshop or participate in more in-depth programs to meet their needs. These services are provided in French.

In parallel, the research team supported the initiative and systematized the experience with special care given to its rural aspect. The researchers' role is tied to the transferability of the practice, which will be addressed in the Analysis section of this fact sheet.

4 New Brunswick Health Council (2024). New Brunswick Youth Mental Health. https://nbhc.ca/surveys/new-brunswick-youth-mental-health and New Brunswick Health Council (2024). The state of mental health of N.B. youth. https://nbhc.ca/sites/default/files/publications-attachments/FinalWEB_Fiche_MentalHealthYouth_NBHC_EN.pdf, Accessed on January 13, 2025

5 Ibid.

More recently, the Department of Health announced its support for the project, which will be rolled out in other communities in New Brunswick. The ASJPA initiative will be adapted to address the Integrated Youth Services (IYS) model, which is now found in different Canadian provinces.[6] The Canadian Mental Health Association will be responsible for project coordination. IYS in New Brunswick have been made possible by contributions from the Government of New Brunswick, the Graham Boeckh Foundation, Medavie Blue Cross, the McConnell Foundation, the Cooperators, GreenShield and other local and national philanthropic partners. The Mental Health Research Chair at the Université de Moncton will be associated with a project on integrated mental health services.

Challenges

In ensuring continuation of the ASJPA project, its leaders encountered difficulties securing renewed funding. Accessing specialized resources and needing to travel to youth due to the rural location were also cited as major difficulties. This challenge is especially common when youth do not have much support from their families and cannot travel to access the services they need. Sometimes they live half an hour from the CBPA service centre. Isolation puts youth at risk.

The resource people reported that their organization tried to maximize the expertise of its employees in an effort to address the obstacles related to a lack of specialized resource. Staff retention is not a problem; the professionals recruited for ASJPA are still in their roles. It can be difficult to ensure the continuum of care when youth need to travel outside of the Acadian Peninsula to obtain specialized care in French.

Analysis

Why is this practice considered innovative?

The fact that a minority Francophone community organization partnered with a Canada-wide project is a very interesting avenue when it comes to getting more support for the project and increasing its scope. Through this partnership, the initial model was adapted to address the needs of youth in remote and rural regions such as the Acadian Peninsula. This initiative is considered innovative because of (a) its appropriate response to the needs of youth regarding the delivery of integrated mental health services in French in rural areas, (b) the financial support it received from different funders, (c) support from university research teams, and (d) its trajectory over seven years. The fact that the approach was flexible and geared toward integrated youth services demonstrates that it is adapted to a specific reality and addresses the needs of Francophone youth in minority communities located in a rural and remote area.

6 IYS is a set of guiding principles for delivering care to youth. Based on a “one-stop-shop” approach, IYS hubs offer youth aged 12 to 25 and their families fast and easy access to an array of services and supports. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/mental-health-wellness/about-youth-mental-health-fund/integrated-youth-services.html; see also Youth Wellness Hubs https://centresbien-etrejeunesse.ca/les-services-integres-pour-les-jeunes-sij.

Emerging, promising or leading: A promising practice

Quality of evidence: From the beginning, the implementation of this initiative was supported by a research team. This ensured that there was a systematic approach with an appropriate method, monitoring and rigorous assessment. In 2019, a socioeconomic assessment of the project was conducted (Dezetter et al., 2019).[7] The researchers' monitoring and guidance included the conducting of surveys and interviews. The results made it possible to adapt the program over time. In 2023, a second study documented the implementation and impacts of the ASJPA program using the RE-AIM.[8]

Impact: The socioeconomic analyses clearly demonstrated that programs offering and funding psychological services for people with mental illness have a very good return on investment.[9] At a yearly cost of $2,237 per youth, the investment was profitable from the first year, according to the program assessment report. Funding this type of program improves youth mental health and wellness; such programs reduce risky situations and social costs.[10]

The second study demonstrated that the approach used by the workers fostered [translation] "the formation of a trusting relationship and youth empowerment."[11] This study underscored the importance of the CBPA's partnerships with community organizations to ensure integrated mental health services for Francophone youth in the region.

Applicability: The CBPA is still working on finalizing the integrated youth service approach. The project leaders recently created Les Carrefours Jeunesse. These are physical spaces where services are found together in one place. Funders plan to implement integrated services for youth in six regions of New Brunswick. The CBPA offers its services in French to its majority Francophone population. The other sites will be in the regions of Moncton, Saint-Jean, Tobique, Elsipogtog and Fredericton (with two of them serving Indigenous communities).

Transferability: This initiative was designed as part of a study to identify approaches that could be replicated elsewhere. Both the research team and the CBPA's project leaders paid special attention to an approach that would address the needs and characteristics of a rural region, to investigate the potential of transferring it to comparable regions of Canada. While the minority Francophone population was not initially considered in the Canada-wide project, this population of youth now represents a key component of it. Furthermore, the concept of integrated youth services was incorporated into the initial response.

Finally, the contact people mentioned the recent creation of an international network on Francophone integrated services, which could optimize the sharing and replicability of this type of initiative beyond Canada's borders. The CBPA has also taken steps to establish a similar model for referring seniors in its territory.

7 Dezetter, A., Beaton, A., Bourque, J. (2019). Evaluation socioéconomique du Projet ACCESS Esprits Ouverts Nouveau-Brunswick. Analyses préliminaires du volet T0 de l'Evaluation socioéconomique 2019 avec modèle prospectif. https://accessopenminds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Dezetter-et-al-ACCESS-EONB-2020_01_31.pdf Accessed on January 13, 2025.

8 Corriveau, H., Goguen, C., et Plourde, V. (2023). Accès santé jeunesse : évaluation d'une approche communautaire en santé mentale à l'aide du modèle RE-AIM. Rapport final. Chaire de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la santé mentale des enfants et des jeunes. Université de Moncton.

9 Dezetter et al. (2019).

10 Ibid.

11 Corriveau et al. (2023).