



Mental Health Commission of Canada **Advisory Committee Project Summary and Update - October 2009**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's (MHCC) eight Advisory Committees developed proposals in the early months of its inaugural year to support the key initiatives. The MHCC board approved and funded 21 projects for 08/09 and four for 09/10. Under the leadership of Dr. Jayne Barker, Director, the Policy and Research team was formed to provide support to and help implement Advisory Committee Projects. We are pleased to provide the second edition of the MHCC Policy & Research Team Update, which will share the progress and achievements of the projects to date.

Status of Projects

- Twenty-one projects were approved for 08/09 and four for 09/10
 - Seventeen of these projects are now fully underway (Project Committees are in place, contract staff, investigative teams or consultants are engaged and funds are flowing)
 - One project has been completed and a final report submitted to the MHCC entitled "*Improving mental health services for immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural and racialized groups: Issues and options for service improvement*"
 - Seven projects are in the development stage

Project Specifics for each Advisory Committee

CHILD AND YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CYAC)

Development of the Evergreen Framework Document - this project will inform and guide policies and plans created by service organizations and governments (provincial and territorial), in the area of child and youth mental health. It will also provide key information related to child and youth mental health in the Commissions' Mental Health Strategy. The online survey for the Values & Principles (V & R) document took place from July to September, 2009; public and committee consultation for the revised draft is expected for the winter of 2009/2010. The research team is presenting at the Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres conference in Halifax (October, 2009) and the second Invitational Symposium on Children's Mental Health hosted by the Child Welfare League of Canada and other partners, including the MHCC, in Ottawa (November, 2009).

Youth Council (YC) - formed at the end of March, this group will ensure the voice of youth is represented across all areas of the Commission's work. 10 young people from across Canada will participate. They are aged 17 to 25 years and with lived experience of mental health problems or illnesses. The YC will advise the Commission about matters relating to youth and mental health. Members will have the opportunity to provide input to project teams, working groups and other committees.

School-Based Mental Health & Addictions (SBMHA) Services - this project will provide practitioners and policy makers in education, health, child welfare and related organizations with a variety of policy and practice

options for the delivery of SBMHA services. The project will include an extensive literature review, environmental scan, national survey and a comprehensive knowledge transfer and exchange plan. Over 70 network affiliations have been identified as potential key stakeholders to be linked into the project. This project is fully underway.

Family Unit Self-stigma – this project focuses on self-stigma in children and youth living with mental health problems or illnesses, and their families (including siblings, parents, and other family members and caregivers). The goal is to identify effective ways for understanding and tackling self-stigma. A consultant has been engaged for this project, and work will begin in November, 2009.

Child & Youth Anti-stigma – this project will inform the child and youth component of the national anti-stigma/anti-discrimination campaign by working closely with the project manager of the Anti-stigma /Anti-discrimination Initiative. Plans are currently under development.

Child & Youth Mental Knowledge Exchange Landscape/Base – this project will explore who is doing what in knowledge exchange in child and youth mental health in Canada and internationally, and ensure that the components of a knowledge exchange and transfer strategy for child and youth mental health are based on the best available science, are culturally appropriate and geared to the specific needs of all end users. Plans are currently under development.

FAMILY CAREGIVERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mental Health Family Link Project - involves developing a national family caregiver virtual peer support network. Through the network, trained volunteers who have cared for a family member will provide support to other families in similar circumstances by telephone. The network will eventually become part of the Knowledge Exchange Center. The Project Coordinator started in October, 2009, based out of Toronto. The first matches of clients and peer volunteers are expected in March 2010.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE LAW COMMITTEE

Evaluation Project – The goal of this project is to ensure people with a mental illness and mental health problems are treated more fairly and justly through legislation. A survey of the literature appraising current Canadian legislation has been completed. A Request for Proposals (RFP) is expected to be issued in fall 2009.

National Trajectory Project – this project will look at individuals who are declared Not Criminally Responsible (NCR) due to a mental disorder. The project will follow their path through the mental health and criminal justice systems in three provinces. Areas of focus will include duration of stay in a facility, treatment received and how individuals responded. Data collection is underway in Quebec and British Columbia, and will begin shortly in Ontario.

Police Project – this initiative is aimed at improving how police relate to individuals with a mental illness or mental health problem. Guidelines will be developed which will be used for training in police services across the country. This project is fully underway, with four of the five deliverables at or near completion. A contract has been awarded to undertake a study of consumer experiences with the police that will inform the development of the guidelines.

Corrections Project - individuals living with mental health problems and illnesses who have been or are involved with correctional services are the focus of this project. Plans are currently in development.

SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Consumer/Peer Research Network – this project is designed to increase the number of mental health researchers who have lived experience of mental health problems or illnesses by developing a network of peer, community, and/or academic researchers. An upcoming national visioning meeting for the network is planned for November 2009.

Resources for Multicultural Mental Health – tools will be developed to support more culturally friendly and appropriate services for individuals of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. Materials will be produced based on input from consumers, practitioners, policy-makers and community organizations. The Multicultural Mental Health Resource Center (MMHRC) website, <http://www.mcgill.ca/mmhrc/> was launched in May. Currently, an online survey for family physicians on “needs assessment” is underway; link <http://www.mcgill.ca/mmhrc/projects/improvingaccess/survey/>

SENIORS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Guidelines – the 1988 *Guidelines for Comprehensive Services to Elderly Persons with Psychiatric Disorders*, a major reference document for clinicians in Canada for over 10 years, will be updated through this project. A review of the literature is underway and consultations begin in October 2009.

Seniors’ Knowledge Exchange - the Committee collaborated with six other organizations to hold a meeting between knowledge exchange experts and key partners in seniors’ mental health and dementia in Canada, “The Think Tank”, was hosted in Ottawa, March 29-30, 2009. An Issues and Options paper providing recommendations for the MHCC regarding the development of the Knowledge Exchange Centre as it relates to seniors is expected to be released in fall 2009.

Seniors’ Anti-stigma – this project aims to reduce stigma for seniors who are mentally ill by developing key messages for a range of activities including: a public awareness campaign, the development of a speakers’ bureau and creating educational materials. A Request for Proposal is being developed.

SERVICE SYSTEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Peer Support – the goal of the project is to enhance the role of peer support programs in the mental health system by examining the current state of peer support across Canada and internationally. A literature review is almost completed, and an emerging list of peer support initiatives across the country is being compiled. Consultation with focus groups in communities across the country is underway and expected to be completed by the end of October, 2009.

Diversity – this project aims to promote promising practices for inclusion in the mental health strategy, as well as developing consensus on strategies that provinces and regional mental health systems may consider in meeting the needs of ethno-culturally diverse groups, immigrants, refugees and the marginalized populations. A final report entitled “Improving mental health services for immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural and racialized groups: Issues and options for service improvement” has been completed and submitted to the MHCC.

Housing and Related Supports – this work will inform a National Strategy for Housing and Mental Health. The ultimate goal is to improve the availability of, and access to, suitable housing and related supports for individuals living with mental health problems and illnesses. Provincial/Territorial Reference Groups/National

Reference Networks have been established, a strategic plan has been developed, and surveys are being developed to capture information from both housing and mental health providers.

WORKFORCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Executive Leadership and Policy – designed to encourage CEOs and other senior organizational leaders to make a commitment to mental health in the workplace. Activities centre on development of a website that includes videos of Michael Wilson and other senior executives as well as links to resources. The website will be launched on October 21, 2009 at the Canadian Society for Training and Development conference in Toronto. Michael Kirby will be speaking at the conference opening and Louise Bradley will participate in a luncheon panel discussion regarding mental health in the workplace. Additional videos of union leaders will be filmed and posted on the website in November.

Aspiring Workforce – targets the “aspiring workforce” – persons living with a mental health problem or illness who have never worked, who have not been in the workforce for a prolonged period of time, or who suffer from episodic mental health problems or illnesses and for whom disability coverage is inadequate. The research protocols are to be inclusive and will employ an “equity lens” to capture the particular experience/narratives of women and diverse communities. A consultant has been selected and the project is getting underway.

Improved Mental Health Care in the Workplace – this project will target Canadian employers with the purpose of examining ways to enhance the three levels of workplace mental illness prevention and to develop a shared or collaborative care model for mental health services and prevention through the workplace. A consultant has been selected and the project will be commencing mid-fall.

FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS COMMITTEE (FNIM)

Cultural Safety - The objective of this project is to ensure cultural safety becomes a pillar of the MHCC mental health strategy and the anti-stigma campaign, and that it informs all efforts of the MHCC. This project will conduct a literature review on cultural safety, prepare for a community outreach process in the fall 2009/winter 2010; and complete a Cultural Safety DVD.

Ethical Guidelines - an ethical framework to guide frontline services delivered to First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities is being developed. While it can be applied across the health care and social service fields, the work will focus mainly on mental health and addictions, where some of the most vulnerable Indigenous people seek support. A literature review is being completed and a national roundtable discussion on ethical programming took place October 1st and 2nd in Saskatoon. The results of the Roundtable will inform the ongoing project.

For further information about any of the projects please contact the Policy and Research Team as follows:

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