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Introduction

High performing health systems should provide seamless, person-centred, quality care to individuals even as they transition across different services and delivery sites.

An instructive yet understudied transition point is the shift from child/youth to adult mental health services, where continuity of care is often lacking. The inability to access appropriate mental health services may have negative long-term consequences for youth's health and well-being (Burns et al., 2009; Singh et al., 2010). In addition, disruption in services impacts not only the youth/family, but also the broader health care system (Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health, 2013).

Our team has set out to conduct a multi-phase study aimed at understanding best practices and how best to address the needs of transition-aged youth in Ontario's mental health system.

Phase 1: Literature reviews

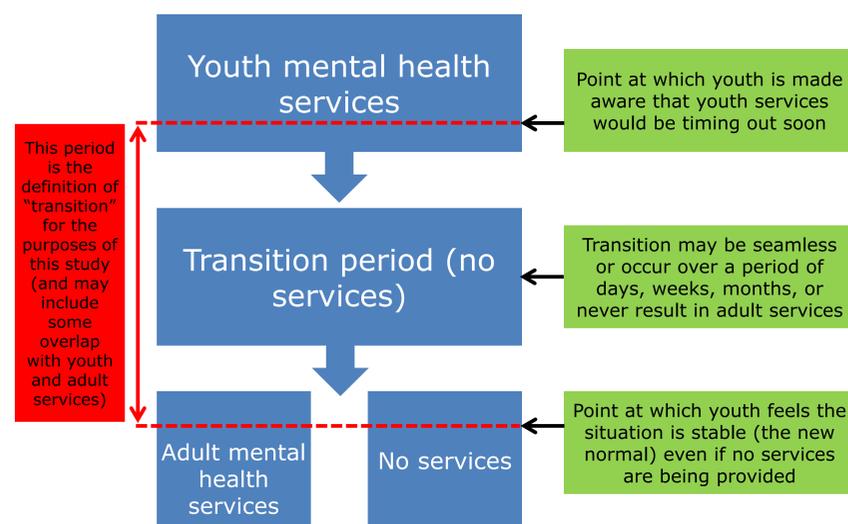
Phase 2: Case studies (key informant interviews)

Phase 3: Conceptual mapping/policy frameworks/decision tools

Phase 4: Knowledge transfer and exchange

The development of a policy framework and a range of decision tools for policy-makers and managers will be informed by a series of literature reviews and case studies (exploring the provision of mental health services, and specifically transition from youth to adult services, across three LHINs in Ontario).

Youth to Adult Transitions in Mental Health



Research Sponsor

This study was funded by the Government of Ontario through a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Health System Research Fund grant entitled 'Harnessing Evidence and Values for Health System Excellence'. The views expressed in this poster are the views of the authors and should not be taken to represent the views of the Government of Ontario.

Methods

A common core search method was developed by the research team. Peer-reviewed literature was searched using keywords related to the terms "child" or "adolescent", "mental health" and "transition". The databases explored included CINAHL, Embase, HealthSTAR, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, ProQuest and Web of Science. Reference tracking was also used. Search results were then refined through separate searches with research questions pertaining to the eight literature review topics.

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews will be conducted with senior decision-makers in the Ministries and LHINs, as well as health care providers, youth who are receiving/have received mental health services, and families of youth, across 9 programs.

	Core search	Review-specific search	Abstract review	Full-text review	Final articles
1. Definitions	37960	2243	92	27	19
2. Information technology	37960	3744	73	25	6
3. Peer support	37960	542	40	25	13
4. Effectiveness of transitions	37960	1584	142	64	6
5. Philosophies of care	37960	2219	209	44	12
6. Developmental transitions	37960	1647	184	40	9
7. Cost of transitions*	38417	898	86	12	8

*EconLit database included in search

Preliminary Results

Preliminary literature review results indicate:

- There is a **scarcity of interventions** and **lack of communication** between child and adult services
- **Peer support, social support** and **information technology** are potential contributors to (and indicators of) successful transitions
- **Multifaceted** (across jurisdictions) and **specialized health service programs** best address various domains of developmental transitions
- **Philosophical differences** exist between services. Child services are often person- and family-centred, while adult services focus on the individual.
- Caregiver **financial burden** and **patient employment and insurance coverage** are negatively impacted during transition.

NOTE: Data collection from case studies is in progress.

Discussion & Conclusion

We have conducted seven related literature reviews. The information from these reviews will be synthesized and combined with results from nine case studies that seek to explore the experiences and/or views of key informants about the process of transitioning to adult mental health services.

While evidence is limited in many theme areas, these literature reviews revealed that philosophy of care, the availability of bridging programs, and effective communication approaches are important elements for effective transitions.

Data collection related to the case studies is currently underway.

	LHIN		
	Erie St. Clair	Central West	Champlain
Youth program	7-10 interviews	7-10 interviews	7-10 interviews
Transition program	7-10 interviews	7-10 interviews	7-10 interviews
Adult program	7-10 interviews	7-10 interviews	7-10 interviews

7-10 interviews comprised of:

- 1 manager
- 2-3 clinicians (physicians, social workers, occupational therapists, etc.)
- 4-6 youth/family members

Implications for Transitions Project

In addition to answering the research specific questions for each focus area, the reviews also inform subsequent elements of a larger ongoing study by helping to:

- identify knowledge gaps that will be explored during key informant interviews;
- provide information to support the analysis phase;
- identify stakeholder values;
- conduct economic and policy analysis; and
- develop policy frameworks and tools.

References

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