

FNP Youth Engagement Project Summary

KEY IDEAS

MHA issues affect an estimated 1.2 million Canadian children and youth, yet fewer than 20% receive appropriate treatment for these concerns.

Navigation responds to this need by working closely with youth and their families to guide them through their care plans and reduce barriers to timely access and transitions.

Youth Engagement in MHA services is about empowering all young people as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important.

The New Mentality

A Youth Engagement Framework in the context of navigation is needed for these services to best meet the needs of youth seeking MHA care.

Project Background

The Family Navigation Project (FNP) is a program in which navigators work one-on-one with youth ages 13-26 with mental health and/or addictions (MHA) concerns and their families to help them find their way through the MHA system and get connected to the right care. FNP has served over 4500 youth in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to connect these youth with MHA concerns to the accessible and appropriate care that they deserve. To build on our successes, we sought to better understand how to best engage youth in navigation services to better meet the needs of youth and their families seeking MHA care.

Objectives

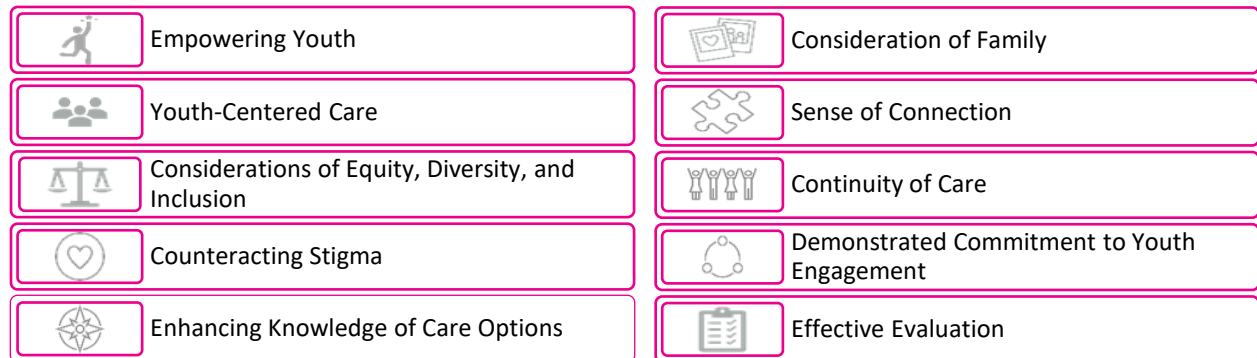
1. Partner with youth to explore youth engagement in navigation
2. Identify preferences for youth engagement in the context of navigation
3. Create a framework for youth engagement in navigation
4. Use the framework to establish a youth engagement strategy at FNP

Participatory Research Design

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an approach to research that uplifts and empowers community members as equal partners throughout the research process. Using a CBPR approach, the research team was established, including 5 youth engagement partners and 1 youth research assistant, working alongside researchers, a navigator, a decision-maker, and a caregiver. The goal of the research team was to investigate the needs of youth with MHA concerns for improved engagement with navigation supports. To do so, the research team co-developed interview and focus group guides and co-facilitated interviews and focus groups with 86 participants (including youth, service providers, caregivers, and FNP staff).

Research Analysis and Findings

- Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed for analysis.
- The research team completed a qualitative analysis of the transcripts, consolidating the rich information into 10 distinct themes.
- These themes, presented in the figure below, emphasize the importance of embracing youth autonomy and creating authentic opportunities for youth to drive their care, identify the need for equitable and comprehensive youth MHA care options, and call for uplifting youth voice in all levels of MHA services and systems.



Key Learnings

The 10 themes cover a comprehensive range of topics for MHA navigation services to consider as they work to engage youth, and showcase key insights into what youth are looking for when they engage with such a service. These themes, along with additional stakeholder feedback from the FNP staff, leadership, Youth Engagement Partners and the Family Advisory Council, greatly contributed to the development of the FNP Youth Engagement Strategy. The strategy will focus on structural, organizational, and individual levels to drive the guiding principles of deepening connections with youth, ensuring youth are guiding FNP, and optimally serving the youth who reach out to use the FNP service.

“Having youth partners contributing to this project created an opportunity for youth voices to be represented and heard.” – Thalia Youth Engagement Partner

Next Steps

- The strategy will be launched and published on the FNP website in Spring 2022.
- The FNP Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was launched in March 2022 to further youth engagement at FNP through providing feedback on policies and practice and partnering with FNP to develop and implement an initiative to make its supports more youth-friendly.
- FNP will build and strengthen partnerships to continue to elevate youth voice in MHA care.

Family Navigation Project is here to help youth & families:

 1-800-380-9FNP

 familynavigation@sunnybrook.ca

 familynavigationproject.ca

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