

August 21, 2018

Concurrent Workshops

Developing skills to foster mentally healthy communities

5 concurrent workshops will be offered to enhance skills in the use of tools and methods for practice and policies that support population child and youth mental health promotion.

5. Youth Voices, Youth Hope: Taking action for better outcomes for children, youth and their families

Presenter: Sheryl Boswell, Executive Director, Youth Mental Health Canada

In this workshop, participants will focus on child and youth mental health reality, change and action using evidence-based and international best practices, as well as the voices of youth and adults with lived experience of mental ill health. The workshop will feature our national documentary film on youth mental health, "Youth Voices, Youth Hope", a film project that is grassroots, youth-driven, produced with 150 youth from 3 provinces who made this film with no funding. Participants will get a solid overview of the changes that are needed to support children and youth with mental health challenges and disabilities. These changes can make a difference to the lives, education and futures of young people and their families by providing easily accessible, structured living and education supports, within a consistent and coordinated local, provincial, national and territorial framework. Improving quality and outcomes has the potential to save lives. Involving youth and their families and creating a needs-based healthcare and education systems is the first step in addressing the challenges. Our film highlights the voices of youth. Any innovative practice, effective methods and potential success stories must keep the voices and lived experienced of young people and their families central to all that we do. Pre and post activities will examine attitudes towards mental health and suicide that create barriers, an understanding of the difference between mental health and mental health challenges and disabilities, ways to support people who are struggling in words and action and an understanding of child and youth mental health reality in Canada.

Connection with the ASI theme:

Suicide intervention and prevention is everyone's responsibility. A societal response to child and youth mental health promotion involves awareness, skills training, needs-based supports and services, a community of people with lived experience of mental health disabilities who guide and direct the changes needed, equitable funding, access and inclusion in all aspects of society. Our film and the workshop highlights the recommendations made by youth and people with lived experience. Child and youth mental health change and action was the theme for our film with the songs, "Give Us Hope" and "Stand Together" as the important messages. One hundred and fifty youth from 3 provinces made this film that featured many prominent mental health advocates including Clara Hughes, the Honorable Minister of Veteran Affairs Seamus O'Regan, Amelia Curran and Mary Walsh.

Participants will learn:

Learning Objectives:

- To explore child and youth mental health reality; address challenges and barriers in the current healthcare and education system
- To screen the national youth mental health documentary film, "Youth Voices, Youth Hope"

- To discuss mental health challenges and innovative, evidence-based, international best practice models of healthcare and education approaches, strategies and tools
- To incorporate the voice of children, youth and families with lived experience of mental ill health in everything that we do

Lessons for scaling up or delivering policies and programs:

Mental health challenges are complex, as are the solutions. A focus on child and youth mental health has to incorporate the use of accessible, individualized and inclusive mental health supports and services in education and health care that focus on motivators and needs. The use of a support team of young person, family, school, health and peer support is an essential component to ensuring that all partners feel supported, understood, respected and heard. Effective policies and programs that focus on the needs of children and youth with mental health challenges/disabilities must reflect the reality and needs of the communities they serve. Equitable access that recognizes that health is health and that mental illness can be chronic and life-threatening requires a commitment to suicide intervention and prevention from all people in society. We must get beyond mental health awareness and scale up to skills training in mental health action in policies and programs.

Presenter:

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Sheryl Boswell is the Executive Director of Youth Mental Health Canada, an educator of elementary to post-secondary and adult education students, a Career Counselor, a suicide loss survivor and an expert on infant, child and youth mental health.