eMental Health for Youth & Young Adults

Research Study:
Call for Community Expression of Interest

Alberta Health Services

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Background

Alberta's healthcare system is currently challenged to meet the needs of youth and young adults with addiction and mental health (AMH) issues, particularly anxiety, mood and substance use disorders. There is increasing demand for services, long waitlists, limited rural access, and stigma attached to accessing services.

The prevalence of mental health problems and limited access to in-person, one-on-one counselling in a clinic setting means many youth and young adults go without needed supports and treatments. This gap between need and supply is an opportunity to introduce innovative, effective online technologies as a complementary service delivery approach to prevention, early detection, assessment, and therapies for youth and young adults with low to moderate need.

Opportunity

A research study led by the Addiction and Mental Health (AMH), and Maternal, Newborn, Child & Youth (MNCY) Strategic Clinical Networks™, including researchers from Alberta Health Services (AHS), the University of Calgary, and the University of Alberta is participating in the final phase of the "Rewarding Success" funding competition by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR). This study will implement and evaluate known-effective e-Mental Health (e-MH) services. By implementing e-MH we aim to improve access to services and support, and clinical outcomes such as mental health and wellbeing. A detailed business case/research application is being prepared and is due in January 2019. If successful, the funding available is up to $5 million over 4 years.

The Proposed Study of e-MH for Youth and Young Adults

In general, e-MH is proven to be a highly effective and cost-efficient way to encourage individuals with low to moderate need to take more control and manage their own mental health in a non-stigmatizing and supportive environment. This study will evaluate whether the e-MH interventions improve health of Alberta youth and system outcomes in Alberta such as intervention uptake, reduced wait times, improved quality of life and symptom control, and removal of barriers to care such as stigma. It will also evaluate the use of this technology by healthcare providers.

The e-MH interventions will target the three most commonly occurring mental health disorders in youth and young adults in Alberta: anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders (including alcohol use disorders). The proposed study will investigate the following internet delivered interventions:

1) Online Peer-to-Peer and Family Support: Online moderated peer support can improve depressive symptoms and anxiety, and enable young people and their families to connect with others; share experiences; and seek and provide information, advice, and emotional support.
2) Internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT): A proven clinically effective and cost-effective intervention involving assessment, treatment, and therapist-guided self-help techniques for

depressive, anxiety-related, and other mental health conditions. iCBT can reduce stigma, increase access to services, enhance convenience, and reduce therapist-patient consult time.

3) Internet-Based Screening for Anxiety and Depression: Online screening to assess individual level of anxiety and depression. This information is used to direct individuals to appropriate healthcare or community services, and relevant and useful 'apps' on the study website.

4) Screening and Brief Intervention (eSBI): An online application that can help reduce alcohol consumption and blood alcohol levels, heavy episodic consumption, consumption frequency, and volume. It can also mitigate negative effects on school performance and other related problems.

If funding is successfully secured the research will begin in mid-2019. A community specific co-design process will occur before implementation. E-Mental health tools are intended to provide self-management supports to youth and young adults, and be adopted by clinicians in their practice. Phased implementation will occur in communities selected to participate. Design, implementation, technology and research supports will be funded through the e-mental health initiative.

Seeking Implementation Communities

We are looking for 5 communities (see table below) across Alberta to participate in this potential research opportunity (*contingent on the success of the research team to obtain funding from CIHR*). Communities will be part of a study to implement a number of app-based e-mental health (e-MH) tools to improve access to mental health supports for youth and young adults with substance misuse, depression, and/or anxiety disorders. The e-MH service will be delivered via the Internet or other innovative technologies, and can be provided to youth and young adults with mental health and addiction issues.

The e-MH supports will be integrated into the local healthcare and social system, and accessed in different ways, such as self-referral, or referral from community agencies, schools, primary care, or specialized mental health services. The emphasis on prevention, promotion, early detection, treatment, and recovery will require cross-sectoral support and partnerships between the healthcare and social system that are focused on improving mental health outcomes for youth and young adults.

Communities that meet the eligibility criteria below and are selected to be part of this study will be part of the co-design process. They will receive support and training in the use and implementation of the e-MH tools, and gain early access to the tools for adolescents and young adults residing in the community.

Five communities will be selected to participate in the research project and support the implementation of e-MH tools. Our goal is to evaluate e-MH implementation in different communities across Alberta to help us learn how to ultimately scale access to all Albertans. Communities will be selected to pilot e-MH tools based on a number of considerations:

Population & Needs	Leadership	Partnership
• Urban (geographically limited part of Edmonton or Calgary), Regional, Rural, or Remote communities • Population greater than 3000 in a town, city, or cluster of smaller communities • Number of individuals between 14 - 24 years old • Identified need for addiction and mental health supports for youth and young adults • Internet access	• Community is currently mobilizing on AMH needs • Clinicians, community AMH supports, and other partners have an interest in adopting e-MH tools into practice • Leadership and support from AHS AMH zone operations, Primary Care Network, Education, Pediatrics, other • Community leaders have the capacity and willingness to be actively involved with e-mental health implementation and the research project	• Broad base of support for adoption of e-MH tools from other organizations such as schools, health and social community agencies, places of worship, Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD)

If your community has questions about this opportunity, please email Seija Kromm at Seija.Kromm@ahs.ca.

If your community would like to apply for this opportunity, please fill out the application form below and email it to Seija Kromm at Seija.Kromm@ahs.ca by *Friday, September 28, 2018*.

Communities will be notified of results by *mid-November 2018*.

APPLICATION FORM

Community Name(s):

1. WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN ADOPTING e-MH TOOLS FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS INTO CARE?

2. *EVIDENCE OF NEED and CURRENT RESPONSE*

In the space below, please provide an explanation (with specific examples/evidence) of gaps in existing mental health services for youth and young adults in your community, specifically for depression, anxiety, and substance misuse. What has your community attempted in the past and/or currently to address these gaps?

3. POPULATION

Total population of YOUR community:

If total population is less than 3000 and there are surrounding communities you can work with, please provide the name of the surrounding communities and their population(s):

Surrounding Community Name	Population

4. DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In the space below, please provide a description of the most relevant services youth and young adults use for anxiety, depression, and/or substance misuse. For example, where do youth and young adults go for information? Where do they go first to access services? What other health and social services do youth and young adults access for MH support in the community? Outside the community? Please be specific.

5. CLINICS and PROVIDERS INTERESTED IN IMPLEMENTING e-MENTAL HEALTH

In the space below, please provide a brief description of the specific clinics or community organizations that are interested in partnering in this initiative and the mental health services they provide for youth and young adults in your community. For example, Alberta Health Services (AHS) Addiction and Mental Health (AMH), Pediatrics, Primary Care, Primary Care Networks (PCN), community organizations, etc.

Organization	Description of services and supports for youth and young adults	*Estimated* number of youth & young adults interacted with each month	*Estimated* number of youth & young adults who would benefit from e-MH services	*Estimated* number of healthcare providers that would use an e-MH platform

6. *EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT*

In the space below, please provide examples to show:

1) **Healthcare providers** are interested in and willing to support implementation of e-mental health in your community, and research study activities. For example, evidence that providers are interested in partnering in research by recruiting youth and young adults; evidence that they are interested in working alongside the lead researchers to co-design the implementation of e-MH in their community and practice; and/or identified interest in using internet based tools in their practice to improve (mental) health outcomes.

2) **The community** has the capacity to participate in and support the activities of the research study. For example, in-kind support can include meeting space, coordination and scheduling of meetings, providers with flexibility and time to work with the researchers, internet access in the community, etc. Financial support from the community or providers is not required.

7. PARTNER APPROVAL

By listing the names on the Application, the lead agency and following partners confirm that they have been involved in this application and will be active partners in the research study if it is successful in obtaining research funds.

Lead Organization:		Partner Organization:	
Name:		Name:	
Title:		Title:	
Phone number:		Phone number:	
Email:		Email:	
Date:		Date:	

Partner Organization:		Partner Organization:	
Name:		Name:	
Title:		Title:	
Phone number:		Phone number:	
Email:		Email:	
Date:		Date:	

Partner Organization:		Partner Organization:	
Name:		Name:	
Title:		Title:	
Phone number:		Phone number:	
Email:		Email:	
Date:		Date:	

Note: You may be contacted for a follow up meeting to better understand your interest in applying etc.

An expert panel has been established to review all proposals.

All applicants will be notified of selection decisions by *mid-November 2018*.

If your community is selected to participate, a letter of support, including signatures, regarding your participation in this study will be required by December 1, 2018.