

Introduction – Canadian Youth Mental Health

Ruby Brown and Anne Wojtak

Introduction

As we consider how Canada will refocus our efforts to build lasting economic resilience and a more sustainable future, at the core of this effort must be a bold commitment to invest in the potential of young people. Our children and youth are the future contributors to society and its most powerful agents of change.

Canada's social institutions of healthcare, education and community services are not merely support systems; they are the launch pads for a generation that can reimagine what is possible. If we truly aim to build a more just, innovative and sustainable world, we must ensure that these institutions are equipped to nurture and uplift young minds. That begins with investing in the mental well-being of children and youth as a foundational pillar of progress embedded nationwide.

There is sufficient knowledge about the effective approaches that can be expanded nationally. In this issue of *Healthcare Quarterly*, we highlight compelling examples of what is working. We are pleased to feature contributors from the advanced education, health and community sectors who have developed successful service models and programs. They have overcome significant barriers and extended their impact by forging strong partnerships.

The need to act is increasing. The article about British Columbia's Foundry initiative by Wuerth et al. (2025) brings

to our attention that 75% of mental disorders emerge before the age of 24 years – yet three out of four children cannot access the care they need (Canadian Medical Association and Canadian Psychiatric Association 2016). As highlighted in "Stepped Care 2.0" (Saxton et al. 2025), Canada's youth rank in the bottom third among wealthy nations on key well-being indicators, and the country faces one of the highest youth suicide rates. A national survey of post-secondary students further underscores the crisis, with 80% reporting experiencing depression, anxiety or loneliness, as cited in "Campus Community Project" (Norman 2025).

At the same time, today's youth are more receptive to seeking help. They are more open and proactive about their mental well-being than ever before, breaking down stigma and leading a cultural shift. They possess greater mental health literacy and have access to information. Youth are engaged and active in their wellness and keen to seek out ways to support themselves and their peers. The path to a stronger future depends on the confidence young people build during these formative years in themselves and in one another. We hope that these articles of institutional partnerships allow readers to envision new possibilities as they search for ways to strengthen our future generation.

References

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About the Authors

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