

**PRESS RELEASE  
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## **New data from ACCESS Open Minds mental health care initiative shows how to reduce wait times and provide quality care for more Canadian youth**

*Paradigms are shifting in youth mental health care in Canada*

**JANUARY 28, 2021, MONTREAL, QUE.** — ACCESS Open Minds is proud to release preliminary research data highlighting the concrete impacts its innovative mental health care model is having on youth and communities across the country.

These insights are a first-ever example of the potential a pan-Canadian network like ACCESS Open Minds to generate a national portrait of mental health needs while delivering real benefits for Canadian youth. Mental health is the number one concern that youth face today, yet mental health services are the most difficult to access. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem. These preliminary data show that by transforming the way mental health care is delivered, more youth get quicker access to quality care and that this transformed model can save the system money.

“This past year has been a challenge for many of us,” said Dr. Srividya (Vidya) Iyer, a licensed psychologist and Nominated Lead and Scientific-Clinical Director of ACCESS Open Minds. “Now more than ever, we need to advocate for better mental health supports for young people across Canada.”

Key findings of the research include:

- ACCESS Open Minds provides a safe and welcome space to youth aged 11 to 25, including those from groups whose needs are often not understood or met, such as those who are Indigenous, economically underprivileged, LGBTQIA2S+ and visible minorities.
- 96 per cent of youth say they would recommend ACCESS Open Minds services to a friend.
- At one service that was economically evaluated, every dollar invested in ACCESS Open Minds saved \$10 in downstream health care costs such as hospitalizations, emergency room visits, outpatient clinic visits, specialist visits, GP visits, public residential admissions, and prescription drug dispenses from community pharmacies.
- The overall saving was up to \$4,500 per patient per year in health care costs.
- Almost 84 per cent of youth referred to ACCESS Open Minds services were seen within 72 hours of initial contact, compared to well over four weeks in other delivery models.
- ACCESS Open Minds is making a positive difference on outcomes that matter, such as reduced distress, improved mental health and increased functioning.

With an expected “mental health echo-pandemic,” access to mental health services for Canada’s youth is more important than ever. From helping rural Canadians to partnering with Indigenous communities and making sure

homeless youth in urban centres receive mental health support, ACCESS Open Minds is delivering real results on the front lines.

ACCESS Open Minds is the first network to have been launched under Canada's Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR). It is funded through a partnership between Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Graham Boeckh Foundation. After five years of research, it's clear that ACCESS Open Minds is transforming youth mental health care and generating vital evidence.

ACCESS Open Minds' innovative model of care means:

- Seamlessly partnering with existing service providers
- Cutting red tape and duplication
- A trusted service built for youth, by youth
- Supports for families and caregivers
- Reduced wait times, improving access to care for more youth and families
- Culturally appropriate services
- Evidence-based and high-quality programs; integrating best practice and continuous evaluation into front-line care
- Being nimble and adaptable to communities and responsive to changing needs (e.g., COVID-19)

"After five years of research using evidence-based principles, ACCESS Open Minds is helping Canadian youth get the care they need — when and where they need it," said Ashok Malla, ACCESS Open Minds' founding Nominated Lead. Iyer added, "Our vision is pan-Canadian in scope but is local and community-driven in impact. The ACCESS Open Minds model is about flexibility, quality and credibility. Our approach means reduced wait times and more youth in care."

There are currently 16 ACCESS Open Minds sites operating in seven provinces and one territory across Canada. Six sites are in Indigenous communities, which face unique challenges and traditionally underfunded resources. This pan-Canadian approach to collaborative mental health care means best practices can be scaled quickly so that youth can access innovative care no matter where they live.

"We have a lot of youth with mental health issues. For them to receive both mental health services and programming — traditional teachings, crafts, cooking, art, sports and recreation events, educational sessions — at the same place has been one of our means of being able to do everything possible to prevent suicides, crisis situations and to meet youth needs," said Chief Leroy Denny about the ACCESS Open Minds site in Eskasoni First Nation.

Research from ACCESS Open Minds is generating critical new knowledge, such as waiting times to access youth mental health services in diverse contexts across the country, which should act as the backbone for making evidence-based service and policy decisions. ACCESS Open Minds is an ongoing research initiative. A final report with updated data is expected April 2023.

To view the preliminary data, please visit: <https://accessopenminds.ca/impact/>

### **About ACCESS Open Minds**

Since 2014, ACCESS Open Minds has been developing evidence-based approaches to improving youth mental health services through testing innovative approaches to care across Canada and meaningfully evaluating their impact and outcomes on youth, caregivers, communities and return on public investment. ACCESS Open Minds is initiating a paradigm shift in youth mental health care in Canada. Our service sites provide quick access to culturally relevant mental health services as well as access to physical health and sexual health services, traditional Indigenous programming/support, and other social services. We continue our work by scaling up best practices, leading knowledge translation and capacity building, and providing a national platform for continuous improvement of youth mental health services.

### **For more information**

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### **Find us online:**

<https://accessopenminds.ca/>

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