

### **Innovative BC Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use project wins national award**

**Vancouver** — A BC collaborative involving over 800 stakeholders who are working together to improve the lives of children, youth and their families living with mental health and substance use issues, has won a national award in recognition of its innovation and team-work.

The BC Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use (CYMHSU) Collaborative, a joint effort funded in partnership by Doctors of BC and BC government, was presented with the award by the *Canadian College of Family Physicians* and the *Canadian Psychiatric Association* at their national conference in Calgary earlier this month.

"This award signifies that we are on the right path in supporting mental wellness for children, youth and their families," said Health Minister Terry Lake. "The collaborative approach, which involves a variety of stakeholders, complements the Ministry of Health's "Setting Priorities for the B.C. Health System," our overarching strategy to create a more sustainable and patient-centered health system."

One of the founders of the collaborative, family physician Dr Shirley Sze, states "Young people and their families are now benefiting from new protocols and practices in place as a result of the work of the hundreds of people involved in this Collaborative. It is really gratifying to know that our work is being recognized in the rest of Canada."

For the past 18 months a growing group of BC mental health stakeholders — including youth and families, family doctors, clinicians, psychiatrists, pediatricians, school counsellors, social workers, RCMP, community agencies, First Nations, government experts and more — have focused on identifying and addressing barriers preventing youth and families receiving support and services for mental health and substance use issues. BC government participation involves commitment from three ministries — The Ministries of Health, Children and Family Development, and Education.

"Anxiety and other mental health challenges affect nearly 84,000 children and youth in B.C. — that's one in seven," said Jane Thornthwaite, Parliamentary Secretary for Child Mental Health and Anti-Bullying. "The Collaborative has been working together to identify and address ways to improve the mental health system, which is helping to make a difference in the lives of young people throughout B.C."

Now in 26 communities across the province, Local Action Teams are building relationships to integrate care across systems and within the community. These teams are tackling issues such as linking youth and families to local resources and addressing local waiting lists for services. Gaps in care identified by Local Action Teams at a systemic level are passed on to province-wide working groups.

These working groups, 10 in total, are creating provincial system-wide solutions to remove barriers to care. These include: a standardized approach to care in hospital emergency rooms, including support

plans and guaranteed follow up; access to a list of doctors who will ensure care and referrals for youth without a GP; and the use of innovative technology to provide access to specialists in rural and remote areas, and much more.

Local Action Teams exist in the following regions:

- **Interior:** Cariboo, Central Okanagan, Creston, Kimberley-Cranbrook, Kootenay Boundary, North Okanagan (Vernon), Shuswap (Salmon Arm), South Okanagan and Thompson
- **Vancouver Island:** Comox, Cowichan, Mt. Waddington, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Salt Spring Island, Sooke/West Shore, Victoria
- **Fraser:** Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Fraser Cascades, Langley, Ridge Meadows, White Rock/South Surrey;
- **Vancouver Coastal:** North Shore, Sunshine Coast

Local Action Teams are currently in development in 18 other communities in the province, including:

- **North:** Engagement with multiple communities is underway
- **Interior:** Golden- Invermere, Lillooet-Lytton, Merritt and Revelstoke
- **Vancouver Island:** Long Beach, Oceanside/Parksville
- **Fraser:** Delta, New Westminster, Tri-Cities, Mission and Surrey-North Delta
- **Vancouver Coastal** Bella Coola, Pemberton, Sea to Sky and Vancouver

For more information about the Collaborative, details of Local Action Team and Working Group activities please visit: <http://www.sharedcarebc.ca/initiatives/cymhsu-collaborative>.

[View this short video](#) to see how youth and care providers are benefitting from the collaborative team approach.

#### **About the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative**

The Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative is supported by the [Shared Care Committee](#), with additional support from the [General Practice Services Committee](#) and [Specialist Services Committee](#). All committees are partnerships between Doctors of BC and BC government.

- 30 -

---

## **Contact**

Media interested in the impact of the Collaborative in their region, and/or interviews with Local Action Team members are invited to contact:

**Lisa Despins, Communications Officer**  
**Doctors of BC**  
**ldespins@doctorsofbc.ca**  
**T. 604 638 7902**  
**C. 778 828 9164**