



ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

ACCESS OPEN MINDS RIPAJ, Montréal, Canada

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CONTEXT

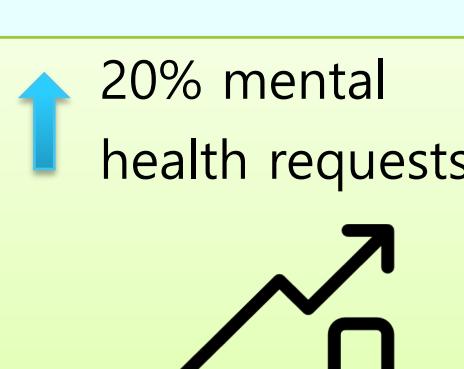
Homelessness is associated with major psychological distress and increased risk of severe mental disorders, especially in young people aged 12 to 25. Homelessness can contribute to, trigger and be a consequence of mental illness and addiction. These co-occurring problems have a major impact on youth functioning, impairing their relationships, their ability to live independently, and their capacity to work or to complete their studies. They also increase the risk of suicide, dangerousness, antisocial behaviour and legal problems. Paradoxically, these youths have little availability of adapted social services and are less likely to access usual mental health services.

OBJECTIVES

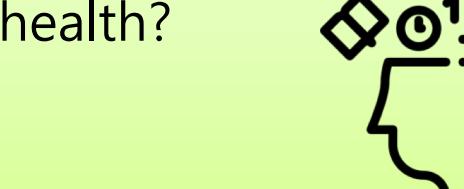
Inspired by evidence suggesting that outreach teams offering intensive integrated interventions and treatments in the community can increase accessibility to mental health services and their effectiveness, we sought to build a homeless youth services network.

ACCESS TRANSFORMATIONAL PLAN GOALS

Early Case Identification → Rapid, Easy Access → Appropriate Care



Does transformation improve social/occupational functioning and mental health?



Evaluate if youth will have access to an initial evaluation in < 72 hrs

90% of youth=1st contact<72h
75% will obtain an evaluation with a clinician < 72h following request

rapid access to appropriate care < 30 days

20% more will receive appropriate care
20% reduction in the average delay

Rate of satisfaction for youth and families



More direct trajectory to appropriate care

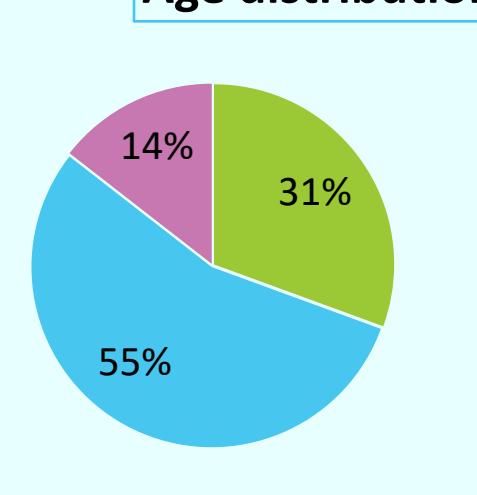
Created in Montreal (Canada) in 2003 and in constant evolution, the RIPAJ network (Réseau d'intervention de proximité auprès des jeunes de la rue/ Homeless Youth Network) brings together community organizations, primary care clinics and specialized psychiatric services. These teams meet regularly and are present in youth-friendly environments. Working in continuity and collaboration, these teams offer the most appropriate and adapted services to youths at risk for homelessness.

Collaboration with the ACCESS Open Minds Pan-Canadian network brought a new wave of transformation in RIPAJ's network, putting the active participation of youth and families at the heart of this transformation process, and setting measurable goals to reduce unmet needs, ensure rapid access to mental health evaluation and high quality treatments.

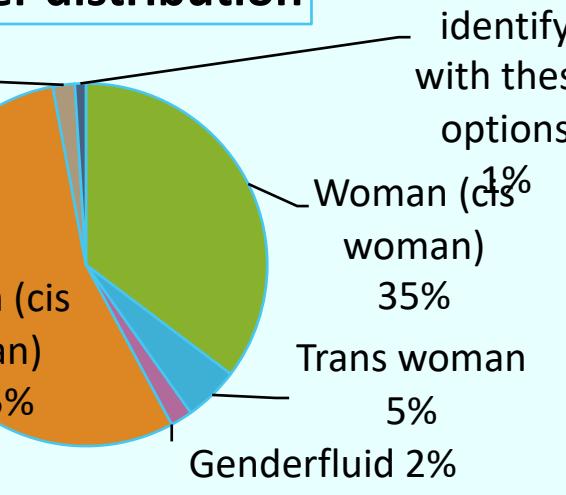
PORTRAIT OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS (n=136)

Preliminary results of the first 2 years

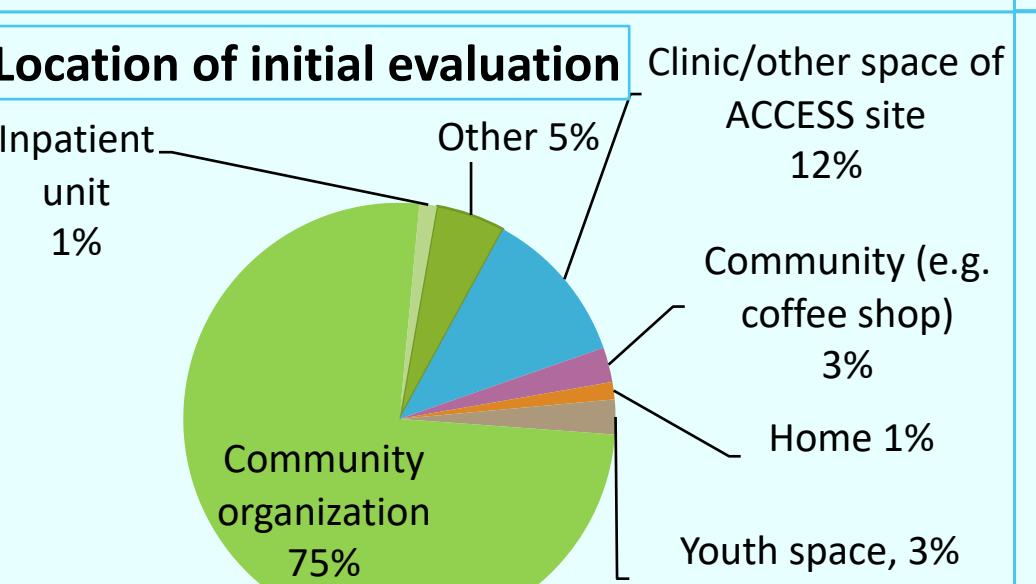
Age distribution



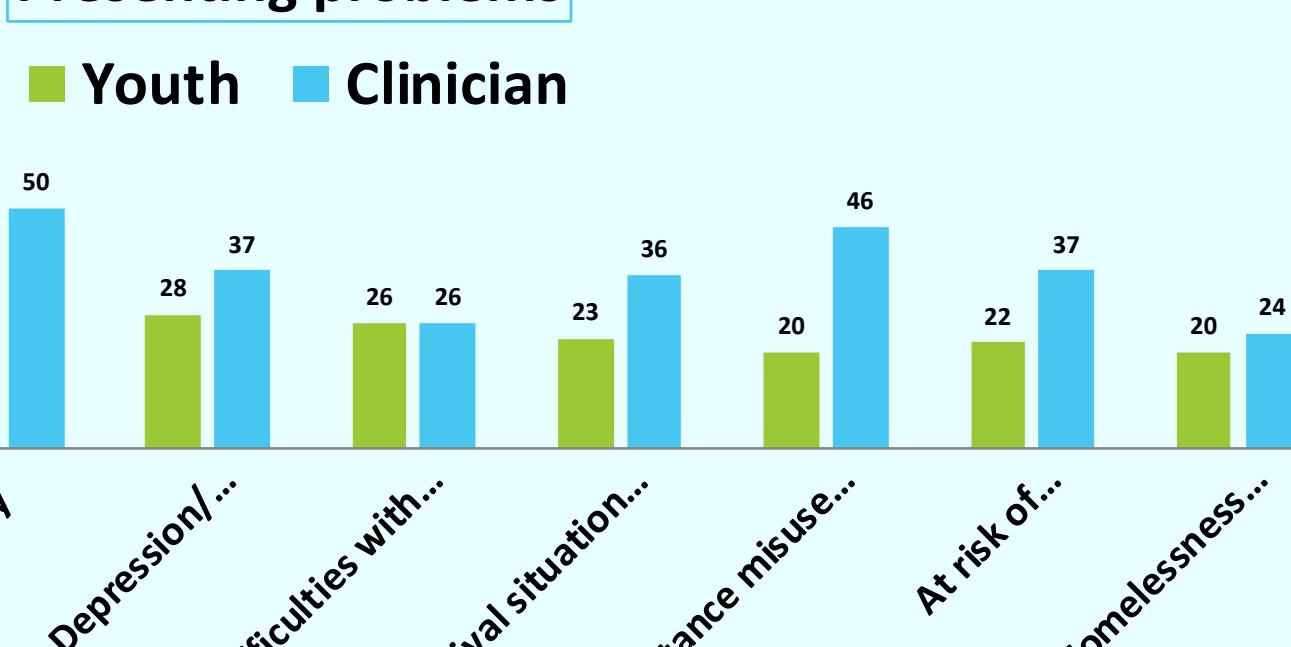
Gender distribution



I don't identify with these options



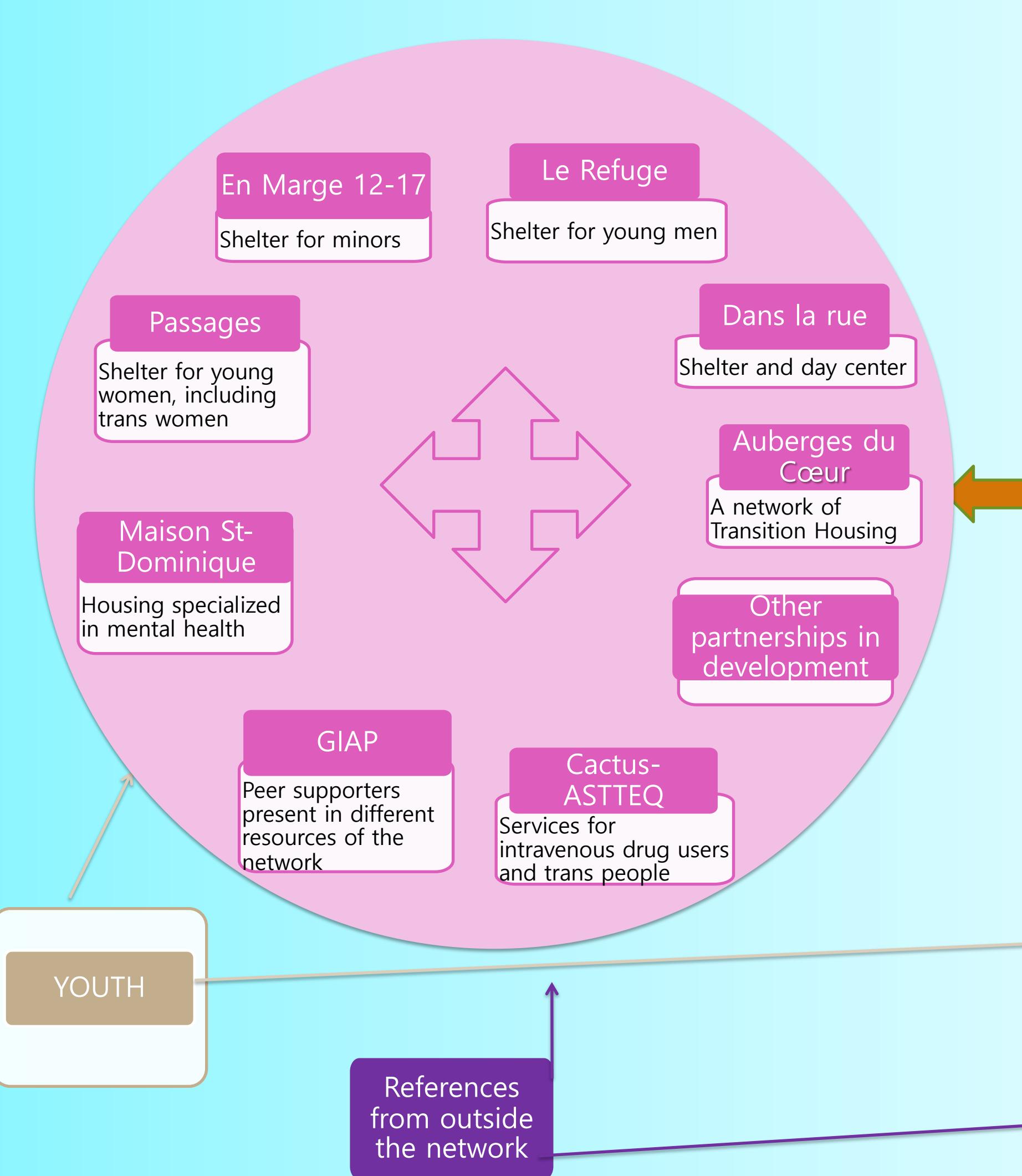
Presenting problems



CHALLENGES

- Family involvement** (in the context of many youth having difficult relationships with their family)
- Sustained youth involvement** (prioritization of meeting basic needs)
- Influencing the transformation of **culture of care outside the network** so that youth can get appropriate care beyond a crisis situation
- Meeting the **research and clinical objectives simultaneously** in the network (recruiting youth difficult to engage, for research and/or involvement)
- Some **resistance/skepticism** around 'another proposed transformation/research' in the context of overload/workload

THE HOMELESS YOUTH NETWORK



COMMON PHILOSOPHY

- There is no « wrong door »
- There is no « bad timing »
- There is no wrong source of referral
- No complicated referral process between partners
- Awareness among community organizations workers and Youth
- Welcoming environments and attractive intervention settings



Accessibility almost 24h/24h within the network (security net); and **Contact** with MH professionals within 24h

Variability of settings

- Day center offering food & school, shelters, Hospital clinics, Detox center, Community clinics

Wide Range of services engaging youth

- MH Education, Art & Music therapy, Sports, Housing support, Vocational support, Psychotherapy, Group interventions, pharmacotherapy, Family interventions, etc.

Help is obtained quickly in a youth friendly and respectful context or environment chosen by the young person

Source of referral



- Accompaniment offered to make sure Youth get the appropriate services. Trust relationship between youth and one organisation is transferred to the other org they might need.

Youth are never left on their own to get help, and once in contact with MHYN



MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS IN THE NETWORK

CLINICIANS IN THE NETWORK

CLINIQUE JEUNES DE LA RUE

- Social worker
- Nurse
- Psychologist
- Doctor

ÉQIIP SOL

- 2 social workers specialized in psychosis

ACCESS CLINICIAN

- Supports the network's workers and organizations
- For complex cases
- Needs evaluation
- Facilitates to allow the network to respond in 72h

PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES AT DANS LA RUE

- Support to workers and teams at DLR
- Needs assessments
- Psychological treatments

CIUSSS-Centre Sud Montréal

- Homelessness clinic
- Youth Clinic
- SIM
- (GASMA)

CHUM

- UPT

CRDM

- Detox
- R1J

OTHER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

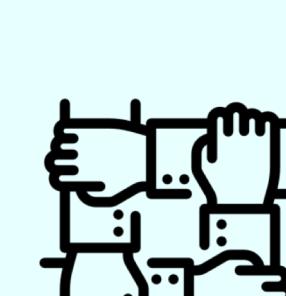
- Psychologues
- Family doctors
- Psychiatrists
- JAP/SOL
- Emergency
- CLSC Clin-J-de la Rue
- Detox services
- Specialized services
- Other bridges to create

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Workshops around themes of mental health and wellness are offered to and cocreated by youth in collaboration with our main community partner, Dans la rue. We foresee making these workshops available to other partners and provide a platform to share best practices.



Youth are being encouraged to get involved in **improving and setting up wellness spaces** in their community through ACCESS Wellness Space grants.



Youth can join the **ACCESS youth committee** in which they can be an active part of our core team and get involved depending on their interests, directly contributing to transforming services



Youth are collaborating on a photo-text project to **counter stigma** around mental health issues. They are supported (financially, and organizationally) to create any project or action in line with ACCESS.



Participating directly in the research project is another way for youth to inform the improvement of access to care

