

Research Digest



QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF TEAM MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES WITH YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Summary of the following article

Sheikhan, N. Y., Hawke, L. D., Cleverley, K., Darnay, K., Courey, L., Szatmari, P., Cheung, A., & Henderson, J. (2021). 'It reshaped how I will do research': A qualitative exploration of team members' experiences with youth and family engagement in a randomized controlled trial. *Health Expectations*, 00, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13206>

KEYWORDS: Adolescent • Caregivers • Family engagement • Mental health • Youth engagement • Qualitative research • Youth mental health

Why this article is important



Importance of youth and family engagement: This approach is gaining traction as an important aspect to providing youth mental health care.



Integrating perspectives: Including service users' and families' perspectives will improve quality of care.



Gaps in knowledge: Not much is known about the impacts of this type of engagement. A lack of research on this topic could contribute to youth and family perspectives being omitted from the service planning process.

PURPOSE

To explain team members' experiences of youth and family member engagement throughout the design and development of [YouthCan IMPACT](#), a project to develop and evaluate an integrated youth service hubs (IYSH) model in Toronto, Canada.

METHODS

28 YouthCan IMPACT project team members (not study participants) participated in semi-structured interviews or a focus group.

Interviews were transcribed, coded, and reviewed by youth and family consultants to ensure that the interpretation reflected youth and family perspectives.

YouthCan IMPACT



WHAT THEY LEARNED FROM PARTICIPANTS



The importance of engagement: led to early engagement, supported efficient decision making, influenced overall approach



Supporting an engagement-promoting environment: prioritizing a physical space that felt safe and inviting; using youth- and family-friendly language contributed to it being a safe and inviting space; having youth and family representatives as part of all aspects made it more inviting



The complexity of integrating an engagement strategy is beneficial: for instance, when youth voices and opinions differ from family feedback



Building strong teams is defined by transparency, honesty, and trust: some strategies included ice-breaking activities, sharing meals, common project development



Some barriers exist: the newness of engagement; money (funding) and time (timelines); interpersonal barriers/ differences in opinion

Group-Specific Benefits and Barriers to Engagement

YOUTH

- The unique perspectives brought by the youth voices were welcome, refreshing, and innovative for participating researchers
- Lack of continuity (youth growing out of their roles, etc.), and need for proper structural/organizational support prior to engaging youth created certain barriers
- An area for improvement that was noted was how to reflect more/all youth voices (youth who self-selectively become involved in advisory roles might not represent all youth perspectives)

FAMILY

- Similarly, feedback about family engagement showed it was enlightening and rewarding
- One participant noted that family involvement was less supported, that more effort was placed on youth engagement



CONCLUSIONS

- Participants strongly endorsed the value of youth and family engagement.
- The McCain Model of Youth Engagement was used, and demonstrated substantial and authentic levels of engagement.
- The authors make 7 recommendations for future projects that incorporate youth and family engagement (see page 10 of the article, an open-source document available free for download).