Co-creating a mental health, substance use, and addictions evidence priority agenda for Ontario

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Sharing Together

THE *SHARING TOGETHER* STORY

Evidence alone does not improve health care systems. But understanding evidence needs is an important first step. *Sharing Together* is an Evidence Exchange Network (EENet) initiative that responded to a critical need: **identifying the evidence that is most needed to improve the mental health, substance use, and addictions system in Ontario.** Located in the Provincial System Support Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), EENet is a knowledge exchange network that helps create and share evidence to build a better mental health, substance use, and addictions system in Ontario.

Evidence is more likely to be used if the system can respond to what stakeholders have identified as their evidence needs. We hope that these results will help contribute to a more evidence-informed system, leading to better experience, quality of care, and overall health and wellbeing for all Ontarians.

Between January and July of 2017, over **550 individuals** from different stakeholder groups and sectors came together to co-create an evidence priority agenda.

Seven in-person dialogues across the province: Thunder Bay, Barrie, London, Sudbury, Toronto, and Ottawa. Six were in English and one in French.

Online dialogue involving members of several of Ontario's Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs).

Provincial online survey to reach additional stakeholders.

Sharing Together used a co-creation approach to ensure that the evidence priority agenda reflected regional and provincial priorities, as well as the perspectives of a diverse range of Ontarians.

THE EVIDENCE PRIORITY AGENDA

Identify evidence themes (Literature review) → Prioritize evidence themes (Dialogues) → Identify evidence needs (Dialogues) → Prioritize evidence needs (Survey) → Develop Evidence Priority Agenda

An evidence priority agenda identifies areas of opportunity and need that can be addressed by providing access to evidence or creating new evidence. The co-created *Sharing Together* evidence priority agenda includes **10 evidence themes** and **2 prioritized evidence needs** for each theme.

Of the 10 evidence themes, **access to services** was discussed most frequently at the dialogues, followed by **effectiveness of services, harm reduction,** and **integrated healthcare**. Participants also discussed evidence needs related to **children and youth, continuum of housing and homelessness, culturally safe and competent care, prevention and promotion, standardized care,** and **supporting the voices of persons with lived experience and caregivers.**

Capacity-building needs were also highlighted for different groups, such as first responders, primary care providers, and French-language service providers.

SO WHAT?

The findings of *Sharing Together* align with current policy priorities and directions related to mental health, substance use, and addictions in Ontario, and at the national level. *Sharing Together* was also an opportunity to identify areas that could inform new policy priorities. Strong emphasis was placed on the value of using evidence to improve health outcomes for all Ontarians, including service users, family members, and caregivers.

The evidence priority agenda highlights the wide range of opportunities that exist to develop and use evidence to help transform Ontario's mental health, substance use, and addictions system. *Sharing Together* can be used to:

- Support service users, family members, and caregivers to better navigate services and supports, and participate in their own recovery;
- Equip service providers to provide evidence-based, culturally-safe, and trauma-informed care that responds to the needs and feedback of service users;
- Support identified priorities and help system planners and policymakers improve access to and effectiveness of existing services and supports;
- Identify areas and populations for researchers and peer-researchers to explore further; and
- Validate and integrate the use of cultural knowledge and the voices of lived experience.

WHAT'S NEXT?

EENet and other interested partners in the system will use these findings to support ongoing system transformation efforts and create a more evidence-informed mental health, substance use, and addictions system in Ontario.

Responding to the evidence needs identified will require working with stakeholders to:

Generate new evidence.

Identify and share current evidence-informed innovations and initiatives currently taking place in the system.

Tailor and adapt existing evidence to different stakeholder groups and settings.

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EENet Evidence Exchange Network for Mental Health and Addictions

camhPSSP Provincial System Support Program