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NEWS RELEASE

NEW REPORT BY YOUTH ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

Youth Voices Help Schools Make Progress

Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) has released ***Building a Better School Environment for Youth with Mental Health and Addictions Issues***, a report by its Youth Action Committee. The report is the first of its kind in Ontario and was released during CMHO's 41st annual conference, *Together for Change*.

CMHO's Youth Action Committee is a group of young people with a passion for engaging and empowering youth to be leaders in creating more accessible mental health services. To inform their report, the Committee gathered insight from young people about whether or not schools are providing a healthy and positive environment for those with mental health and/or addiction issues. In total, nearly 300 youth from across Ontario took part in the project through video submissions, focus groups, and an online survey.

Recommendations in *Building a Better School Environment for Youth with Mental Health and Addictions Issues* focus on the need for improved communication between students and educators, increased resources to ensure more young people seek help, and a greater level of mental health education in the school curriculum.

CMHO will provide the report to mental health leads and mental health workers in Ontario schools. We expect that the report will be used as the basis for in-school discussions about improving support for students experiencing mental health issues.

Key Findings:

- The highest ranked resource needed for addressing mental health and addiction issues was a designated safe space at school
- 46% of youth participants identified stigma as a barrier at their school that prevents them from seeking support for mental health and/or addiction issues
- 28% youth indicated that mental health issues are not covered in their school's curriculum and 36% indicated that they were covered only once in one class
- Youth identified that teachers, administration staff, and mental health professionals in schools need to improve communication with young people experiencing mental health and addiction issues

"This project has given youth a voice. It identifies what youth would like to see in schools so that they can learn strategies to deal with mental health and addiction issues and have a better chance of succeeding."

– Mary-Anne Leahy, Youth Action Committee Co-Chair

"The power of this project is that it was developed and led by youth who encouraged their peers to have a voice. Ongoing youth engagement is of critical importance as we strive to enhance mental health services for children, youth and their families in Ontario."

– Gordon Floyd, President and CEO, Children's Mental Health Ontario

"There are brochures and flyers concerning mental health, suicides hotlines, etc., for people to take. But they're in the front foyer, so everyone can see if you take one, which sucks. No one wants everyone to know if they're struggling."

– Excerpt from submission by a student respondent

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For a copy of the report click [here](#) or visit www.kidsmentalhealth.ca