

Youth Mental Health

When youth who are bullied are engaged in activities outside of school that they feel are meaningful, they are more likely to feel good about themselves and to rate their mental health as excellent.⁵

3.2 million youth in Canada are at risk of developing depression.¹ In Greater Victoria, 1 in 4 youth rate their mental health as poor or very poor.²

The infographic below illustrates that in Greater Victoria only 45% of youth felt listened to and valued in their activities.

Research shows that youth engaged in high-quality programs outside of school have better social and emotional health outcomes.³

The Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI) is a community-based initiative committed to supporting high-quality

programs that enable young people to thrive. Over 40 youth serving organizations across Greater Victoria have been part of the initiative since 2012.

By assessing and improving quality year after year, Greater Victoria YPQI is ensuring that our region's youth programs are having a positive impact on the well-being of our young people.

Participating organizations also receive vital professional development opportunities for youth workers which, in turn, strengthens the capacity of our youth sector as a whole.



Youth Engagement on South Vancouver Island⁴

Only 45% of youth felt that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in their activities on South Vancouver Island.



96% of those who felt listened to and valued, rated their overall health as good / excellent.



Only 74% of those who did not feel listened to or valued, rated their overall health as good / excellent.



1 in 5 youth on South Vancouver Island report having at least 1 mental health condition.⁶

Program Quality and Youth Engagement

A substantial and growing evidence base confirms that high-quality out of school time (OST)* programs can make a positive difference for youth in the critical domains of achievement, social and civic skills, and risk reduction.⁷

Investing in program quality ensures that the dollars spent on youth programming are actually making a difference in the lives of young people.

The YPQI improves youth programming in several domains based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs with a key focus on increasing youth voice and governance within the program structure itself. This benefits youth by increasing their sense of belonging, competency, identity development and social capital – among many others – all of which are preventive factors for mental health issues.

Youth in Greater Victoria have given the region a failing grade in program quality. It's time to take action and make program quality a priority for the youth serving community.

*OST programs refer to: afterschool, expanded learning, extracurricular clubs, summer camps and sports; summer school and summer learning; mentoring, tutoring, apprenticeship, and workforce development models; programs for disconnected and homeless youth; and some alternative schools.


Supporting quality improvement in youth programming is a means of achieving positive gains in the social and emotional development of youth.⁸

For More Information

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¹ Canadian Mental Health Association. (2015). Fast Facts about Mental Illness, <http://www.cmha.ca/>

² Victoria Foundation. (2014). Victoria's Youth Vital Signs, <http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/>

^{3,8} Vandell, D. (2007). Outcomes linked to high quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs. University of California, https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fij/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_iafis04c04.pdf/

^{4, 5,6} McCreary Centre Society. (2013). Adolescent Health Survey, South Vancouver Island, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/AHSV_SouthVancouverIsland.pdf/

⁷ Smith, C. et al. (2012). Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study. Washington: The Forum for Youth Investment, <http://cypq.org/printpdf/385/>