

August 20, 2019

Concurrent Sessions

Updating the Evidence - Presentations and Conversation

Five concurrent sessions will be offered in thematic areas. Each session will feature three presenters who will have 15 minutes to share evidence that complements and adds to our understanding of supportive environments for child and youth mental health. Presentations will be followed by general discussion on the following questions:

- *How does this work fit into and advance the ASI Call to Action?*
- *What are the implications for upstream investment and a whole society approach to mental health promotion?*

Results of these discussions will be included in the final plenary session on August 21st.

Session 1: Empowerment and resilience

a) Imagine NB: Empowering Young Leaders

Presenter: Arianne Melara Orellana, New Brunswick Multicultural Council

Imagine NB is an example of an innovative and successful program, with a whole-of-society approach, that fosters positive mental health and well-being among immigrant and refugee youth by prioritizing community connections. The 26 diverse participants represent 15 countries, 8 New Brunswick communities, and over 10 languages. This provincial and bilingual program is developed by the New Brunswick Multicultural Council and is co-funded by the Government of Canada and the Government of New Brunswick. Since 2017, 35 partners (both community and private sector) have been engaged in collaborating in the service delivery of this program. Among the milestones accomplished, the participants report increases in self-worth and dignity, self-confidence, feelings of belonging and validation through being part of a provincial relatable network of experiential similarity. They also report an increased sense of purpose and recognition of personal capacity and potential to be a leader in NB. The quantitative data collected from the participant's lived experiences, and qualitative data received from participants' parents, guardians, mentors, teachers, as well as funders, experts and practitioners in the program, demonstrate positive strides in addressing the growing need for immigrant youth mental health and well-being support resulting from the multifaceted emotional hardships as part of the migration, resettlement and settlement experience. The Imagine NB program has much to share, report and offer on a variety of sectors, including key ingredients on how to build a strong support system around newcomer and refugee youth during their critical teenager years.

How does your presentation make a connection with the theme Supportive Environments for Child and Youth Mental Health – Our Shared Responsibility!?

Newcomer youth experience multifaceted emotional hardships as part of the migration, resettlement and settlement experience. Examples include: trauma resulting from war or conflict in their countries of origin; stress and anxiety as family power dynamics and household responsibilities change; culture shock; identity formation and intergenerational cultural expectations; anti-immigrant sentiments; and social pressures inside and outside school environments. Imagine NB responds to the theme by addressing the growing need for immigrant youth mental health and well-being support, and showcasing results on how championing community connections and networks of relatability within a leadership mentoring process, can lead to healthy, sustainable, and inclusive environments for newcomer mental health.

What will others learn from your presentation?

- Common challenges among immigrant and refugee youth;
- Personal lived experiences from the 26 Imagine NB participants, and what their top challenges related to mental health and well-being are, taking into consideration differences in a variety of areas.
- How collaboration among various sectors: education, immigration, and population growth has worked to deliver this program in partnership with NBMC.
- How community connections are prioritized and championed in all possible aspects to address mental health and well-being challenges among immigrant and refugee youth.

How does your presentation demonstrate implications for policy and practice in fostering supportive environments?

- Demonstrated ability to successfully work with various departments and funders on one project delivery that has multifaceted milestones;
- Community connections activities with a whole-of-society approach, especially for networks mostly frequented by children and youth, are key ingredients to foster supportive environments for mental health in immigrant youth.
- Recommendations to educators, elected officials, and the larger community, provided by the 26 immigrant and refugee youth on how to create supportive and healthy environments for their mental health and well-being support.

Presenter

Arianne Melara Orellana
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Arianne was born and raised in El Salvador. She came to Canada as an international student and completed her liberal arts degree in International Relations and Economics at St. Thomas University. Arianne was the recipient of the Winfield Poole prize for the best Honours thesis in Political Science and the Prize for Economics in fourth year. Before joining NBMC, she worked for WE (formerly known as Free The Children) in Toronto supporting youth and educators in experiential service-learning programs, facilitated numerous youth workshops, and project managed a youth summit in Waterloo. She has joined NBMC as the project manager of a Multicultural Youth Leadership Program. She speaks Spanish, English, and French.

b) Building Resilience Promoting Contexts: The role of service providers

Presenter: Linda Liebenberg, Everfair Research & Evaluation; Daphne Hutt-Macleod, Eskasoni Mental Health

Globally, we are becoming increasingly aware that we need to change the contexts surrounding children and youth, establishing social and service environments that are more promotive of positive mental health outcomes. The question confronting parents, service providers, and policy makers then, is what changes need to occur in order for environments to be more in tune with child and youth needs? Additionally, what role can service providers play in facilitating the establishment of such contexts especially those children and youth living with mental health challenges? The field of resilience may offer answers. This presentation draws on a review of the resilience literature, together with findings from a pan-New Zealand study of multiple service using youth, to highlight guidelines for service providers to consider in service delivery to especially those young people facing

complex challenges. To illustrate these guidelines, this presentation will include an example of resilience practice from a Canadian mental health service provider. This exemplar will be used to highlight the application of current evidence-based understandings of resilience promoting service provision and the implications for policy and practice. Concluding implications will focus on the value of relational practice together with inter- and intra-service collaboration that integrated community resources.

How does your presentation make a connection with the theme *Supportive Environments for Child and Youth Mental Health – Our Shared Responsibility!*?

This presentation focuses especially on the role of service providers in both providing direct service supports for children and youth, but also indirectly facilitating contextual change within their social environment. It stands to answer the question: what can service providers do to establish more supportive environments for child and youth mental health.

What will others learn from your presentation?

The audience will learn the following:

- 1) An understanding of current resilience theory;
- 2) implications and guidelines for community-based service provision; and,
- 3) implications for related service delivery policy.

All three components will include a focus on both direct service delivery as well as the role of services in facilitating contextual change for children and youth where access to informal social supports is increased.

How does your presentation demonstrate implications for policy and practice in fostering supportive environments?

Drawing on findings from an extensive scoping review of resilience and resilience promoting service provision, as well as findings from a longitudinal country wide study of multiple service using youth in New Zealand, the presentation will illustrate the application of findings to policy and practice by using an exemplar of service provision in a rural Canadian context. In this way, critical components of service delivery and related policy will be brought to life in a Canadian context.

Presenter

Linda Liebenberg
Independent Academic, Everfair Research & Evaluation
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Linda Liebenberg, PhD., is a researcher and evaluator with a core interest in youth with complex needs, and the communities they live in. Her work explores the promotion of positive youth development and mental health through civic engagement and community development as core components of resilience. As part of this work, Linda reflects critically on how best to conduct research and evaluations with children and their communities, including participatory image-based methods; sophisticated longitudinal quantitative designs; and the design of measurement instruments. Linda has presented internationally and published extensively on these topics of research and youth.

Daphne Hutt-Macleod
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c) Early bird gets the worm – Early childhood as a critical period for the development of resilience (*L'avenir appartient à ceux qui se lèvent tôt : la petite enfance, un moment critique pour le développement de la résilience*)

Presenters: Renée Smith and Cynthia Ferguson, Vitalité Health Network

Given concerning statistics resulting from the Student Wellness Survey, New Brunswick Public Health nurses undertook a literature search to better understand how to foster the development of resilience in New Brunswick children. Research quickly indicated that targeting the early childhood period was the most cost-effective and efficient way to foster the development of resilience that would last a lifetime. Early childhood is a crucial period of brain development and is largely influenced by the secure and stable relationships provided by adults and their environment.

Now that the information has been collected, Public Health is committed to sharing this information with partners and implement several of the identified best practice initiatives. Broadly this includes the adoption of equitable policies, as well as the development of healthy social, natural and built environments.

Several of the initiatives currently underway include:

- Stimulating discussion, sharing of knowledge and partnerships related to strengthening resilience during early childhood (member of the Steering Committee for Mental Health Promotion Community of Practice, leading discussion forums on lack of resilience among children and youth);
- Implementation of the Handle with Care program in Early Learning Centres as well as Family Resource Centres across New Brunswick.

How does your presentation make a connection with the theme *Supportive Environments for Child and Youth Mental Health – Our Shared Responsibility!*?

Both the social and physical environments (built and natural) influence the development of resilience during early childhood. For infants and toddlers, their social worlds revolve around their parents, therefore their attachment to these people plays a key role in the development of their resilience. Furthermore, social and physical environments can either foster or hamper parents' opportunities to strengthen their attachment to their children.

What will others learn from your presentation?

Key learnings will be related to how the development of resilience can be and must be fostered during early childhood. Specifically, what are key protective factors for the early childhood period, as well as best practice initiatives that can be used to foster those protective factors.

How does your presentation demonstrate implications for policy and practice in fostering supportive environments?

This presentation will provide research-informed suggestions for actions to build supportive environments for the development of resilience during early childhood. Suggested **policy avenues** to pursue could include policies that promote equity (e.g., equitable access to resources and services, poverty reduction and work life balance). Concrete actions to build **supportive environments (social, natural and built)** could include: strengthening daycare staff's competencies and inclusion practices and building parents attachment and responsiveness to their babies; encouraging the development of green spaces that also facilitate social connectedness.

Presenters

Renée Smith, Vitalité Health Network

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Renée Smith is a health promoter for Vitalité Health Network. She earned her master's degree in Health Promotion from Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. Renée has worked in public health, mental health and addiction services in western Nova Scotia. She played a catalyst role with municipalities for defending and promoting the implementation of healthy public policies. Her main files were alcohol and the legalization of cannabis. Renée is currently working on advancing health promotion work using a population approach and on developing strategic partnerships.

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