

Fall 2011

NEWSLETTER

McCreary
Centre Society

www.mcs.bc.ca



Welcome to McCreary's latest newsletter, and if you are just back at school for the new academic year we hope it is a successful and enjoyable one. Since our last issue in the spring we have launched *Making the right connections: Promoting positive mental health among BC youth*. There has been incredible interest in the report and in the topic of youth mental health in general. As a result of this interest we have decided to focus a large part of this newsletter on the subject of promoting positive mental health. Inside this issue you will find information from the report, youth engagement resources and some examples of promoting positive mental health from our evaluation projects.



Latest release: *Making the right connections*

Funded by the BC Ministry of Health, this report takes an in-depth look at promoting positive mental health among BC youth. It includes the views and suggestions of 617 young people who took part in

46 workshops or focus groups across BC, as well as data from the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey. The report provides an overview of the current mental health picture of youth in Grades 7-12. It also takes a detailed look at youth who are at risk for not developing positive mental health, and provides evidence about what may help these and other youth to overcome the challenges they face.

The report was published in May along with eight fact sheets which summarise the results for different groups of youth.

McCreary's Youth Advisory Council member Lucy Shen also created a youth friendly version of the key findings which, like the other fact sheets and the full report, can be downloaded at www.mcs.bc.ca.

Since the report was launched we have conducted webinar and in-person presentations of the findings to well over 100 sites across BC and Alberta. We will also be presenting the results at international conferences in Toronto and Brazil.

If you would like to request a presentation, please contact mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.



Next Steps

Coast Capital Credit Union have provided funding for a Positive Mental Health Next Steps project in Nanaimo and Bell for a similar project in the Fraser Valley. We are hopeful of securing funding from other sources to do similar projects in additional communities who have expressed an interest. The Nanaimo and Fraser Valley Next Steps will engage youth in discussions of the report results as well as in designing and delivering a project to promote youth mental health. The projects will begin in the fall and run through the winter.

In preparation for this project and in response to community requests, we have developed a toolkit which will soon be available to download from our website. The toolkit is designed for use by teachers, public health nurses, youth workers and others who want to engage young people in discussions to promote positive mental health. If you would like McCreary to facilitate a Next Steps project in your community or would like some support to plan your own Next Steps, please contact nextsteps@mcs.bc.ca.





Promoting positive mental health: A selection of findings

» Most youth in British Columbia report positive mental health and low rates of mental health challenges. They not only have high

self-esteem, educational aspirations for the future, and rate their health as good or excellent, but also have not self-harmed or had suicidal thoughts or attempts in the past year.

- » In 2008, youth reported lower rates of considering and attempting suicide than their peers five years earlier.
- » Some youth face obstacles to achieving positive mental health. These youth include those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, youth who live in poverty or have an unstable home life, those who have been abused and youth who are living with a chronic illness or disability.
- » In the past year, over half (56%) of youth who reported experiencing a limiting mental or emotional health condition had not accessed the mental health services that they felt they needed.
- » When youth felt supported by professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses and youth workers, they reported better mental health.
- » Youth who could identify something they were good at were more likely than other youth to report positive mental health.
- » The more connected youth felt to family or school, the more likely they were to report excellent general health and higher self-esteem, and the less likely they were to have considered suicide.
- » Feeling engaged and valued within their extracurricular activities was another important protective factor associated with positive mental health.
- » When youth were asked to comment on the data, they consistently reported that to achieve positive mental health they needed access to supportive adults and peer mentors, as well as opportunities to engage in activities that promoted their physical health.

Promoting positive mental health among youth in transition

McCreary produced a literature review of programs designed to address youth mental health for Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House in Vancouver. This literature review focused on evaluations of community-based programs that promoted positive mental health among youth in transition into and out of adolescence.

The most successful programs focused on positive rather than negative outcomes, allowed youth to develop skills and competencies, enhanced connectedness to family, school or peers, and provided opportunities for youth to contribute to their community.

The review showed that interventions were most effective in improving mental health and achieving behavioural change when they were coupled with policies that addressed threats to health and promoted positive mental health.

To download a copy of the literature review, visit www.mcs.bc.ca/literature_review.

Did you know?

Youth feel that they should be taught how to manage stress in their lives BEFORE they reach an age where it becomes a problem (*Making the right connections*, p10).



Making the right connections display table at the BC Teachers' Summer Institute, August 2011



Evaluation projects

McCreary's role as an independent evaluator of local programs continues to expand and we are delighted to have added the evaluation of citizenU to our portfolio. citizenU is a three year City of Vancouver initiative which aims to reduce racism and other discrimination in the city. The program involves anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and inter-cultural leadership training, and engages young people in nine-month youth engagement program cycles.

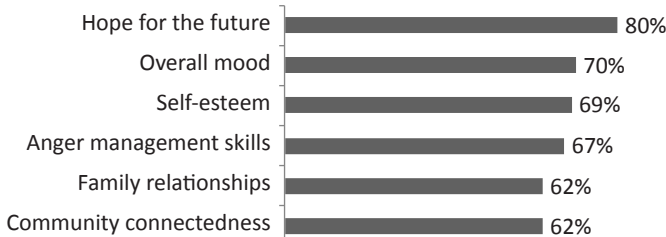
PLEA

Whilst the citizenU evaluation project has only just begun, we are nearing the conclusion of a three year evaluation of a range of PLEA Community Services programs.

During the course of the evaluation, youth in seven PLEA programs were asked to complete surveys at intake, at discharge (approximately six months later), and six months after discharge. The surveys asked youth to give feedback on their participation in PLEA, as well as about their health risk and health promoting behaviours.

The majority of youth reported that their involvement in PLEA had helped to improve their overall mood and hopefulness, self-esteem, anger management skills, relationships with family members, and connection to their community. Many also reported marked reductions in suicidal ideation as a direct result of their involvement in PLEA (81% of females and 42% of males).

Improvements at discharge (youth who reported 'quite a bit' or 'a lot' of improvements)



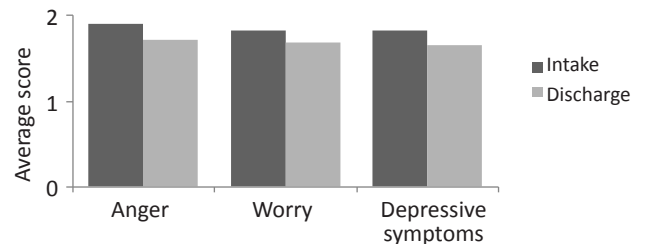
Did you know?

Youth recommend teaching all children and youth about different cultures as a way to reduce discrimination and support the mental health of Canadian newcomers (*Making the right connections*, p21).

Most youth (80%) reported improved hope for their future as a result of taking part in PLEA. Additionally, at discharge from their program, most thought that within five years they would have a job, a home of their own, or be in school.

Making the right connections reported that females were more likely than males to report extreme levels of stress and despair, self-harm and suicidal thoughts and attempts. It was therefore encouraging that when results for females who had been in PLEA were analyzed, we saw improvements in their mental health (see graph for examples).

Improvements in females' mental health (PLEA participants)



At discharge from PLEA, females were more likely to be attending school than at intake (86% vs. 65%). They were also more likely to anticipate graduating from a community college, technical institute or trades program (31% vs. 17%), and were less likely to not know when they would finish their education (13% vs. 29%).

For more information on our program evaluation projects visit www.mcs.bc.ca/program_evaluation.



Coming Soon

Raven's Children III

Raven's Children III is due to be released later this year. It is the third report focusing specifically on the health of Aboriginal youth who completed the Adolescent Health Survey.

With the support of a provincial advisory committee of experts in Aboriginal youth health, our research team are currently conducting community consultations on draft findings. If you are an Aboriginal youth or are working with Aboriginal youth and think they might be interested in having input into the report, please contact ravenschildren@mcs.bc.ca.

In the fall, Aboriginal youth on the North Shore will develop and deliver a youth health project based on the Raven's Children report results as part of a Next Steps program funded by VanCity.



Youth in care report

Youth who grow up in the care of the government are at risk for a range of negative health outcomes but many go on to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. Using data from the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey, we are currently conducting an extensive analysis of data provided by around 3,000 youth with experience of the BC care system to identify the protective factors that are associated with positive outcomes.

Save the date!

McCreary's Annual General Meeting and Open House will take place on **Tuesday November 15th from 4pm**. All are welcome to attend.

Students

Congratulations to Langara nursing students Nazgol Jalalian and Han Thi on the recent completion of their practicum at McCreary. Nazgol and Han produced a new fact sheet looking at school based bullying which will soon be available for download at www.mcs.bc.ca/fact_sheets_and_powerpoint_presentations.

We also want to say congratulations to graduating student group members, Aviva Laye-Gindhu, Kallista Bell-Karjala and Stephanie Callaghan, who have all finished their analyses of McCreary data and are currently basking in the joy of having completed their Masters or Doctoral degrees.



Twitter

Since the launch of our twitter page we have been steadily accumulating followers. If you would like to stay up to date with our daily tweets, follow us **@mccrearycentre** at www.twitter.com.

The support of government, business and community members is critical as we look toward funding more priority initiatives, conducting future research and implementing community-based youth leadership projects. McCreary needs your support to ensure that we can continue to address the unmet health needs of young people and their communities.

I would like to contribute to McCreary Centre Society:

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Enclosed, please find my donation of: \$50 \$75 \$100
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A tax receipt will be issued to
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Thank you for making a difference
in the lives of young people in BC.