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Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being
Coalition pour la sécurité, la santé et le bien-être des communautés



Report on National Invitational Symposium on Youth Illicit Substance Abuse and the Justice System

BACKGROUND

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), in association with the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being, and in particular the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC), Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) and YOUCAN, entered into a contribution agreement with Justice Canada on 22 December 2008 to convene the National Invitational Symposium on Youth Illicit Substance Abuse and the Justice System.

The CACP agreed to host a facilitated day-and-a-half symposium that would bring together approximately forty-two individuals from the health, justice, education and social service systems with experience in working with youth in a range of settings, including youth with substance abuse problems, youth who have been victimized, youth in conflict with the law and youth in the process of re-integration into mainstream society.

The expected outcomes of the Symposium were to:

- increase awareness in the justice community, social development sectors, governments and the public of the relationship between illicit substance abuse and youth crime and victimization;
- help participants and Coalition members to modify their approach to working with youth who have illicit substance abuse problems; and
- build momentum for addressing, through a holistic, multi-sectoral, long-term approach, the issues affecting youth with illicit substance abuse problems who are involved in the justice system.

The Symposium, funded from Canada's Youth Justice Fund (Youth Justice Anti-Drug Component), was held on 25-26 February 2009 at the Delta Ottawa Hotel and Suites.

PARTICIPANTS

All but one invitee attended, for a total of fifty-two participants representing the following sectors: addictions, child welfare, corrections/victims, education, justice system, police, public health, recreation, substance abuse practitioners, youth, youth engagement, youth services and youth workers and community development. Invited speakers included the mother-daughter team of Heather Hilts and Jessica Weihrich, Dr. Dick Meen of Kinark Child and Family Services in Oakville ON, Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier of the Okanese First Nation in Balcarres SK, Madame Justice Dianne Nicolas of the Ottawa Youth Mental Health Court, and Deputy Chief Michael Mann of the Waterloo Regional Police Service. The six-member Coalition Planning Committee served as hosts and facilitators. A detailed "Participants List" can be found at TAB 1.

PROCESS

In advance of the Symposium, the following background paper (included at TAB 2) and electronic links to two publications were provided to assist invitees in their preparations:

- “Issues Paper & Guiding Questions: National Invitational Symposium on Youth, Illicit Substance Abuse and the Justice System”, Colleen Anne Dell, PhD, University of Saskatchewan, February 13, 2009 (commissioned research)
- “Substance Abuse in Canada: Youth in Focus”, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, September 2007
- “Girls, Women and Substance Use”, prepared by Nancy Poole, BC Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health and Colleen Anne Dell, PhD., Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2005.

The event followed the program found at TAB 3. Participants were assigned to six discussion groups organized to ensure a mix of sectors and geographic areas. Each table included a police chief or deputy chief and a young person. The discussion groups stayed together for the whole symposium.

WELCOME

Chief Gary Crowell, Halton Regional Police Service and Co-Chair, CACP Crime Prevention Committee

Sandra Wright introduced Chief Gary Crowell, who was unable to participate in person because of an important municipal budget meeting, delivered his opening remarks by video. He explained the CACP motivation for forming the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being in 2005 and the Association’s continued support since government funding ended in 2007. He noted the genesis of this Symposium, which arose from issues raised at the “National Invitational Symposium on Youth Justice Renewal” that took place in March 2008.

Sandra Wright then elaborated on the purpose of the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being, twenty-three non-governmental organizations working together to advocate for safe, healthy and inclusive communities across Canada. She outlined its activities to date: two national consultations on social development related to community safety in 2006, “Strengthening Canadian Communities”, a national conference in 2007, the invitational symposium on youth justice renewal in 2008, and planning for conferences on youth mental health and the justice system and on multi-generational family violence in the coming year.

OPENING REMARKS

Dorothy Ahlgren of CACP and Louise Hanvey of CNA outlined the objectives of the Symposium: to contribute to better linkages among the sectors, to facilitate knowledge development and transfer among the sectors, and to support the development of a major national conference on youth and the justice system being planned for the coming year. Dorothy drew attention to the research piece that had been commissioned from Colleen Anne Dell, PhD, of the University of Saskatchewan to summarize current evidence and pose some “guiding questions” to assist in deliberations at the Symposium.

Louise explained the population health approach which serves as a model for a determinants-based understanding of crime, victimization and their prevention and provided a brief overview of the three discussion themes around which the Symposium agenda was constructed:

- What challenges do youth with illicit substance abuse problems face in dealing with the health, justice and other systems in Canada, and how are those systems challenged in responding to these youth?
- How can communities support youth with substance abuse problems to prevent them from engaging in criminal activity?
- What should be done in the future, and by whom, to prevent substance abuse by youth, to prevent youth with illicit substance abuse from becoming involved in the justice system and to ensure that youth crime and victimization are regarded as a health and justice issue? What are the most effective ways of responding to these youth once they are in the justice system?

Each topic began with a feature presentation by invited speakers who set the stage for the following group discussion work. Each table worked on each topic for approximately ninety minutes, recording on work sheets the interventions made by individual members. A *rapporteur* from each group then reported in plenary where additional lively discussion took place. Participants noted gaps in knowledge and information about certain issues/topics, identified a wide range of practices and community behaviours that are working and show promise, and expressed commitment to some key principles for working in a multidisciplinary fashion on issues touching young people.

This report is a compilation of what Symposium participants communicated through their presentations, work sheets, plenary reports, ensuing discussion and evaluation comments. (See "Participants Evaluation Report" at TAB 4.)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Heather Hilts and Jessica Wehrich

Peter Dudding of the Child Welfare League of Canada introduced the keynote speakers, Heather Hilts and Jessica Wehrich of Smiths Falls ON. Jessica is a 21-year old woman who struggled with addiction, prostitution and life on the streets in her early teenage years. She has now been clean for four-and-a-half years and is rebuilding her life: completing high school, working part time and educating parents and teens on the dangers of substance abuse. She and Heather, her mother, opened the Symposium with their very brave and personal story of Jessica's slide into alcohol and drug abuse, her decision to leave home and live on the streets and her mother's initial naïveté about the drug use, followed by denial, then her relentless efforts to locate Jessica, to work with police to take her off the streets, to arrange suitable treatment for her and to support her daughter in returning to mainstream life. Theirs is an exceptional testimony of the rapid slide into drug addiction of a "straight A" student and the exceptional perseverance required to obtain and sustain effective treatment. (Copy of presentation not available.)

Group Discussion Topic 1:

What challenges do youth with illicit substance abuse problems face in dealing with the health, justice and other systems in Canada? How are those systems challenged in responding to these youth?

Louise Harvey of the Canadian Nurses Association facilitated the first group discussion topic. Plenary discussions began with the challenges youth face in dealing with the health, justice and other systems for their substance abuse problems. A major issue identified is the barriers that exist with those systems, beginning with accessibility at the system and individual levels. Societal and parental denial that young teens have addiction problems means that age-appropriate treatment facilities are not available to the extent required, for children as young as 12, for example, and certainly for those under 16. Residential treatment waiting times are too long, as are wait lists for methadone replacement programs. It is acknowledged that an arrest can save the life of a youth, but short sentences limit the effectiveness of in-custody treatment. As well, many youth are released before receiving any treatment.

Some barriers specific to youth are very practical ones. Youth require a health card for services at walk-in clinics, but marginalized and street youth may not carry official personal documents. Those with addictions live chaotic lives not conducive to their meeting scheduled appointments. Many lack safe housing, adequate and nutritious food and access to transportation. Policies that limit treatment to those who are already clean present an obvious barrier for the youth demographic. The typical treatment programs are too short to be effective and in any case, youth do not relate to programs designed for adults.

Other identified barriers include youth finding services unwelcoming, stigmatizing and judgmental. Services are rarely located where youth spend their time and vulnerable youth are less likely to seek out services in intimidating settings. Youth will not disclose their health issues and concerns to disapproving adults, particularly since many young people do not consider their use of soft drugs to be a problem. Drug use frequently masks an underlying issue, such as mental illness leading to self-harm, but the drug use – the symptom – gets more attention than the real cause. Navigating the various separate systems is confusing and frustrating to many system users, and more so for addicted youth.

The breadth and depth of the problem is much greater than the justice system and impacts virtually every social agency/institution in society.

*D/Chief Constable Mike Chadwick
Saanich Police Department/
CACP Crime Prevention Committee*

The systems themselves face challenges in responding to the needs of youth who have substance abuse problems. First is their need for knowledge about and a comfort level in working with youth clientele. Health assessments are slow and medical protocols are inconsistent across jurisdictions and systems. Because of the heavy demands on health services, youth who are in an obvious

spiral of self-destruction are often discharged because they are assessed, in the hospital emergency room context, as posing no imminent danger to themselves. The lack of follow-up services and after-care results in haphazard and non-continuous interventions.

An overlooked access point is the school, where the placement of drug professionals would improve the integration of schools with other systems. Some interventions come too late; for example, police who have an important role in youth engagement and public education are often not brought into the picture until enforcement is required. Service providers are not sufficiently familiar with the substances used by youth and are therefore limited in the services and counsel they can provide. Cooperation among and across systems is identified as a perennial challenge, but one that might be overcome with a shift in focus and funding from processes to case management based on the youth's needs. Specifically, where the young person has concurrent health and substance abuse issues, the system seems paralyzed and without protocols on which element should be addressed first. Participants stressed that a more effective response consists of an integrated approach to the young person's needs.

What seems to work for youth? Participants identified the value of multiple, "friendly" entry points for treatment, so that there is an opening when and where youth are

[The symposium] has brought to the front of the line when assessing and evaluating a youth and considering an intervention plan. I will emphasize this with my team and ensure that components of illicit substance abuse go into our programming.

*Cathy Di Stefano
Batshaw Youth and Family
Services, Montréal*

motivated to access services. There are some examples of working solutions that warrant replication, such as health clinics in youth services facilities, with addictions counselors on staff, and the placing of counselors in schools. More pre-charge diversion of youth, consistent with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, was identified as an effective approach. The non-court option also allows youth to avoid the technical breaches so often resulting from probation conditions that drug-addicted youth cannot meet. A focus on personal, medical and spiritual healing is a holistic approach to which many youth gravitate and respond,

as is access to recovering young people whose experiences are personally relevant to other youth and who can serve as mentors.

Youth engagement emerged from this discussion as an approach that is insufficiently tapped, and this brings one to the most basic component of society – the home and family. Youth who are not attached to family, school and community establish connections to other young people in similar situations and become vulnerable in terms of their personal safety, their health and mental health, their exploitation and their life prospects. Programs designed to give young children a head start end at age six, but there is a clear need for support to older children and their families, with the school used as an appropriate programming site.

[I have a] much better understanding of the need to involve youth in a meaningful way in any solution or discussion and to "engage" them.

*Lisa Miles
Crown Attorney's Office, Ottawa*

PRESENTATIONS: Community-based Youth Substance Abuse Programs

Dr. Richard Meen, Kinark Family and Child Services, Oakville ON
Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier, Okanese First Nation, Balcarres SK

Dave Farthing of YOUNCAN introduced the guest speakers, noting some of the obvious differences in the communities about which they would speak: urban in the first instance, rural and Aboriginal in the second.

Dr. Meen began by commenting that the Symposium was timely, because stakeholders need to understand this issue better. He made seven points in his succinct and direct presentation, citing a research reference or effective program to illustrate each point. (Copy of presentation not available.)

1. Behaviour is the language of children and youth, which means that adults must listen, hear, be patient and provide a safe setting for this language to be expressed. Many youth do not have the skills they need to communicate effectively and they will listen to peers before adults. But there are very effective programs that help them to acquire communication skills. Dr. Meen recommended "True Notebooks" by Mark Salzman as a source for understanding the literacy and youth justice connection.
2. Adolescence is a time of sexual energy. Sexual activity begins at an early age and sexuality and body image are constant factors in the images young people see, what they hear and actions they emulate. Illicit drug use is part of this picture; for example girls use drugs to suppress their feelings about being sexually exploited. Boys need to know that prolonged drug use in youth can cause erectile dysfunction in adulthood.
3. All children and youth come with families, whatever their shape and size, and families must be involved in the efforts to prevent illicit substance abuse among youth and other family members. He cited the Triple P Parenting Program from Australia as a program that aims to do this.
4. Addiction is the big factor which must be recognized, especially by health-care professionals. Most are not equipped to deal with the multiple conditions that many of these youth have, such as post traumatic stress disorder and attention deficit disorder. He recommended "The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook – What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing" by Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz to illustrate the impact of co-morbidity. He pointed to types of expression that work for youth, such as dance, drumming and other forms of expressive art.
5. Information technology and the internet have changed everyone's lives, offering youth the opportunity to self-diagnose and professionals the opportunity to pool their resources quickly, from sharing information to accessing data bases. But this technology can also complicate treatment by enabling the youth to question recommended therapies.
6. There are positive results coming from community partnerships and collaboration; for example, the York Police Service's work on children's mental health, with mental health experts, is a successful model that respects the role of police as police and psychiatrists as psychiatrists.
7. Childhood does not end at age 18, despite legal definitions. He noted that the Mental Health Commission of Canada was recommending that youth be considered to include up to age 25. The SHOUT program of medical care and counseling offers an approach that is helpful. In reference to youth and their needs, Dr. Meen stressed the importance of safe housing in the form of hostels, so that young people did not have to seek safety in crack houses.

Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier began by stating that youth need hope. She then laid out the history of the First Nations people in her community and their expectations, coming from the 1875 treaty that promised education, fishing and other traditional rights. Chief Day Walker-Pelletier spoke of the impact of government policies and paternalism from then until now, including the *Indian Act*, residential schools, Bill C-31 which prevented Aboriginal women from retaining their status if they married a non-Indian and the “adoption scoop”, the apprehension of a significant number of children into protective care, in the 1960s. These actions indicate that First Nations are unwanted; as a result of these government decisions, they have lost family systems, the right to govern themselves, kinship, community ownership and culture. Individual rights have trumped collective rights. Oppression, said Chief Day Walker-Pelletier, leads to alcohol and drug abuse, gangs, family violence and the multitude of other ills that affect First Nations peoples.

I believe there is a veritable gap in understanding the root cause of illicit substance abuse amongst First Nations and Inuit youth and the systemic impact that it can and does have in many Aboriginal settings, both urban and rural.

*Michael Martin
National Native Addictions
Partnership Foundation
Muskoday, SK*

The spirit of hope comes from elders and forefathers. Her First Nation regards Treaty 4 as sacred and the basis for moving forward to push for recognition of her people’s rights and the Crown’s responsibilities. She cited the Head Start program, funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, as a positive measure that has allowed the re-introduction of the native language. Five per cent of the population of Okanese First Nation has a criminal record, but as all of these offenders are male, it is falling to

the strong women of her community to take the lead in realizing the vision of holistic wellness based on the traditional medicine wheel (mind, body, spirit and emotion). This was the starting point for a healing and reconciliation program undertaken by her community following a triple homicide by youth in 2001. Federal funding of a comprehensive community health and wellness program permitted the training of twelve band members as certified addictions counsellors so that a wrap-around, team approach could be initiated for youth substance abuse. Chief Day Walker-Pelletier noted, however, that government processes and terms and conditions continue to be a barrier to the community’s efforts to secure funding for its initiatives.

In speaking for the youth of her community, Chief Day Walker-Pelletier characterized them as a troubled population, marginalized and with low self-esteem, with no long-term aspirations and a profound sense of isolation. The legacy of residential schools, no parenting, draws many to gangs for the sense of belonging, as well as power, status and prestige. In her estimation, the promise lies in engaging youth themselves to design and implement programs that are meaningful to them in their own community and family environment. The community has to take charge, refuse government programs that are not relevant to its needs and invest in its youth. The young people of her community, stressed Chief Day Walker-Pelletier, need mandatory, age-appropriate education on substance abuse, sexuality and relationships. There is a need for more shelters for youth, more transitional housing and more support on parenting to address the residential school legacy. The key is prevention, prevention, prevention. The challenge is to demonstrate results to governments within their short, specified timeframes. Youth empowerment and the ability of young people to turn things around quickly offer hope. (See Tab 5 for presentation.)

Group Discussion Topic 2:

How can communities support youth with substance abuse problems to prevent them from engaging in criminal activity?

Rod Olfert of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse facilitated this group discussion topic. Consensus views emerged from the discussions within the six groups, all of whom expressed the need for both families and communities to take responsibility for the situations of their youth. One group presented a string of words capturing many of the elements of support needed by youth:

hope...trust...care...mentorship...relationships...role models.

Participants identified support to families as something that is needed and that many communities could provide. Support takes many forms including: development of parenting skills; support to parents and teachers in recognizing and understanding substance abuse among youth; and better information about resources, programs and counseling services for youth with substance abuse problems.

At the community level, this responsibility spans policy decisions and programs that have an impact on prevention all the way through to positive re-integration strategies for those who have undergone substance abuse treatment. Participants identified many concrete actions that communities can take to support youth who have substance abuse problems. Communities can examine their policies, programs and procedures to ensure that they have considered the impacts of their decisions on youth. They have the means and responsibility to analyze the immediate and ongoing needs of youth. They can ensure that programs available to youth have a service rather than a business orientation and that existing services operate in a multi-disciplinary, case management fashion.

Communities can insist that service providers have the capacity to detect substance abuse problems; they need current knowledge and information in order to educate, refer and provide appropriate treatment options to youth along a continuum of care model. Communities can support youth by offering many access points within these systems. Schools and youth centres are obvious places for education, not only on drugs and substance abuse, but also on the fundamentals of healthy communications and relationships for youth. Participants cited California's "Quantum Opportunity" program as one successful model for engaging youth and parents.

A basic support needed by youth with substance abuse problems is a safe place – hostels, clubs, after-school drop-in centres – when home may not be the round-the-clock answer for the young person. The "lighthouse" program was mentioned as one such support. With respect to the question of how to prevent youth from entering the justice system, the resounding response is that communities can and ought to do much more. They can begin by involving young people in the planning, design, delivery, implementation and evaluation of attractive and desirable programs and pro-social activities. Sports are positive activities if the facilities and necessary equipment are accessible and youth are not prevented from participating because of financial need. There are also other recreational activities such as the creative, performing, visual and domestic arts, many of which have a cultural element that allows young persons to connect with their roots, their families and their communities.

All of these activities allow youth to develop skills and form relationships with healthy role models and mentors. It is important that these activities be flexible, on a drop-in basis where appropriate, and that the community make an ongoing financial commitment to maintain them. Bridging programs at the community level support youth who have undergone treatment programs, are (re-)entering school or the job market and working to establish pro-social community ties. Experiential youth themselves are a resource often overlooked by communities which could draw upon them as peer counselors and mentors.

Finally, communities can inform themselves about youth substance use and dispel myths about substance use, abuse and criminal behaviour. Communities need to learn how to collect data effectively and accurately, so that they can make sound local decisions and support their requests for financial assistance for programs designed to meet their needs.

DINNER ADDRESS:

Madam Justice Dianne Nicholas, Ottawa Youth Mental Health Court, Ottawa ON

Louise Hanvey of the Canadian Nurses Association introduced Madam Justice Dianne Nicholas at the evening's dinner. Madame Justice Nicholas presides over the Youth Mental Health Court in Ottawa and, in that context, has direct experience in applying judicial provisions of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. She began by saying that judges need to be better educated on youth issues and the public needs a better understanding of Canada's youth justice legislation because a black-and-white approach is proven to be ineffective. She noted that there are very few crimes committed by youth for which incarceration is an option. The challenge for Canada is to find meaningful alternatives to a 19th century solution when responding to 21st century problems.

She described the young people seen in her courtroom as "angry and sad". Many are the offspring of people she sentenced almost two decades ago; many of those parents are seeking help in establishing a relationship of trust with their children and with the institutions and systems designed to provide help. Reports of the assessments conducted under s. 34 of the *YCJA* set out the challenges these youth face: learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, Asperger Syndrome, possible Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder,

There was a good mix at this session. Involving a few more mental health people would be helpful – mental health and substance abuse usually go together.

*Linda Smith
Nova Scotia Department of Health
Halifax, NS*

low self esteem and poor academic achievement. Many are youth in the care of the state. Many of the girls are addicts who are being sexually exploited. All have mental health and addiction problems. They are the result of

an insidious social problem – abuse of drugs and other substances – and the need for treatment for these young people far exceeds what is available.

Gaps in health and mental health services result in young people being denied medical care, even at times of crisis. Expectations that the justice system has of these youth, such as appearing in court and complying with conditions of release, are often not realistic given their living conditions and circumstances. The existing good facilities are insufficient and even the promise of additional residential treatment capacity will not meet this community's needs. (Copy of presentation not available.)

Police and other service providers recognize the revolving door that these youth pass through on their way in and out of the various systems in place, she said. A number of concurrent factors contribute to this pattern. Homelessness is one example. Because the YCJA prohibits detaining a young person for an offence that would not warrant custody upon conviction, children who may have no stable and safe place to go are released. Those in custody for breaches of their conditions generally flourish in the environment of safety and shelter, good food and education and training.

Madam Justice Nicholas' speech pointed out the serious consequences for young people who have not been adequately served by existing prevention and intervention efforts. For Canada's youth justice system to succeed as it is designed to do will require much more effort to address and meet the basic needs of the "angry and sad" young people who have mental health and addiction problems and find themselves caught up in the justice system.

PRESENTATION: A Police Perspective

Deputy Chief Michael Mann, Waterloo Regional Police Service, Waterloo ON

Rod Olfert of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse introduced Deputy Chief Mann, who addressed on behalf of the CACP the role of police in speaking out on social issues. Deputy Chief Mann linked CACP beliefs and objectives to its vision of crime prevention. The CACP stresses a comprehensive approach, with an emphasis on addressing the root causes of crime and social disorder in order to achieve positive social change. This emphasis on social development is shared by members of the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being. Deputy Chief Mann related the Coalition's seven key messages to the issue of youth illicit substance abuse and involvement in the justice system.

The partners here are committed to prevention and we need/must lobby government in such a way as they see it as a priority. Spread the news on supporting our future leaders. Understanding partner responsibility and knowing who to contact has been fostered at this symposium. Give youth a chance. If consequences, they need to be practical and timely. More often than not, substance abuse is a health issue and resources are lacking or the waiting period is unacceptable.

*D/Chief Mike Mann
Waterloo Regional Police Service/
CACP Crime Prevention Committee*

Police advocating on social policy issues is not a new notion. The Chief Constable of Toronto in 1934 called for police to use their voices to promote the social betterment of their communities. Deputy Chief Mann illustrated this advocacy role with two examples from his own community. One is the police acting as a catalyst for ongoing community action on heroin addiction and other substance abuse among the youth population. Another is the police support for diversion of youth, in keeping with provisions of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, in cases where alcohol or drug abuse is a factor. The police role here transcends enforcement by endorsing a non-court approach for young persons drawn into substance abuse.

By using these examples, Deputy Chief Mann challenged all members of the Coalition and all participants to speak out, to engage youth and to influence how young people are perceived by society, how they are reared and how they are supported in making good choices today and for their own futures. This, he concluded, is a challenge we can meet. (See Tab 5 for presentation.)

Group Discussion Topic 3:

What should be done in the future, and by whom, to prevent youth from abusing substances, to prevent youth with illicit substance abuse problems from becoming involved in the justice system and to ensure that youth crime and victimization are regarded as a health and justice issue? What are the most effective ways of responding to these youth once they are in the justice system?

Gord Phaneuf of the Child Welfare League of Canada facilitated the group discussion on the third topic. The objective of this session was to build on the previous day's work, to be forward-looking and to elicit concrete and achievable recommendations for all who have a stake in preventing substance abuse by youth and the trajectory into health problems and the justice system that may result. He reminded participants of the inspiring power of "one honest voice" in keeping a message alive and influencing government policies and public opinion.

Participants identified a number of actions on the part of governments at all levels and the many service providers that interact with youth who have, or are at risk of developing, substance abuse problems.

Beginning with the macro level, a number of policy changes were suggested and questions were raised about the state of current policies and strategies. Canada does not have a child and youth strategy which presents huge policy and practical challenges for service providers attempting to implement the most effective responses to the needs of young people. Participants agreed that Canadians would be better served if

Strength-based framework. Public health framework. Neighbourhood-based service delivery.

*Lew Golding
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Toronto, ON*

governments were to embrace a public health framework for prevention of youth illicit substance abuse. This is a proven and workable model for service delivery and is applicable to many other community issues that require both intervention and prevention.

Would love to shift from thinking of groups/ individuals as "victims". What weakens/enables/ prevents resilience?

*Shelley Reid
Sandy Hill Community
Health Centre, Ottawa*

Basic needs of children and youth and their families must be met – safety, food and shelter. Social planning ought to be based on universal core values of creating a sense of belonging, encouraging mastery of skills and abilities and recognizing interdependence and accountability among members of society. These core values express the belief that young people are capable and provide a foundation for government decision-making that supports the healthy

development of all members of society. A focus on meeting the needs of our society's youngest members offers more hope for sustainable and effective measures than does a crisis-driven reaction to addiction and crime.

Policies that strengthen families are crucial; for example, extended maternity/family leave and flexible work hours support family cohesion and encourage greater parental involvement with their school-aged children. Programs on parenting, provided to parents themselves or to other appropriate family members such as grandparents, can compensate for the diminished, sometimes lost role of the extended family in Canadian society. Inter-generational substance abuse makes addiction a community problem, best addressed through a policy that encourages a comprehensive approach designed to engage parents in the solution as well as a variety of detoxification and treatment options ranging from secure custody to peer support programs to walk-in treatment facilities.

The school, recognized throughout Canadian history as a powerful pro-social agent, is the setting where at-risk youth are best identified. This is where wrap-around services can be mobilized most effectively for timely interventions. Police-health-education collaboration was stressed as important for addressing many youth issues, particularly substance abuse. A specific positive step would be to put public health nurses back into schools,

Priority on early intervention programs – biggest risk factor: early onset of use. Community based strategies that encourage protection factors. Accessible, community-based addiction services (i.e., in schools, outreach, etc.)

*Sherrie Palmer
Addictions Foundation of Manitoba
Southport, MB*

along with addictions counselors and police. The requirement for sectors to work together facilitates a case management approach to youth who are using and to those at highest risk of using. Youth who are not using illicit substances possess psycho-social assets that make them a valuable potential resource for peer-to-peer support. Many successful school-based programs that reach out to parents were cited by participants. The effectiveness of the school in substance abuse programming requires smaller class sizes, attention to truancy, changes to curriculum to emphasize social and life skills and developmental

psychology, and opportunities for youth to meet challenges in ancillary activities outside the classroom. Manitoba's Student Assistance Program was mentioned as a practical measure, easily accessible to youth within the school environment.

Throughout the symposium, participants made reference to various programs and approaches that are working well in their communities and expressed interest in the names of programs that others found promising. A list of such programs and approaches can be found at TAB 6.

Agencies that have direct contact with youth, such as police, Crown attorneys, probation officers and health professionals, need better knowledge about communicating with young people, greater sensitivity towards sexuality issues which youth are dealing with personally, more awareness of racism and cultural diversity and more training on youth drug and alcohol abuse. Many participants stressed the need for alternative system responses to youth, according to their individual needs (e.g., healing and cultural attachment, educational opportunities, removal from the current setting for more intensive treatment.) At a systems level, participants identified the need for a shift from "outputs" to "outcomes/results" which would place a greater focus on the effects of the intervention on the individual and the means and requirements for achieving positive outcomes.

Within the justice system, participants were unanimous in their support for greater and more creative use of pre-charge diversion as a proven effective means of intervening early in a young person's decision-making path, re-directing them to pro-social activities and avoiding a criminal record that will affect them in their adult lives. The need for closer youth-police relationships was stressed. Many pointed to the great value of mental health courts, supported by case conferences, and of restorative justice processes that illuminate for youth the effects of their substance abuse on themselves and those around them.

Police reps, youth community leaders. Strong linkages need to be established between these two parties.

*Chuk Ugwuegbula
San Romanoway Revitalization Association, Toronto*

Finally, a public commitment to the principles of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* was stressed as something that each individual stakeholder, agency and professional

Getting from Plan A to Plan B. Making YCJA a good thing. Actually making addiction a health issue. Actually stopping police to youth violence. Creating opportunities for the justice system to improve.

*Janna Dickinson
Youth Services Bureau, Ottawa*

association at the symposium could and should make. Service providers, participants agreed, need to learn how to use and create networks in order to influence public policy, rather than waiting for politicians to lead on these important social issues. A national effort to work collectively to advocate and contextualize youth issues such as illicit substance abuse and involvement in the justice system is one such challenge. Some suggested that the Coalition on

Community Safety, Health and Well-being, its members, and all organizations and associations committed to social development and social justice are well-placed to do this.

Finally, the media could be brought into the dynamic, with the challenge that they shift from sensationalizing crime and victimization to focusing on the path that leads from youthful experimentation with drugs and other substances to substance abuse, the measures that are being used by so many stakeholders to support young people combating addictions and the underlying social and health issues.

Improving collaboration, reducing stigma and developing media engagement strategies.

*Dr. Hazen Gandy
Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
Ottawa*

SUMMATION, FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

Louise Hanvey of the Canadian Nurses Association and Dorothy Ahlgren of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police brought the Symposium to an end, returning to its stated objectives: i) to contribute to better linkages among the sectors, which appeared to have been achieved, ii) to facilitate knowledge development and transfer among the sectors, which participants had commented on positively throughout the event, and iii) to support the development of a major national conference on youth and the justice system planned for the coming fiscal year.

Findings

The following is a summation of the main findings and themes that emerged throughout the Symposium:

Government policies have the potential to increase risk factors for substance abuse by children and youth and the adults in their lives; those factors include poverty, homelessness, health and mental health problems, lack of employment, and limited access to education and learning. Governments have the opportunity to diminish those risk factors through policies that

- support families (employment, flexible working hours, extended maternal/paternal leave),
- support communities in providing pro-social choices for young people (recreation that goes beyond sports to include expressive, performing, domestic and visual arts, real youth engagement and decision-making), and
- support inter-agency information-sharing, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and continuous learning, especially among education, health and police sectors.

Intergovernmental issues are a great challenge that require further dialogue. There was a wealth of information shared; initiatives and policies are making a difference. Need more housing for youth – what are the cities planning for youth?

*Beth Ulrich
Manitoba Justice, Winnipeg*

As our federal prisons seem to be filling up with more young 18-26 year olds with long sentences on drug-related charges, I think many legislative and policy changes can be discussed and implemented to better deal with these complicated issues and get society on track with needed change.

*Dave Farthing
YOU CAN, Ottawa*

The unanimous view of participants was that the principles of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* are sound and its stress on diversion and non-court options offers an effective means of supporting young persons in choosing pro-social behaviour. Participants expressed some concern about any potential erosion of these principles and were unanimous in calling for greater use of diversion, both pre- and post-charge.

Program delivery is characterized as presenting real barriers to youth and their families who need to access information and services related to drug use, addiction, health and

I believe we should study the resources and make them available more easily.

*Jennifer Wilson
Youth Delegate, Whitehorse*

mental health care and the prevention of involvement in the justice system as offenders and victims. Youth and their families face enormous and discouraging challenges in navigating the various systems that have a role in the treatment of young people experiencing substance abuse problems. These challenges, identified by youth, parents and care providers, include:

- providing age- and gender-appropriate information, programming and treatment for youth and children;
- placing public health practitioners and community police officers in schools as resource persons and a non-threatening point of contact for youth on issues such as healthy sexuality and substance use;

- modifying services that are currently intimidating because of their institutional nature, limited service hours, unwelcoming atmosphere and judgmental practitioners, by making them youth-friendly in tone, flexible in time and located in places easily accessible to youth;
- providing safe places for youth, including housing for those whose homes are not an appropriate option;
- expanding treatment options to span a continuum of residential to community walk-in centres, making these options more widely available and ensuring that treatment and intervention are of sufficiently long duration that they can be effective;
- changing the service-delivery focus from processes to outcomes through using an integrated case management approach designed to meet the needs of the individual young person;
- placing realistic and achievable conditions upon youth who are in the justice system, to recognize the difficulty an addicted person may have in appearing when required for appointments, fulfilling follow-up actions and generally making good decisions;
- teaching adult service providers how to communicate effectively with youth (i.e., in a manner that is respectful, receptive and non-judgmental) and with parents;
- engaging youth in an ongoing, direct and meaningful way on issues that touch them and using youth in designing, planning and implementing solutions that are effective for their peers.

The other critical and ongoing issue is aftercare service and planning. It is extremely challenging to provide this to our clients and in spite of good research and evidence, no funding or interest for funding exists.

*Renata Aebi
Family Services of Greater Vancouver*

Increased involvement by youth in the solutions. Prevention, prevention, prevention – we need to continue to advocate for support (dollars, philosophy, etc.) Increase access to services to youth and their families. Coordination of services.

*Barb Miyamoto
Alberta Addiction and Drug Abuse Commission
Calgary*

At the community level, there is a need for much greater awareness – among parents, teachers, police, health professionals and other service providers – of drugs, of drug use among children and youth and of signs of substance abuse. This lack of awareness leads to denial which in turn results in the lack of available treatment for children and youth who may not fit the stereotype of an “addict”. A de-mystifying of substance abuse is required, and achievable, by using resources and information that currently exist. There is a need to update continuously the awareness and education of the community about the changing nature of substance abuse with new drugs and distribution channels becoming available.

Communities have an obligation to collect data about substance abuse in the community, in order to understand the nature and extent of the problem and to develop a suitable prevention and intervention strategy. Community leaders have a role in speaking out about substance use among children and youth and advocating for prevention measures, treatment and appropriate responses to those whose drug use becomes abuse. Support to families can occur in tangible ways such as courses and workshops on parenting, drug recognition and communicating with adolescents. Multi-generational substance abuse must be recognized by the community and addressed from this perspective.

Next Steps

Louise Hanvey and Dorothy Ahlgren closed by thanking all for their contribution and participation, on behalf of the Planning Committee. They noted that a report on the discussions and findings will be provided in English and French to the Department of Justice and confirmed that it will be made available to all participants at the Symposium as well as all members of the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being and their networks. The full report will be posted on websites of Coalition members, in particular the Planning Committee organizations shown below :

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police: www.cacp.ca
Canadian Nurses Association: www.cna-aiic.ca
Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: www.ccsa.ca
Child Welfare League of Canada: www.cwlc.ca
YOUCAN: www.youcan.ca

Many participants expressed the desire for a longer symposium and/or another meeting similar to this one. With additional time, it was suggested, the group could develop a model for creating a practical in-service training curriculum for service providers on how to talk, how to connect and how to intervene with youth. This suggestion and others are taken under advisement by the Symposium Planning Committee which will assess the feasibility of holding events to follow up on this symposium, including a similar event focusing on youth mental health. The CACP and its Coalition partners will also consider options for a planned youth justice conference in the coming year.

EVALUATION

An evaluation form was provided to each invitee at the outset of the Symposium. Following the symposium, 43 evaluation forms were collected from 47 participants who were neither part of the Planning Committee nor speakers. (See detailed Participants' Evaluation Report at TAB 4). The following is a synthesis of the responses to the five main questions asked on the evaluation form:

1. Using a scale of 1 (little value) to 4 (high value), how worthwhile was this symposium?

Participants were unanimous in responding that this was an important and worthwhile consultation. Two participants did not offer a numerical score, four rated it between 2 and 3, thirteen judged it to be between 3 and 4, twenty scored it a 4 and four rated it over the scale. Curiously, the lowest rating, a 2, was accompanied by very laudatory written comments.

Very impressed; open, inviting, respectful.

*Pytor Hodgson
Centre of Excellence on Youth Engagement
Kingston*

What would have made the symposium better?

Responses to this question underlined the problem that can arise when the invitation list is very broad and multi-sectoral. There was considerable discrepancy between the responses of those individuals who work on the front lines or in policy/research related to youth substance abuse and those who came

I know it is difficult, but having each of the youth present to the entire group. They offered lots to their tables, but they had value for the entire group.

*D/Chief Gary Broste
Saskatoon Police Service/
CACP Drug Abuse Committee*

to the symposium without such professional experience. The latter participants tended to want more basic information, while the former were looking for more specific data and examples of what works and what doesn't. There was a real desire to hear the voices of youth in discussion on illicit substance abuse, with several participants suggesting that more young delegates would have made the symposium even better.

2. How has participation in this symposium increased your understanding of the impact of youth illicit substance abuse on youth crime and victimization?

Most participants reported that they had learned something by taking part in the symposium, whether it was greater knowledge about substance abuse, the extent of the problem, the important roles and responsibilities of various parties (particularly the CACP and police generally), differences in approach from jurisdiction to jurisdiction or how various systems are involved in addressing youth illicit substance abuse. Even those participants with deeper knowledge and front-line experience found that they benefited from exposure to different sectors and jurisdictions.

*Improved understanding of nation-wide perspective on drug abuse.
Improved understanding of situation from addicts' perspective.
Broadened understanding of problem from many agencies' perspectives.*

*Marilyn O'Neil
Community Partnership on Drug Abuse
Sydney, NS*

3. Do you think further consultations should be held in the youth criminal justice system?

Yes, particularly regarding resources and their consistency as they are in place.

*Dianna Bussey
The Salvation Army
Winnipeg*

There was unanimity that there should be further consultations on the youth criminal justice system, with a focus on members of the system. Some participants suggested that it would be helpful to develop an action plan, while others noting that sharing information on "best practices" within the system should be an objective.

If yes, what specific areas should be focused on in future consultations?

Only one respondent did not suggest areas for future consultation. A variety of ideas were advanced, ranging from the need for more information to the roles of sectors (e.g. education) to greater involvement of families to more attention to specific groups (e.g. Aboriginal youth) to sharing of models and "best practices". Quite a range of approaches was proposed, with participants recommending changes in how

Families – diversity and cultural issues.

*Dr. Dick Meen
Kinark Child and Family Services
Oakville, ON*

systems function together, work on cultural shifts and values, the development of action plans and timetables and addressing linkages between mental health and substance abuse.

Who should be invited to participate in such consultations?

Participants liked the multi-sectoral, geographically broad representation, although several thought that there could be more delegates from the justice system, the

Youth, police, education including teachers, Health and Social Services, corrections, Justice, NGOs working within justice, parent groups.

*Darcy Fleury
Government of Northwest Territories
Yellowknife*

mental health sector, major police services, Aboriginal communities, social service organizations and youth. Two new categories recommended for inclusion were politicians at all levels who make decisions on funding and programs and the media. So broad was the suggested invitation list that it would be difficult to have another symposium of the limited size of the two consultations on youth justice topics that have been held in

association with the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being.

4. What key changes do you think are required in responding to youth with illicit substance abuse problems?

Participants pointed to the need to clarify responsibilities and ensure greater

More support for families at early stages of youth addiction issues.

*Chief Troy Hagen
Regina Police Service/
CACP Crime Prevention Committee*

collaboration between systems horizontally, as well as with youth, their families and their communities. Resources not only need to be increased, but spent more effectively. Access to services is a serious problem in many communities; if youth substance abuse is to be seen as a health issue, then early

intervention, timely access to treatment and more education on the impact of addiction must be emphasized. Attention needs to be paid to community capacity building and supporting families as well as youth. Above all, there must be a commitment by governments, systems and communities to prevention as a means of reducing the need for reaction. The growth in federal prison populations of 18- to 26-year-olds serving lengthy sentences on drug-related charges underlines the need for consideration of legislative and policy changes to address this complex, social problem.

The ridiculous consequences youth have to go through for making mistakes.

*Desmond Langford
Youth Delegate
Winnipeg*

5. Do you have any further comments?

Only four participants offered additional ideas. Another eleven passed on their thanks, noting that the symposium was well-organized, the venue was very comfortable and the multi-sectoral discussions had been rich. Several participants

Really great experience. Felt political. Felt like my voice and thoughts were heard.

*Allan Richard
Youth Delegate
Winnipeg*

emphasized the value of youth involvement. The symposium offered excellent excellent opportunities for networking and a number of participants indicated their interest in reconvening the group or at least being kept informed of future activities related to youth justice.