

Child and Youth Mental Health Intervention, Research and Community Advocacy Project in Nunavut



Mental health and wellness is the number one priority issue for our research centre. The purpose of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate, child and youth mental health and wellness interventions in Nunavut that focus on northern and community-based ways of understanding and knowing about healthy children and youth. We will combine community-based programs and activities; research; and evaluation to deliver a multi-level program to address child and youth mental health and wellness issues in Nunavut. The objectives of this project are to: 1) build capacity and generate new knowledge for addressing child and youth mental health and wellness issues in Nunavut; 2) develop and implement community-based mental health and wellness interventions for children and youth in Nunavut within a research framework; 3) to inform the development of short-term and long-term action plans for implementing culturally relevant child and youth mental health and wellness programs based on the findings from the research projects and evaluations of the interventions. This will be accomplished through our 4-component program.

Component 1) Children and Youth Health Summer Camps: We are collaborating with community partners and programs to develop, deliver, and evaluate this culturally-appropriate youth-centered intervention. These camps again will focus on child and youth mental health and wellness, self-esteem building, empowerment, coping skills, and more.

Component 2) Youth Exploring Mental Health and Wellness Through Photovoice: Photovoice is a research method that allows the photographer to be the researcher. We are proposing to collaborate with schools across Nunavut to provide youth with the opportunity to explore and share perspectives on Mental Health and Wellness through Photovoice. This project will continue to generate new research knowledge about the mental health of Nunavut youth as well as raise awareness of youth perspectives with regard to the number of issues they are faced with.

Component 3) Needs assessment for child and youth mental health services in Nunavut: To research and highlight immediate needs for children and youth mental health services as well as provide information with which to advocate for action on a number of health determinants that need to be addressed to promote child and youth wellness in the North including housing, poverty, nutrition, clothing, and family support programs.

Component 4) Health Promotion Program/Education Program for Parents: A very strong need for parenting support programs has been identified in Nunavut communities. We are collaborating with this group to implement an intervention that will be selected in the first year of this project (there are a number of models currently being reviewed by the working group). The program will be augmented to reflect community needs and cultural realities before being implemented. Pre- and post-intervention data will be collected to evaluate efficacy and cultural relevance. The goal of this component is to highlight the role of parents in supporting and raising healthy children and youth, develop and implement a culturally relevant intervention, and evaluate it.

Our organization is collaborating with local community groups, Inuit associations, territorial and municipal governments, research institutes, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Katimajit (Inuit traditional knowledge committee), and more, for the implementation of this project. It is also guided by a territorial advisory committee comprised of members from various disciplines.