



Effectiveness of mental health
outreach services for adolescents:
Modalities and approaches in a
context of scarce resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

of the ETMI report

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Depressive and anxiety disorders often emerge during a child's early development and become more prevalent during the transition from childhood to adolescence (Couture, 2019). Timely management of symptoms and mental health conditions, coupled with appropriate care from childhood or adolescence onward, is crucial for preventing these conditions from persisting into adulthood (Agresta *et al.*, 2022; World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). As demand for outreach services grows, effective approaches and various service delivery methods should enable us to reach all young people in a timely manner (Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux (INESSS), 2019). In line with the guiding principles of the 2022-2026 *Plan d'action interministériel en santé mentale* (PAISM) (Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec (MSSS), 2022) and the *Programme québécois pour les troubles mentaux* (PQPTM) (MSSS, 2020), rethought care delivery methods adapted to adolescents' needs are still needed.

CONTEXT

In Quebec, as in other parts of the world, the prevalence of mental health symptoms and disorders among young people is constantly increasing (Ouellet-Morin *et al.*, 2021). Exacerbated by the pandemic, this problem is leading to an increased need for local mental healthcare and services for adolescents (Bergeron *et al.*, 2022; Lane *et al.*, 2022). To address this need, CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale's Direction du programme jeunesse wishes to improve the effectiveness of its outreach services for adolescents with mental health symptoms or disorders. The UETMISSS of CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale was tasked with identifying and evaluating innovative approaches to improving the effectiveness of community mental healthcare and services for young people aged 12 to 17. This mandate was carried out in collaboration with the UETMISSS of the CIUSSS du Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal.

OBJECTIVE

This ETMISSS project was conducted to answer the following question: What are innovative outreach modalities and approaches are there for treating adolescents with mental health symptoms or disorders?

MÉTHODOLOGY

A systematic review of the scientific literature was carried out using the PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses*) method to formulate finding. Literature search strategies were employed to query the CINHALL (EBSCO), Medline (OVID), Embase (OVID), and PsychINFO (OVID) bibliographic databases. Documents identified during the literature search were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria determined using the PICOTS tool. Relevant data were extracted using a structured grid. The interventions identified in the literature were grouped according to their delivery modality: face-to-face, digital, or hybrid (more than one approach simultaneously).

RÉSULTS

Of the 2 566 potentially eligible documents, 23 studies with 22 interventions were selected for the review. Overall, face-to-face interventions were found to improve depression and/or anxiety. There were also positive effects on global functioning and psychosocial problems. The impact of digital interventions or programs appears to be more heterogeneous. Programs based on or including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) showed that a greater reduction in depressive or anxiety symptoms correlated with participants attending more sessions. Two hybrid interventions, carried out both face-to-face and digitally, demonstrated a reduction in depressive symptoms.

FINDINGS

- Digital and hybrid face-to-face interventions in clinical, school, and community settings have been identified as effective methods for delivering mental health outreach services to adolescents;
- Many community mental health interventions are based on CBT to treat adolescents;
- The duration of these interventions varies from three to 12 weeks;
- The professionals most often involved are psychologists, general practitioners, and psychiatrists;
- Parents or relatives may be involved in certain interventions. They may participate as service providers or support their child during treatment;
- Face-to-face interventions appear to be the most effective way to reduce depression and anxiety, regardless of the setting;
- Various forms of CBT can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety;

- Interventions based on approaches other than CBT can improve mental health symptoms in adolescents;
- Numerical approaches show some efficacy in reducing anxiety, and their effectiveness varies according to how many sessions young people attend;
- Hybrid interventions, which combine at least two types of interventions, are no more effective than face-to-face or digital interventions;
- No study has specifically addressed the safety of interventions;
- Measures to ensure the confidentiality and safety of young people during face-to-face interventions have been reported;
- Digital studies address the issue of securing access to digital platforms.

CONCLUSION

Twenty-two interventions and innovative programs, delivered in different modalities, could be offered to adolescent clients in community mental health services. Face-to-face interventions delivered by various professionals seem to be the most effective at reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in young people. However, digital interventions are an interesting avenue to explore. Further research is needed to confirm the effectiveness of these interventions.

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