

Generating New Evidence

Project and Research Report

2017 - 2018



Policy Wise
for Children & Families

Lead • Create • Mobilize

OUR VISION

Alberta is a leader in creating and mobilizing evidence to ensure the well-being of children, families, and communities.

OUR MISSION

To develop and integrate evidence to inform, identify, and promote effective public policy and service delivery to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.



Policy Wise
for Children & Families

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Welcome



Robyn Blackadar
President & CEO



Jim Talbot
Board Chair

As a long-standing strategic partner of Alberta Children's Services, we continue to produce evidence to inform its services, programs, and policies. This year, we began supporting the work of the Ministerial Panel on the Child Intervention System and its recommendations in regards to cultural safety, diversity, and the need for co-development with those who access the system. In the next fiscal year, our annual grant will be devoted to assisting the Ministry in implementing the research and evaluation priorities identified in the public action plan, *A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow*.

After many years of very successful work completed by the Child and Youth Data Laboratory (CYDL) initiative, the Government of Alberta has decided to transition the CYDL internal to government after 2018/2019. PolicyWise will be fully involved in the transition process over the next year and the collective learnings will be invaluable to the new model under development. The CYDL Longitudinal Study was one of the many strategic data initiatives accomplished by our team, and we encourage you to learn more (p. 13).

Our reliance on an enthusiastic, engaged, and experienced Board of Directors is essential for success. We welcomed two new board members this year: Dr. Jackie Sieppert, Dean Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary; and Ms. Belinda Boleantu, community leader. We said farewell to Dr. Gayla Rogers, Mr. David Elton, and Dr. Brent Scott, whose leadership and guidance have been instrumental in our journey.

This year's *Generating New Evidence* report is inspired by kites. The kite is a symbol for progress and a brighter future, which is our story today.

Over the past 12 months, PolicyWise for Children & Families has played an important role in many of the province's initiatives to ensure that the future of children, youth, and families has focused on safety, wellness, inclusion, achievement, and happiness.

Without the wooden dowels and strings that form the frame of the kite, there would be nothing to keep the kite afloat. Our team is the frame of PolicyWise.

With new opportunities and projects, our team has grown in both our Calgary and Edmonton offices. Each office has settled into their bright new space. The new work environments are designed to support increased connections with our partners as the nature of our work is highly collaborative, with the provincial ministries and community agencies, with our focus being on building and mobilizing capacity for evidence-informed policy and practice.

To our board, partners, stakeholders, and our PolicyWise team - we thank you for your continued support and dedication. Each of you help us soar higher!

Robyn Blackadar, President & CEO

Jim Talbot, Board Chair

Board of Directors



(Front row, left to right): Denise Lightning, Belinda Boleantu, and Tanya McLeod

(Back row, left to right): Jackie Sieppert, James Talbot, Robyn Blackadar, Martin Coutts, and Brian Callaghan

(Absent): Sandra Davidge and Brenda Rebman

The Board promotes the work of PolicyWise through the development of strategies and establishing partnerships with key stakeholders.



*Thank you to our
staff for another
wonderful year
together.
We could not do
the work we do
without them.*



About PolicyWise

Supporting Wise Decisions

PolicyWise is an innovative, not-for-profit organization that exists to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities. We do this by collaborating, leading, creating, and mobilizing research and evaluation to inform social policy and practice.

We are governed by members representing government, academia, and community. Our employees are experts in data analytics, applied research and evaluation, and knowledge mobilization.

PolicyWise prides itself on building long-term relationships with stakeholders that improve the well-being of children, their families, and communities across Alberta.

Through the development of our Impact Assessment (page 8), we are committed to a set of long-term outcomes:

1. Alberta is a policy and practice leader for child, family, and community well-being.
2. There will be an increasingly receptive and integrated environment for the use of data, information, and evidence.
3. Alberta policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners will further build a contextual, credible, and comprehensive picture of the state of child, family, and community well-being.

Informing Policy and Practice

Lead

- Through the Child and Youth Data Laboratory (CYDL), we play a unique role in analyzing and interpreting linked administrative data collected across all child- and youth-serving ministries.
- Through Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE), we increase the value of existing data by bringing people together to use it in new ways. SAGE manages and shares data from research, community service, and administrative activities.

Create

- By collaborating on research, evaluation, and funding, we help generate policy-relevant evidence in Alberta.

Mobilize

- Mobilizing knowledge is a cornerstone of our work. We are committed to helping people apply evidence in policy and practice.



Flying a kite without a tail will often result in spinning and rolling due to instability. Like the tail of a kite, we at PolicyWise use both communication and collaboration to keep us strong and balanced.

About PolicyWise

Theory of Change

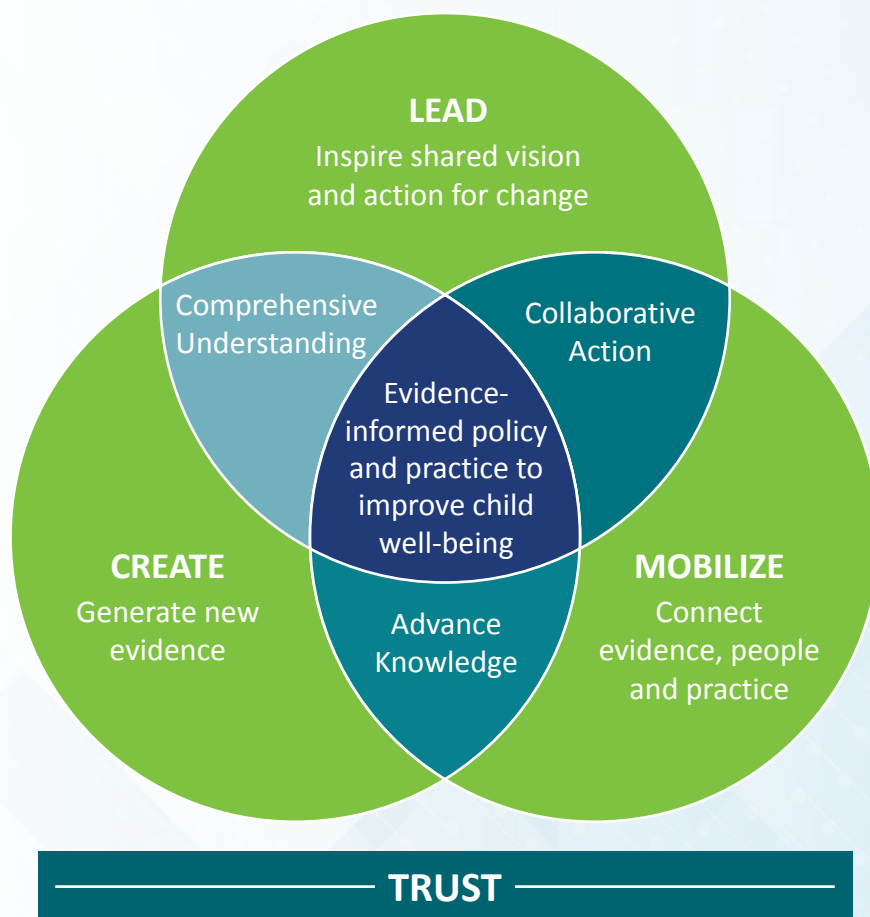
Our Theory of Change is based on trust: trust in the wisdom of the children, families, communities, and others we work with; trust in our funders; and trust in the knowledge that our work will improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.

Evidence-informed policy and practice are embedded in our theory of change. Comprehensive understanding, collaborative action, and our drive to advance knowledge informs the work we do to affect positive change.

Assessing our Impact

We hold ourselves to the highest standards for delivering quality services and products. This drives our passion to pursue organizational excellence. Measuring our results goes beyond looking at goals and objectives to provide a deeper understanding of how and why we are doing what we do.

The question that guides how we evaluate our work is, “What happened or changed as a result of our actions?” Through our commitment to learning, rigorous monitoring, and evaluation of our approach, PolicyWise learns, adapts, and improves.





Projects

We use a collaborative approach to research and evaluation that engages stakeholders in creating evidence that answers their questions. The research and evaluation projects listed in this section are policy relevant and align with our thematic areas of focus:

- Early childhood development
- Prevention, early intervention, child maltreatment
- Primary healthcare
- Mental health
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Family violence
- Trauma-informed practice
- Vulnerable populations
- Indigenous peoples

Alberta Mentoring Partnership Research and Evaluation

Ongoing

PolicyWise is on the Alberta Mentoring Partnership leadership committee and our CEO chairs its research and evaluation committee. In 2017/18, the committee focused on engaging the broader mentoring community.

Highlights

The committee hosted five webinars to mobilize research and evaluate findings on mentoring:

- The Aboriginal/Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program: Expanding the Circle into Alberta (94 registrants)
- Placing a Better Bet: The Importance of Bridging Research and Practice in Youth Mentoring (45 registrants)
- Implementing the Alberta Career and Technology Studies Mentoring Courses (36 registrants)
- Mentoring for Credit: An Introduction to the Career and Technology Studies Mentoring Courses (101 registrants)
- Exploring Opportunities for Research, Evaluation, and Knowledge Mobilization in Mentoring (62 registrants)

Next Steps

PolicyWise to co-host a Research/Learning Day with Alberta Mentoring Partnership and Big Brothers Big Sisters National.

Apprenticeship Data Integration Engagement Project

Initiated

This project's goal is to link client data from non-government agencies and the Apprenticeship, Trade, and Occupational Management System (ATOMS) database at Alberta Advanced Education. This will allow non-government agencies to track their clients' apprenticeship placements and employment outcomes. It will also allow agencies to assess the effectiveness of their client services.

Highlights

PolicyWise and NGO apprenticeship agencies have initiated partnerships to determine data types, collection methods, and gaps/needs.

Next Steps

- Conducting interviews with NGO agency staff.
- Analyzing data.
- Writing a business proposal for Alberta Advanced Education advocating for the data integration initiative.

This project will allow non-government agencies to track their clients' apprenticeship placements and employment outcomes.

Bell Canada – Child & Youth Mental Health Portal

Ongoing

With support from Bell Canada, the Government of Alberta, and Alberta Health Services, PolicyWise collaborated on a new youth mental health web portal. The portal (help4me.ca) is a gateway to mental health resources and information to support youth, families, and caregivers.

Highlights

Activities during 2017/2018 included:

- Re-establishing project governance and approval between Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and PolicyWise in September 2017.
- Evolving PolicyWise's role to day-to-day project management.
- Increasing PolicyWise's role on the working group.
- Increasing collaboration between the portal working group and the Valuing Mental Health Strategy Child & Youth Integration Committee.
- Initiating an externally-led portal evaluation.

Next Steps

- Completing the externally-led portal evaluation.
- Determining next steps for the project.
- Establishing partnerships with other child and youth mental health-related initiatives in Alberta.



Calgary Thrives

Completed

Six Calgary not-for-profit agencies and PolicyWise jointly lead Calgary Thrives. The project aims to understand the barriers to sharing data in Calgary's social sector. Despite some constraints, project partners benefit in numerous ways. This project has started a conversation on understanding client trajectories and served as proof of concept for LinkWise, PolicyWise's privacy preserving record linkage software. By linking records across agencies, project partners can assess common clients and assist with cross-agency referrals. This project also sought to better understand indicators around poverty.

Highlights

The project focused on building relationships and trust among participating agencies. Four agencies successfully participated in a data sharing and linking exercise, which also successfully tested LinkWise. One agency overcame significant technical barriers to contribute their data to the exercise. As well, a poverty indicator was defined using metadata from each agency. Analyses of each partner's data showed wide contrasts in client bases amongst the various agencies. An analysis entitled Law and Governance of Secondary Data Use Legal explored issues regarding data sharing in the sector.

As a result of its participation, the South West Communities Resource Centre dramatically revised and improved its intake and data collection processes. Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) also agreed to share more data with PolicyWise, for use in future research to understand clients' trajectories and factors that contribute to better outcomes. Calgary Thrives has allowed PolicyWise to position itself as an engaged partner in data stewardship within the not-for-profit sector.

Next Steps

- Applying lessons learned to new collaborative initiatives in the sector.
- Proposing similar new projects in Calgary and Edmonton.

Child and Youth Data Laboratory (CYDL) Longitudinal Study: Experiences of Alberta Children and Youth over Time, 2005/06-2010/11

Ongoing

PolicyWise conducts policy-relevant analyses to support decision-making for government, community organizations, and other stakeholders. The CYDL is a key partnership with the Government of Alberta focusing on linking data across ministries to inform policy and practice. The Child and Youth Longitudinal linked data for Albertans 0-30 years old over a 6-year period of time. The Project looks at service use within and across ministries, across key indicators and time.

Several major research themes were identified as a result of extensive consultations and ongoing collaboration with participating ministries. These include transitions, resilience, early childhood development, and other specific topic areas such as disability, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and mental health. This work provides a novel quantitative perspective and reveals deep and complex relationships of determinants and influencing factors on the outcomes of children, youth, and families.

Highlights

The 2017/2018 year was a productive time for the CYDL in releasing policy-relevant products on the well-being of children, youth, and families in Alberta. Some highlights include:

- The Post-Secondary Students and Mental Health report tells the story of those enrolled in post-secondary education and their mental health service use and fills a critical information need for institutional planning.
- The Income Support Recipients report provides insight into Albertan youth accessing basic training support to secure employment.
- The Child Support Services Dependents report profiles children of parents seeking child support agreements or court orders across key indicators such as age, educational achievement, and socio-economic status.

- The Youth Corrections report profiles youth with corrections involvement and provides insight into their experiences and use of other government programs.
- The Child Care Subsidy provides an overview of the recipients of provincial financial assistance to eligible lower-income families using day care centres, group family child care, family day homes, out-of-school care centres, pre-schools, and early childhood development programs.
- The CYDL is constantly developing new ways to mobilize evidence and support the use of findings by the government and other stakeholders. Data Bytes were developed as a quick product aimed at conveying a highlighted result and generating interest in the work. Three such Data Bytes were released on Child Intervention Clients' Mental Health, Post-Secondary Students' Mental Health, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Educational Achievement.

Next Steps

- Other reports on Family Support for Children with Disabilities, Cerebral Palsy, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Income Support Transitions and others will be released in 2018/2019.
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the FASD Cross Ministry Committee, a report will be released on how children and youth with FASD were served by provincial programs in Alberta.
- Discussions have begun with the Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre on a new model of partnership that will support information needs of First Nation communities in Alberta.
- The CYDL will support the development of capacity within the Government of Alberta for data integration and analytics.

Edmonton and Area Community Action Plan on Mental Health

Ongoing

This project is a large-scale initiative that brings together community, academic and government organizations to implement recommendations for improving the system. PolicyWise is represented on the project: our CEO is in the role of change agent on the evidence foundation leadership committee.

Highlights

The project team defined, developed, and used a navigation system, which was further informed by users and providers of various parts of the mental health system. In turn, the project found that every frontline person needs to have a system-navigation lens.

The evidence foundation committee identified evidence gaps in navigation, peer support, and collaborative care.

As part of the project, an email was distributed to 1,600 stakeholders as part of an evidence use survey. The survey captured data on stakeholder awareness, and use/potential use of the action plan.

The leadership team and steering committees opened each meeting with reflective questions that generated stories and common themes around practice changes, new/enhanced collaborations, system changes, and emerging opportunities and issues.

Next Steps

- A community gathering will be held in February 2019 where the focus will be stakeholder engagement, knowledge translation, and disseminating products to support mental health navigation.
- Developing a guide for community-based government and non-government organizations that provide addiction and mental health services/supports. The guide will include leading and evidence-informed practices to improve community-based addiction and mental health outcomes.

- Developing a living library that includes the perspectives of community and members and professionals with mental health life experience. Their perspectives can be used to inform practice and influence policy development in the area of mental health.
- Disseminating findings from our conversations with navigators about navigation in the mental health system, an area in which there is scant evidence available.

Enviros Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Support Program

Ongoing

PolicyWise evaluated the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) support program offered through Enviro as part of ongoing efforts to improve the program and adopt leading practices in caregiver support and service delivery.

The evaluation sought to:

- Understand how well the Enviro FASD support program works.
- Identify the features and influences on outcomes.
- Develop a framework for ongoing monitoring, adaptation, and improvement.

Highlights

Evaluators found that the program significantly supports caregivers of children affected by FASD. Statistical analysis, qualitative interviews, and focus groups showed that caregiver outcomes improved and children's risk factors decreased after participating in the program. Of particular interest is how staff support caregivers in understanding clinical diagnoses and assessments, strengthening caregivers' knowledge of FASD effects and building capacity to implement strategies.

The project team presented an evaluation report to with findings and future opportunities.

Next Steps

Future opportunities for Enviro include clarifying the program logic model, adapting assessment tools, and building capacity to collect and analyze program data. The project team will support knowledge mobilization efforts and implementation of future opportunities and considerations.



Family Violence Death Review Committee Evaluation Analysis

Completed

PolicyWise evaluated the quality improvement opportunities of the newly formed Alberta Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC). The mandate of the committee is to conduct a full review of family violence deaths to identify trends, risk factors, and case patterns. FVDRC uses these reviews to recommend effective intervention and prevention strategies. In this project, all committee members were interviewed and support staff participated in multiple focus groups.

Highlights

Quality improvement was examined across three main areas:

- Committee roles and composition – clarity regarding roles of chair, co-chair, and staff; and the committee’s diversity, policy knowledge, and respectful environment
- Committee processes – communication; reviews; recommendations; pod membership, processes, variations, leads, meeting frequency, and format
- Future considerations – new members, workload, orientation, and personal benefits

Next Steps

No further steps required – project complete.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Council Support & Research Projects

Ongoing

PolicyWise supports the operations of the FASD Cross-Ministry Committee and five FASD Councils. The councils ensure Albertan’s FASD needs are being met and their focus includes research and evaluation, education and training, supports and services, awareness, prevention and communications, and assessment and diagnosis.

We streamline communication between ministries, academics and practitioners as well as manage the development of evaluative resources and research projects aligned to the Government of Alberta’s FASD 10-Year Strategic Plan.

Highlights

Projects conducted in 2017/2018 include:

- FASD Workforce Development Framework—which aims to equip staff across systems with FASD knowledge to deliver quality treatment, supports, and services.
- Best Practices Guide for FASD Service Delivery and Evaluation Toolkit—which helps agencies assess and inform future practice and policy development.
- Supporting Employment in Individuals with FASD Guide and Evaluation Toolkit, which is designed to help Alberta employment programs that serve individuals with FASD.

Next Steps

Planning the next phases of the research projects, including developing a knowledge mobilization strategy to promote the completed research and associated toolkits.



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Data Integration

Ongoing

PolicyWise is collaborating with Alberta Community and Social Services and Service Alberta to integrate service data from different programs to better understand and serve Albertans with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This FASD Cross-Ministry Committee project will inform FASD prevention and address the needs of individuals with FASD, their families and communities, across the lifespan.

Highlights

In the fall of 2017, the PolicyWise project team brought together government stakeholders and FASD experts to identify a research agenda to inform policy and programs. Building on our expertise with linked administrative data, we then prioritized and further developed research questions that would best supply evidence from the project to inform FASD-specific policies and programs. In addition, we worked with Service Alberta to develop business requirements for the project, and to identify the best data sources to answer the research questions.

Next Steps

- Continuing our work with Alberta Community and Social Services and Service Alberta to further develop enterprise-wide data integration.
- Using evidence from integrated data sets to inform policy and program development.



Innovative Models Promoting Access-to-Care Transformation (IMPACT)

Ongoing

This 5-year, CIHR funded research project aims to co-create models of care that enhance access, especially for vulnerable populations. Set in three Australian states (New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria), and three Canadian provinces (Alberta, Ontario, and Québec), local innovation partnerships represent communities with complex challenges to the delivery of primary healthcare.

In Alberta, PolicyWise supported Lethbridge's local innovation partnership, which worked with community organizations over 4 years to design, develop and deliver pop-up health and community services for residents of North Lethbridge.

Highlights

We learned:

- Bringing services to where people are increased access to those services. Many attendees came specifically for the pop-up; others eventually accessed pop-up services despite arriving at the venue for different reasons (e.g., attending other programming, picking up children, etc.).
- Co-location of services increased access to more services. Attendees of the pop-ups usually identified one to two services they wanted to access; however, they consistently accessed more.
- Co-location of services is just the beginning. Service providers also changed how they provided service, including reconsidering provision of care and relationship building when interacting with attendees.

Next Steps

- Collecting and analysing data from the pop-ups, including interviews with attendees and service providers.
- Exploring the feasibility of implementing the pop-up interventions in other areas.
- Evaluating the Canadian and Australian interventions' effects on access to care and their costs and benefits.
- Sharing results of the project through publications, conference presentations and more.



Indigenous Youth Suicide Scoping Review

Ongoing

Working with the Indigenous and Community Connections Division of Alberta Children's Services, PolicyWise is examining the knowledge of Indigenous youth suicide in Alberta and Canada.

Our scoping review asked: What makes Indigenous youth suicide distinct; what are promising practices for addressing such suicide; and, what are knowledge gaps around service provision?

This review will inform the development of the Children's Services-led Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention Plan.

Highlights

Review findings include:

- Intergenerational trauma from colonization disrupts a sense of connectivity and belonging for Indigenous youth. Recognizing Indigenous youth as survivors of colonization moves attention from deficit to resilience.
- Indigenous practices, including hunting and language, and inter-generational relationships are significant protective factors. There is a need to strengthen social environments that reconnect Indigenous youth to community and place.
- Suicide prevention policy and programming must meaningfully involve Indigenous youth and their communities as experts on their own healing and on what they need. Respectful external support of that healing is crucial.

Next Steps

- Focusing on storytelling from elders, youth, community, and service providers to illustrate review findings.
- Developing the project findings further.
- Sharing what makes Indigenous youth suicide distinct and highlighting promising existing practices for addressing the issue.

Library Services Influence on Early Childhood Development

Completed

Alberta Municipal Affairs contracted PolicyWise to examine and clearly report on how public libraries in the province influence early childhood development. Such understanding will help illustrate why, how, for whom, and under what conditions libraries have positive outcomes on early childhood development. The project will also develop a framework to support strategic clarity, desired outcomes, and impact of library services.

Highlights

Working together, Alberta Municipal Affairs and PolicyWise developed a vision for Alberta public libraries to serve as a hub for community activities and early childhood development. The vision will be achieved through the following five strategies:

1. Developing community services and partnerships.
2. Providing a welcoming, inclusive, and culturally appropriate space.
3. Promoting caregiver participation.
4. Offering programs and services that prepare children for school.
5. Sharing knowledge within and between libraries.

PolicyWise also developed a framework to support, monitor, and evaluate the five strategies.

Next Steps

Implementing the five strategies based on capacity and resources.

Multi-year Trauma-informed Services Action Plan

Initiated

In collaboration with Alberta Justice and the Alberta Solicitor General, PolicyWise is developing an action plan to integrate trauma-informed practices in the youth criminal justice system. Trauma informed practice is an approach that understands, recognizes, and responds to the effects of trauma in individuals. This project includes: updating Young Offender Branch policies and documents to reflect this approach; creating related materials for staff and families; and, developing an action plan to the implement the approach.

Highlights

Activities completed in 2017/2018 include:

- First meeting with the senior management of the Youth Offender Branch in September 2017
- Data collection in fall 2017 and winter 2018
- Convening the Young Offender Centre Action Team
 - Provided trauma-informed practice training to the action team
- Developing trauma-informed service maps for young offender centres
 - These service maps use a trauma-informed lens to identify issues and potential changes that could be made within each of the centres
- Presenting a multi-year action plan to Youth Offender Branch leaders and action team

Next Steps

Implementing the second year of the action plan will include:

- Trauma-informed practice training for staff
- Reviewing the talent acquisition process.
- Assessing staff annually.
- Ongoing review of policies and procedures.



Parent Link Centre Enhancement Showcase

Completed

Alberta Children's Services provided a grant to PolicyWise to plan a Parent Link Centre (PLC) Enhancement Showcase highlighting PLC Enhancement Grant activities. The Ministry has provided Parent Link Centre Enhancement grants since 2014-15. These grants support the capacity of PLCs to connect with communities and implement specific strategies for healthy childhood development in communities with early development instrument results above the provincial average of 29 per cent. The showcase also built understanding of and discussions between Parent Link Centres.

Highlights

Some 120 staff from PLCs attended the day-long event that featured opportunities to learn and connect with research, policy, and practice through panel discussions, presentations, break-out sessions, and a poster gallery of innovative leading practices among Alberta's PLCs.

A survey found the event:

- Improved understanding of how Parent Link Centre Enhancement Grants are applied in Alberta.
- Improved understanding of leading and innovative practices at PLCs across the province.
- Positively informed the work of most PLC staff who attended.

PolicyWise applied lessons and suggested improvements from the Enhancement Showcase to plan a similar workshop on implementation science.

Next Steps

No further steps required – project complete.



Parent Link Centre Implementation Science Workshop

Completed

On behalf of the Early Childhood Development branch of Alberta Children's Services, PolicyWise hosted a one-day implementation workshop with Dr. Melanie Barwick (Psychologist and Health Systems Research Scientist, SickKids) and Jacquie Brown (Executive Director, Families Foundation). The presenters shared research and provided interactive tools to promote leading practices that could support Parent Link Centres (PLCs) in implementing Triple P and the five core services: parent education; early childhood development and care; family support; information and referrals; and, developmental screening. The workshop also aimed to capture experiential knowledge and wisdom from PLCs, and mobilize lessons learned through 2016's implementation workshop.

Highlights

About 80 PLC directors, managers and supervisors attended the event; 30 completed an event survey.

The survey found:

- Overall, the workshop improved the understanding of implementation science and associated leading practices for implementing new and existing programs.
- Most participants found the content of the workshop valuable enough to share with colleagues.

Next Steps

No further steps required – project complete.

PAX/Triple P Randomized Control Trial

Ongoing

With support from Alberta Health, PolicyWise is leading a randomized control trial to investigate a combination of two strategies to protect children from risks of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. These two interventions are PAX: Good Behaviour Game (school-based) and Triple P: Positive Parenting Program (home-based). Since 2013, the study has been underway in 24 schools in 9 Alberta cities and towns.

Highlights

The research team reconvened in September 2017, and the PEERS Lab, Department of Psychology at the University of Alberta, oversaw data entry, cleaning and analysis, as well as initiation of manuscripts for publication. PAX data has been transferred into the PolicyWise SAGE environment.

Next Steps

Analyzing data to assess potential outcomes related to child functioning, classroom behaviour, and self-reporting from teachers. A final report will be submitted in the winter of 2018.

PolicyWise Quality Assurance Framework

Ongoing

This Quality Assurance Framework guides the development, implementation and assessment of all work led by PolicyWise, and serves to:

- Provide structure and accountability for consistent, transparent, quality products.
- Articulate policies and procedures to guide research, evaluation, and data analytics and services.
- Support learning and application of quality assurance findings for continuous improvement.

As such, this framework outlines PolicyWise's quality standards and quality assurances achieved through a collaborative approach.

Highlights

At PolicyWise, our approach to quality assurance reflects our commitment to:

- Existing quality standards for work in social and health sectors.
- Building and sustaining relationships in order to achieve quality.

This Framework will align with our values, support our mission, and enable us to achieve outcomes associated with our theory of change. PolicyWise processes align with and demonstrate this approach to quality, and ultimately in generating quality evidence and inform quality decisions.

Next Steps

- Applying and refining the framework to current and new projects throughout 2018/2019.
- Sharing what we learn about embedding a rigorous quality assurance approach within not-for-profit organizations.

Psychosocial Response and Recovery Evaluation of the RMWB Wildfire 2016

Completed

Alberta Health, Addiction and Mental Health Branch contracted PolicyWise to evaluate the Psychosocial Supports (PSS) provided to residents affected by the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) Wildfire in May 2016. The project team held engagement sessions with RMWB and provincial stakeholders, conducted an evaluation of the disaster-related Response and Recovery phases, and identified guiding principles, necessary resources, infrastructure and policies to inform a provincial Disaster Psychosocial Framework.

Highlights

Psychosocial supports matter because they assist people and the communities they live in to move forward following disaster. In order for this to occur, psychosocial supports must be:

- Provided early and sustainable.
- A local and provincial priority with common goals for response and recovery.
- Community-based where local not-for-profit organizations and agencies are responsible for the initiatives.
- Fostered in times of non-disaster to help build a strong and resilient community, which will in turn make successful recovery from events such as disasters more likely.

The evaluation revealed many activities and processes that facilitated PSS among RMWB residents. These corresponded with established and emerging principles in the literature and contributed to the categorization of seven principle groupings which synthesizes the wealth of information into concise points of reference.

By establishing a framework of understanding between stakeholders, communities will be well positioned to respond to future disasters in a way that promotes PSS, post traumatic growth and ongoing learning.

Next Steps

Contributing to future disaster management efforts by providing a clear framework for response and recovery.

Psychosocial supports matter because they assist people and the communities they live in to move forward following disaster.

Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) Learning Series

Ongoing

The Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) Learning Series aims to share emerging, promising and leading practices among 17 RCSD Regions to capture experiential knowledge and wisdom. The intent of the series is to mobilize existing capacity and knowledge across the province.

Seven RCSD Regions are participating, producing a recorded presentation, research brief, and top-takeaways related to an innovative or leading practice from each of their regions.

RCSD is a regional partnership among Alberta Education, school authorities, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Community and Social Services, and other community stakeholders. RCSD partners work collaboratively and share available resources to:

- Address regionally identified needs.
- Coordinate and leverage systems.
- Build system capacity.
- Plan for sustainability.

Highlights

The RCSDs who participated in the series are:

- Aspen Collaborative Services
- Calgary and Area RCSD
- Central Alberta RCSD
- Central East Collaborative RCSD
- City of Edmonton RCSD
- Réseau RCSD
- Southwest Alberta RCSD

Team members from each of the RCSDs reported they enhanced skills in preparation for the video presentation, including PowerPoint, design, script editing, and public speaking.

Next Steps

Finalizing and publishing the presentations and related research briefs, top takeaways, and guiding questions on the PolicyWise website.

The RCSD Learning Series aims to share emerging, promising and leading practices among 17 RCSD Regions to capture experiential knowledge and wisdom.



Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE)

Ongoing

SAGE is a collaborative data platform that connects stakeholders through data. SAGE provides the governance, processes, and tools to enable data-driven collaborations between researchers, community organizations, and government.

SAGE has been in operation for over 2 years. Relationships have been built with academic institutions and the research community to advance the culture of data sharing. PolicyWise currently holds 12 datasets including 2 large birth cohort studies, which represent over 5,000 Albertan families.

In 2017, PolicyWise created the Secondary Data Use Grant to develop capacity in secondary data use. Five grants were awarded in May 2017. PolicyWise just launched the 2018 competition and are looking to award between five and ten applicants this upcoming year.

Highlights

SAGE has taken a leadership position in a network of stakeholder organizations to develop capacity for data use and sharing. PolicyWise has worked with Calgary Food Bank, Calgary Urban Project Society, Calgary Counselling Centre, among others. We have analyzed and linked data of three not-for-profit organizations and are ready to undertake new projects in this arena to help improve client services, experiences, and outcomes.

Laying the groundwork to data use and sharing for our stakeholders is not enough. Cross-sector linkage and optimized use of data will lead to better evidence and more holistic perspective of our communities, which will have a greater impact in policy and decision-making, all resulting in improved outcomes for children and families.

Next Steps

Bridging relationships between government ministries, community organizations, and the research community.

SAGE has taken a leadership position in a network of stakeholder organizations to develop capacity for data use and sharing.

Supporting Child and Youth Mental Health Outcomes in Alberta School Settings

Ongoing

A comprehensive review of the current state of child and youth mental health supports in school settings has been undertaken by PolicyWise on behalf of the Alberta Health Services Addiction and Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network. This project is designed to support a provincial, collaborative approach to improved mental health outcomes for children and youth.

The specific goals of the project are to:

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the provincial landscape for child and youth mental health in school settings.
- Inform a shared vision and approach on a cross-sector model for improving outcomes.
- Mobilize and strengthen provincial capacity and capability to achieve the desired change.

Highlights

Schools have a valuable role in supporting child and youth mental health, and a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach provides the most effective and efficient support. The project team found that situating children and families at the centre of service delivery facilitates this work, and that access, resources, partnerships and relationships are critical. Working together is also facilitated by shared definitions of mental health, common purposes and principles, shared priorities, evaluation, and infrastructure. A significant lesson learned through engagement with stakeholders across Alberta is that relationships, many of which are informal, bolster this work.

Next Steps

- Facilitating deliberative discussions across the province to inform design and implementation considerations.
- Synthesizing findings from the deliberative discussions and developing an implementation framework.
- Facilitating further discussions in the fall of 2018 to adapt and refine the framework.



The Framework to End Family Violence – Evaluation Action Plan

Ongoing

PolicyWise developed an evaluation action plan for the framework to end family violence in Alberta. The framework is a collective effort of the following ministries to prevent, reduce and end family violence: Children's Services, Community and Social Services (CSS), Education, Health and Alberta Health Services, Indigenous Relations, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing, and Status of Women. The aim of this project is to plan future data and evaluation research activities to demonstrate the impact of the family violence framework.

Highlights

Key highlights include:

- Presenting the draft Action Plan to the Interdepartmental Committee on April 2017, and the final Action Plan in May 2017.
- Commencing an implementation of the action plan.
- Coordinating with CSS and partner ministries to refine the scope of each evaluation project. Through this discussion, gaps and overlaps were identified related to evaluation and outcome measurement.

Next Steps

Implementing evaluation work plans to address the gaps and overlaps.

Trauma, Grief, and Loss Literature Review

Ongoing

In collaboration with Dr. Patti LaBoucane-Benson, Dr. Nicole Sherren, and Dr. Deanna Yerichuk, PolicyWise developed a literature review focusing on how trauma, grief, and loss impact child development, with a particular focus on First Nation and Métis peoples and communities.

The goal of the review is to help inform service providers and caregivers in the development and implementation of evidence-informed guidelines and practices. The potential of this work is to enhance outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and communities affected by trauma, and grief and loss.

Highlights

Important thematic messages from the literature review include:

- The resilience of the Indigenous individual, family, and community is evident throughout Alberta.
- First Nation's interconnected worldview focuses on building, maintaining and strengthening relationships with all living things.
- The three conditions for the building and maintaining of family and community resilience and for healing from the effects of historic trauma are:
 - reclaiming an interconnected relationships-based worldview and legal tradition
 - reconciling damaged relationships
 - recovering the power to respectfully self-determine

Next Steps

- Hosting an event facilitated by Dr. LaBoucane-Benson to share findings and promote understanding from the literature review.
- Developing a presentation and related material for the Foundations of Caregiver Support project.

Valuing Mental Health - Integrated Hubs

Initiated

The Government of Alberta's Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps report was released in June 2017. Within the report, the first action step calls for the implementation of a community-based service model (Integrated Hub) where services are jointly planned and delivered by multiple sectors through one location. PolicyWise has been contracted to create a framework that will support community-led implementation of integrated hubs in small to medium population centres in Alberta for youth ages 11-24. This includes:

- An environmental scan to identify the systems-level, operational, and practice considerations
- A provincial implementation and evaluation framework based on developmental evaluation of initial implementation of the integrated services approach
- A model for collaborative governance

Integrated Hubs are defined as the integration of health and social services under one roof in a youth-friendly environment.

Highlights

The following list includes lessons learned and activities completed in 2017-18:

- Integrated Hubs are defined as the integration of health and social services under one roof in a youth-friendly environment. They typically focus on prevention and early intervention and the provision of resources to help youth manage their concerns and navigate pathways to specialized services.
- Three guiding principles and five critical elements serve as the foundation of integrated hubs. If these guiding principles and critical elements are used to inform the development, implementation, and operation of a hub, it is expected to improve:
 - youth and young adult engagement and empowerment
 - mental health early identification and intervention
 - service integration and coordination
- Participating communities have completed early stages of implementation.

Next Steps

- Supporting communities as they progress through further stages of implementation.
- Convening deliberative discussions to establish a collaborative governance structure for hubs.
- Creating frameworks for implementing and evaluating integrated hubs in Alberta.

Year 10 Evaluation of the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder Strategic Plan (2007-2017)

Ongoing

The Government of Alberta's Cross-Ministry FASD Committee developed the FASD 10-Year Strategic Plan in 2007 with ten partnering Ministries. PolicyWise led the Year 5, Year 7, and Year 10 evaluations. The Year 10 evaluation assessed to what extent the goals have been met, included an historical analysis of the implementation of the Plan, and highlighted key lessons learned, innovations and trends that have contributed to results achieved over the last 10 years. This system-level provincial evaluation assessed progress and impacts in these areas: awareness, prevention, education and training; assessment and diagnosis; supports for individuals and caregivers; and performance as a learning organization.

Highlights

Activities completed in 2017/2018 included:

- Submission of a draft final report to the FASD Cross-Ministry Committee in the fall of 2017.
- Facilitation of discussion of the report findings took place in November 2017.
- Review and approval of the final evaluation report by the FASD Cross-Ministry Committee.
- Implementation of initial knowledge mobilization activities.

Next Steps

A number of knowledge mobilization activities are underway, including:

- Drafting a white paper highlighting the FASD CMC as a learning organization.
- Recording a presentation for Community and Social Service's Learning Series video sessions.
- Presenting evaluation findings at a national level conference.
- Finalizing the report and associated summary documents.

Youth Mental Health Community Support Program Evaluation

Completed

Alberta Health, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, and Alberta Health Services implemented pilot programs for youth with complex needs in Calgary and Edmonton. These pilot, community-based programs are designed for youth continually accessing tertiary services without achieving a stable resolution. PolicyWise facilitated the developmental evaluation and economic analysis of the programs.

Highlights

Activities completed in 2017/2018 included:

- Review of economic evaluation and Year 2 reflective report by YCSP Advisory Committee in October 2017.
- Completion of data collection at the two program locations in December 2017.
- Formal presentation of findings to the YCSP Advisory Committee in February 2018.
- Review and approval of the final evaluation report in March 2018.
- Completion and submission of the final evaluation report in March 2018.

Next Steps

No further steps required – project complete.



Grants Management

Using our established processes for application management and peer review, we manage grants on behalf of other groups or organizations who have like-minded goals for improving child, family, and community well-being in Alberta. We support every stage of the process from conceptualization to delivering competition results.

These grants align with our mission, with goals such as:

- Identifying evidence-informed research
- Improving community-based system integration
- Focusing on translational projects

PolicyWise will continue development of its capacity to manage externally funded grant competitions.

Valuing Mental Health Innovation and Integration Research Grant Competition

Completed

PolicyWise managed a grant competition issued by the Addiction and Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network™ (AMH SCN™). This funding call focused on the identification of evidence-informed research practices and programs to improve community-based system integration in the addiction and mental health sector in Alberta. As part of this grant management, PolicyWise facilitated the administration and review process. This included administering and collecting registrations and applications, engaging with new and established networks for reviews, as well as participating on the Grant Steering Committee.

Highlights

A total of 22 applications were submitted. An external peer-review was conducted by three expert reviewers for each application. For the 66 reviews, 57 different reviewers participated. Three “people with lived experience” each ranked the top ten reviewed applications, and their prioritization and comments were taken into consideration by the Grant Steering Committee. Applicants who identified Indigenous peoples and communities as a target population for their research had their application reviewed by an Indigenous expert, as well as internally by PolicyWise and AMH SCN™, in regards to cultural appropriateness, safety, and commitment to OCAP® principles. Comments from this review were also considered in the final funding decisions.

Next Steps

No further steps required – project complete.



Funded Research

We fund research that supports policy and program decisions for Alberta's children and families. PolicyWise also manages grants on behalf of the Ministry of Children's Services and external partners. Grants from the Ministry of Children's Services support programs, policy decision-making, and current priorities, such as:

- Partnering with people who can use newly created knowledge
- Building capacity in academia and community
- Sharing knowledge in ways that make it more usable

The descriptions of research on the following pages are drawn from submissions by the researchers; next steps statements include steps to be completed by the researchers as well as researchers' description of implications for application of the results.

A Narrative Inquiry alongside Urban Indigenous Children and Families into their Familial and Early School Curriculum Making Experiences

- Cindy Swanson, University of Alberta

Ongoing

The proposed inquiry attends to the experiences of three young children and families of Indigenous ancestry as they begin, and continue, to compose their lives in familial and school curriculum-making worlds. There are three research purposes:

1. Understand the early experiences of children and families of Indigenous ancestry as they compose familial curriculum.
2. Attend to personal, social, historical, cultural, and institutional narratives shaping the lives of the children and families within the dominant narratives of school curriculum making.
3. Understand the tensions experienced by the children and families as they move between familial curriculum-making worlds into school curriculum-making worlds.

Highlights

The research data has been collected and the investigator is in the data analysis process of writing narrative accounts with the three children and their families.

Next Steps

Further narrative drafts will be completed and negotiated with the remaining participants. Final analysis and resonant threads will take place once all narrative accounts have been accepted and negotiated with the participants. The investigator's draft dissertation will be submitted by August 2018.

Aging Out of Care: Rural Youth in Transition

- Dr. Anne-Marie McLaughlin, University of Calgary

Completed

This study endeavoured to understand the process of transition for rural youth leaving care. Investigators focused on how communities and service providers can better support these youth and improve long-term outcomes. They examined the experiences and perspectives of rural youth aging out of care, and those who care for them.

Highlights

The need for extended government care was a central finding of this study, and all key stakeholders resoundingly echoed this theme: youth, caregivers, and social workers alike. Key stakeholders made a unified call for government to better recognize the unique needs of youth aging out of care by developing policies and practices that give youth the time, skills, and resources necessary to achieve outcomes more comparable to those of their peers who have not entered government care. Evidence from this study revealed that current child welfare policies and services understand the transition out of care as an event, rather than the process it is.

To address these issues, policies and services must be aligned in ways that promote the coordinated and collaborative participation of youth, their caregivers, and their social workers during the transition process.

Next Steps

Knowledge mobilization activities will continue throughout the coming year.

An Early Feasibility Study of Midwifery Services in a Vulnerable Population

- Dr. Esther Suter, University of Calgary

Completed

Not all women have equal access to healthcare during their pregnancy. This is especially true for socially vulnerable women, such as those with lower economic resources, lower education levels, and fewer social supports. Midwives take a holistic approach to care, meaning they address women's emotional, psychological, and social needs; they are trained to manage low-risk pregnancies independently. Our study aimed to understand whether midwives might be a good alternative to traditional physician-led maternity care for vulnerable women.

Highlights

Given the holistic approach of midwifery-led maternity care, midwives were seen to be appropriate care providers for vulnerable women with low-risk pregnancies. Continuity and accessibility were seen as main benefits of midwifery care. The potential challenges to implementing successful midwifery services for vulnerable women were lack of awareness and knowledge about midwives and their services, and the need for additional funding to service this population because of increased workload and time required. Having access to a team of health care providers and making sure that maternity care is provided in a flexible and personalized manner were the most important ways to make midwifery services successful according to our participants.

Next Steps

This feasibility study demonstrated that midwifery services may be an acceptable alternative to physician-assisted births for pregnant women living in socially disadvantaged circumstances. Further research needs to address how midwifery services can be designed, implemented, and evaluated to meet the complex health and social needs of vulnerable women.

Assessing the Feasibility of an Aboriginal Community-led Health Centre in Lethbridge

- Dr. Cheryl Currie, University of Lethbridge

Completed

A growing number of Indigenous-led health centres are being organized around the country to ensure urban Indigenous populations are being served in culturally competent, holistic, and self-determined ways. The purpose of this study was to understand key steps needed to successfully develop and maintain an urban Indigenous-led health centre in Canada. We sought to understand the various ways in which urban communities mobilized for this purpose, best practices in management and program delivery, and recommendations that established centres had for communities beginning this work.

Highlights

The research team conducted interviews with 23 individuals who initiated, organized and/or currently led 12 full-service Indigenous health centres in Canadian cities, including Indigenous physicians, nurses, healers, Elders, and health care managers. They also conducted document and website reviews for supplementary information. The selection of a centralized urban location and adoption of a two-eyed seeing approach that considers the whole person—physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional—was identified as important by most centres when considering the suite of services to be offered.

Next Steps

The Indigenous community and their allies in Lethbridge have organized an Indigenous Health and Wellness Committee tasked with organizing the next steps for the development of an Indigenous-led urban health centre for southern Alberta. Proposals are being submitted for various health programs that will be run at this centre in anticipation of its launch. The work as a whole has sparked important discussions about gaps in health services for Indigenous people in southern Alberta, and the programs and services needed to fill those gaps.

Can the Associative Learning Abilities of Late Talking Toddlers Predict a Persistent Language Impairment?

- Dr. Beverly Collisson, University of Calgary and Dr. James S. Magnuson, University of Connecticut

Ongoing

Two-year-olds who are behind schedule to begin talking (late talkers) are at high risk for a diagnosis of Specific Language Impairment (SLI), one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders. This study is testing if visual associative learning ability at age 2 and 2 and a half is predictive of a later SLI diagnosis, which could provide an easily measurable, early biomarker of SLI, identifying children early for intervention.

Highlights

The investigators have tested and revised the protocol and continue to work with pilot participants to apply the final version of the protocol.

Next Steps

Data analysis will proceed in the spring of 2018 with a final report anticipated in July 2018.



Kites are believed to have originated in China. Their original use was for fishing. Fisherman would attach bait to the tail of the kite with a net to catch the fish. This technique is still in use today.

Community Capacity Building for Sexual Violence Prevention

- Dr. Florence Glanfield, University of Alberta and Christine Mhina, Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

Completed

The focus of this Seed project was partnership development to identify possibilities of “community capacity building for violence prevention” with a focus on reducing sexual and intergenerational violence.

Highlights

Over several months, a group of community volunteers came together and shared ideas and thoughts around the issue. The reflective process was guided by questions such as:

- What can we do to address violence in our community?
- What can we do to become resources to protect ourselves and our children from violence?

Through dialogue and reflection on divergent understandings and conceptualizations of sexual violence, based on lived realities and different frames of reference, the group developed a shared framework within which discussion moved toward building consensus on priorities for action steps to prevent violence.

The team’s work affirmed that the community development approach has strong potential for making the space for community volunteers to build working relationships with others. These relationships allow insights and shared understandings to develop and support identifying action steps that are locally and situationally appropriate.

Next Steps

No further steps – project complete.

Developing Interventions for Children and Youth at Risk for Sexual Exploitation: a Community-based Participatory Research Project

- Dr. Margot Jackson, University of Alberta

Ongoing

Worldwide, children and youth are at a high risk of sexual predation and exploitation. This project is a response to the Standing Senate Committee's Report on Human Rights that highlights an urgent need to take national action on the sexual exploitation of children (Government of Canada, 2011). The purpose of this research is to work with youth ages 15-18 years who themselves have been victims of, or are currently at risk for, sexual exploitation. The intent is to co-create programming that is sustainable by the community. Investigators aim to understand youths' experiences with broader social, legal, economic, cultural, and institutional contexts.

Highlights

Investigators have recruited ten youth, and are working closely with them to gain an understanding of their lives and experiences surrounding sexual exploitation and relationships. The research is in the analysis phase, identifying and coding common themes; this is being done alongside the youth.

Next Steps

The team submitted an abstract to present interim findings at the 23rd World Congress of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions in July 2018.

Enhancing Function and Meaningful Participation of Children and Youth with Motor Disabilities: a Program of Research

- Dr. Lesley Wiart, University of Alberta

Ongoing

Funded through the PolicyWise Early Career Award, this program of research aims to improve patient and family outcomes for children with cerebral palsy and neuromotor disabilities. Three projects are partially supported through this funding.

Highlights

Dr. Wiart has successfully secured additional funding for this program of research, and has co-authored eight publications that have been accepted and/or submitted.

Next Steps

All three projects are still underway, with anticipated completion dates ranging from spring 2018 to 2019.

This program of research aims to improve patient and family outcomes for children with cerebral palsy and neuromotor disabilities.



Experiences of Urban Aboriginal Families as they Ready their Children for, and during, Kindergarten

- **Dr. Janice Huber, University of Alberta**

Completed

This project investigated the experiences of urban Aboriginal families as they engage in readying their child for, and supporting them during, kindergarten. Investigators wanted to know: what knowledge, strengths, and relational supports families brought to this process; what intergenerational stories shaped their experiences of school readiness; how the processes of readying their child for school shaped the family's ongoing experiences; and, how the families' readying practices and school readiness practices interact and shape each other.

Highlights

Stories shared by the families showed six narrative threads:

- Each family and their life situations are unique.
- Families wish for mutual respect and collaboration with schools.
- Respect is significant.
- Families are invested in their children doing well in school.
- Siblings shape stories of school readiness.
- Intergenerational stories and places shape readiness.

Next Steps

Questions on management and policy issues for future consideration:

- The national landscape and ways that language and culture rights can be part of the larger educational conversation in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten.
- Intergenerational knowledge and the importance of acknowledging and respecting (in school) language and culture from home places and community.
- The need for educational institutions to know where children come from and where they learn first.

Exploring Visual Research as a Participatory Evaluation Method for Gender-informed Mental Health Promotion with Adolescent Boys: a Pilot Study

- **Dr. Deinera Exner-Cortens, University of Calgary and Pam Krause, Calgary Sexual Health Centre**

Initiated

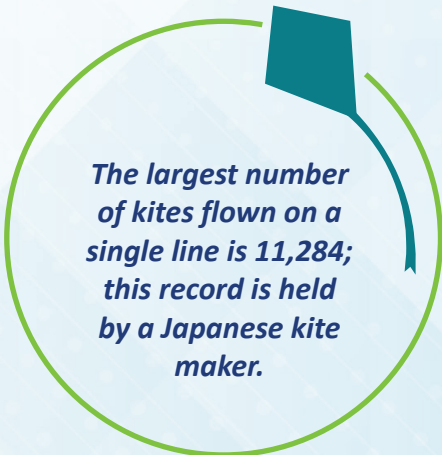
WiseGuyz is a participatory, school-based mental health program for adolescent boys that works to deconstruct unhealthy gender norms. This Seed Grant will explore the use of a new, photo-based visual research methodology for qualitative outcome data.

Highlights

- Project initiated, no additional highlights at this stage.

Next Steps

Through this project, the research team will: establish if this method is a useful tool for WiseGuyz program evaluation; collect pilot data for future grant applications; and, create visual knowledge translation documents to support social policy initiatives around children's mental health.



The largest number of kites flown on a single line is 11,284; this record is held by a Japanese kite maker.

FAMILY: Family Access to Municipal Infrastructure for Leisure: Young Children

- Dr. Candace Nykiforuk, University of Alberta

Completed

Physical activity during early childhood is critical in maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle later in life. Despite the health benefits of physical activity and active play, Canadian children are not meeting physical activity guidelines. The purpose of this project was to understand facilitators and barriers that low-income families with young children experience when using (or attempting to use) public indoor recreation facilities and outdoor spaces in Strathcona County. A photovoice approach, using participant photographs and discussion, was used to learn more about parents' experiences when trying to encourage their children to be physically active and play in Strathcona County.

Highlights

Participants presented a consistent message and emphasized the importance of physical activity and the accompanying physical, mental, and social health benefits. As a means to achieve this, participants often advocated for the value of unstructured, free-play time and the opportunity to engage in free-play in the community, both indoors and outdoors. Generally, participants admitted to being less active outdoors during the winter months due to amenities being closed, poor lighting, and fewer outdoor activities to choose from. This project demonstrated that community residents feel that financial support and free access to recreation facilities, as provided by the Recreation Access Program, positively increase accessibility to indoor recreation facilities year-round.

Next Steps

This model can be replicated by municipalities across Canada, with evidence from Strathcona County supporting the benefits of financial support for recreation in contributing to preschool-aged children's early childhood development. Facilities can accommodate low income families with preschoolers by considering flexible program scheduling, a measure that does not require financial investment but has large implications on the ability of families with preschoolers to engage in recreation programming. It is clear that simply investing in the physical infrastructure for recreation facilities is not enough; cost of access, programming, and the surrounding community environment (e.g., social opportunities, public transportation) all influence facility use.



Improving Access to Social Services for Marginalized Albertans with Substance Use Disorders

- Dr. Elaine Hyshka, University of Alberta

Ongoing

Funded through PolicyWise's Early Career Award, this program of research is designed to evaluate the Addiction Recovery and Community Health (ARCH) Team, a unique model of care implemented at the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH), providing substance use treatment and social supports to vulnerable patients. Specifically, Dr. Hyshka will use existing research funding and evaluation infrastructure to examine the social service aspects of the ARCH team and generate knowledge to improve services for vulnerable Albertans.

Highlights

ARCH Team patient outcome data collection is complete, and Human Services administrative data has been linked to the survey dataset. Early qualitative data collection is underway.

Next Steps

The qualitative research component will be the main focus in 2018. Reporting on the qualitative findings is expected in late 2018.

The ARCH Team, is a unique model of care implemented at the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) providing substance use treatment and social supports to vulnerable patients.

Integrated Maternal Psychosocial Assessment to Care Trial (IMPACT: PILOT)

- Dr. Dawn Kingston, University of Alberta

Completed

Mood and anxiety problems are common in pregnancy, yet few women receive help. Left untreated, many women continue to experience depression and anxiety throughout pregnancy, the postpartum period, and the early childhood years with adverse effects on child development and mental health. The IMPACT pilot trial (funded by PolicyWise) sought to determine whether psychosocial screening and online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) modules could improve a mother's mental health prenatally and postnatally, and improve risk factors for babies after birth. The full randomized controlled trial (RCT) was funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Highlights

Through the pilot project, the research team recruited 160 participants. Results from the pilot include:

- Participants prefer to be texted to be reminded to complete their surveys and CBT modules.
- Participants viewed online screening as private, efficient, and beneficial.
- Participants found the online CBT modules to be effective, easy to use, and helpful long-term. They would recommend the modules to their pregnant friends.
- Collaborating family physicians, obstetricians, and prenatal class instructors are interested to incorporate the use of the CBT modules into their program of care for all patients when the RCT results become available.

Next Steps

The RCT has recruited over 1,050 women in both Edmonton and Ontario. Full results from the RCT will be forthcoming in 2019. In collaboration with Alberta Health Services, this new model of care will be trialled in 2018.

Jasper Intersectoral Collaboration Evaluation Study

- Dr. Jill Konkin, University of Alberta and Dr. Lars Hallstrom, University of Alberta

Initiated

Inspired by the eight principles of the Canadian population health approach, healthcare and social services professionals in Jasper began a paradigm shift 15 years ago by setting up an intersectoral collaboration (IC) for community development through the development and implementation of the Jasper Collaborative Team (JCT). This collaboration now includes 36 partners. Jasper's IC is one of the earliest ICs and is the most comprehensive and enduring. The focus of this IC is on wellness in all age groups within the community. This project is a broad, systematic evaluation of the Jasper IC model.

Highlights

Quantitative questionnaires have been distributed and data collection is complete.

Next Steps

A qualitative interview guide is being reviewed using preliminary results from the questionnaires; interviews will begin shortly. The final report is anticipated in September 2018.

Healthcare and social services professionals in Jasper began a paradigm shift 15 years ago by setting up an intersectoral collaboration for community development.

Parent and Community Experience and Engagement with EAL Policies

- Dr. Yan Guo, University of Calgary

Completed

Language policy research puts little emphasis on parental agency. The parents of English as Additional Language (EAL) learners are often excluded from school decision-making processes whereas white middle-class parents are more strategic in intervening in their children's schools. This study explored how immigrant parents advocated for higher quality and more equitable EAL policies and practices in Alberta.

Highlights

Investigators completed interviews with 35 immigrant parents and community group members, as well as two focus groups with parents and policy makers. Participants made the following recommendations for policy:

- Hire more EAL trained teachers and culturally competent teachers, and use funds for EAL more effectively at the district level.
- Value students' multilingual abilities and more diversity in the school system at the school level.
- Include parents and community members in the policy-making process.

Next Steps

The results of this research will provide directions for EAL policies, programs, and services, as well as new insights into the effectiveness of advocacy and capacity building of EAL parents.

Partnering to Implement an Evidence-based Tool within Schools to Improve Child Mental Health

- *Dr. John McLennan, University of Calgary and Dr. Julie Owens, University of Calgary*

Initiated

The Daily Report Card (DRC) is a positive behavioural support approach to support teachers with students struggling with behavioural and attentional difficulties. This project involves a partnership between researchers and three Alberta school districts to strategically approach the update, implementation, evaluation, and evaluation-informed modification of the DRC. The study will describe different approaches and associated challenges with piloting the DRC, determine the outcome of the pilots, and determine the next steps to move forward with a larger roll-out.

PolicyWise funded a Seed Grant for this project in 2015, which led to a successful application for this grant funding.

Highlights

One of the most significant achievements to date has been facilitating training opportunities for teachers and other school personnel across at least 14 different schools. A second round of training was offered because of the high level of interest.

Next Steps

Teachers' use of the DRC is ongoing until the end of the school year (June 2018), and data analysis will be ongoing into the summer. Findings will be reviewed with community partners in the fall of 2018.



Partnering with Community to Understand the Long-term Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse

- Dr. Gina Dimitropoulos, University of Calgary

Completed

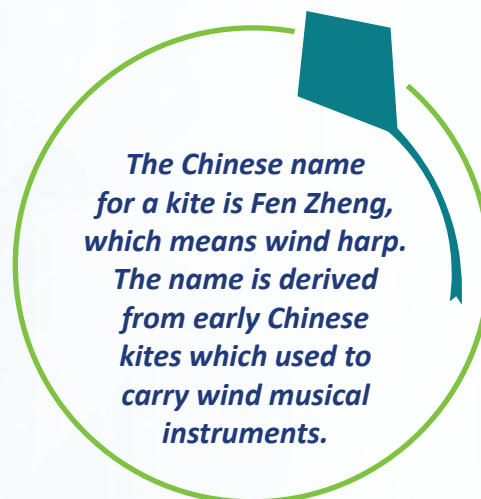
This Seed funding for Building and Strengthening Academic-Community Collaborative Partnerships to Investigate the *Longitudinal Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Online Child Abuse Imagery: Informing Policy and Practice* was used for the first phase of a study. This phase facilitated community consultation with various stakeholders and community partners to investigate the effects of child sexual abuse and the subsequent re-victimization associated with online sexual abuse imagery. The purpose of this consultation was to engage the community in forming research questions that are meaningful for them.

Highlights

The research team has actively engaged various community partners from child welfare, law enforcement, crown attorneys, Alberta Health Services, and Child Advocacy Centres to identify potential research questions, an appropriate research design to address these potential questions, and how to mitigate risk associated with participation in a study for young people who have experienced abuse on or offline. A shared interest emerged to explore the longitudinal biological, psychological, and familial impacts of child maltreatment.

Next Steps

The research team is using the results of the seed grant to guide future research and inform policy and practice. The team is moving forward with the longitudinal study. Further, a number of additional research projects have emerged as a result of this Seed funding. The team is developing a qualitative study on children's experiences of court proceedings in collaboration with the crown attorney at the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre. They are also in discussion about designing a study to examine the longitudinal impact of child pornography on young people, and how pornography shapes sexuality and relationships among children and youth.



Popular Theatre as a Primary Prevention Approach for Youth Suicide Among Aboriginal Communities: Evaluation

- Dr. Lynden (Lindsay) Crowshoe, University of Calgary, Dr. Rita Henderson, University of Calgary, Dr. Stephanie Montesanti, University of Alberta, Dr. Wilfreda Thurston, University of Calgary.

Ongoing

First Nations youth suicide is occurring at an alarming rate across Canada. Popular Theatre (PT) is a particularly relevant, though understudied, suicide prevention strategy among this population. The objective of this project is to pilot-test and evaluate the process and outcomes of a PT intervention aimed at addressing Aboriginal youth suicide risks among a group of Aboriginal youth in the City of Calgary. PT offers a means of promoting personal health, the healing of ruptured or forging of new community ties, and self-advocacy skills through a collaborative, arts-based approach to prevention. It also poses strengths-based and transformative community-driven solutions adaptable to diverse Aboriginal realities.

Highlights

The research team has developed surveys and interview guidelines, specific to PT workshops in Siksika. A mixed-gender group of 14 youth have been recruited. There were 37 workshop sessions held, and the youth performed in front of more than 100 people during Siksika Youth Awareness Week.

Next Steps

Another project has been started to pilot the PT workshops with urban youth, in collaboration with the Iniskim Centre at Mount Royal University.

Post 1994 Genocide Survivors in Edmonton: Rwanda Community-based Research Project Exploring Mental Health Challenges, Strengths and Pathways to Healing

- Dr. Linda Kreitzer, University of Calgary and Dr. Sophie Yohani, University of Calgary

Completed

The purpose of this research was to identify mental health issues that are experienced by survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi of Rwanda and their children. The objective is to ultimately identify a community-driven mental health intervention that is culturally appropriate and community specific that will address these mental health issues experience by children and their families.

Highlights

The research project involved community engagement, semi-structured interviews, and a one-day workshop with members of the community to share research findings. These findings included: community-specific recommendations focused on building the community's capacity to support the needs of survivors; policy recommendations focused on changes to the immigration system to better support the needs of survivors and their families; and research recommendations focused on building understanding regarding the experiences of 1994 genocide survivors in Edmonton, and generation-focused research.

Next Steps

Although this community has progressed positively towards healing, there are still issues that need to be addressed and they are looking forward to working on possible action points to help continue this healing process.

Promoting Healthy Relationships and Masculinities among Adolescent Boys: Building a Community-university Partnership to Inform Policy and Practice

- *Dr. Deinera Exner-Cortens, University of Calgary*
and *Pam Krause, Calgary Sexual Health Centre*

Completed

Primary prevention programs that target root causes of family violence, such as gender inequality, and promote healthy relationship skills, are increasingly recognized as critical to violence prevention efforts across the lifespan. This pilot project evaluated once such initiative, WiseGuyz, a healthy relationships and masculinities program for mid-adolescent boys developed and implemented by the Calgary Sexual Health Centre.

Highlights

- A community-university partnership was established using the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Partnerships Partnership Assessment Toolkit (PAT).
- Pre/post evaluation pilot data was collected from 126 boys in eight schools in Calgary and area; the data indicates the promise of the program for promoting positive bystanding behaviours for violence prevention.
- A systematic literature review on associations between masculinities and future well-being was completed, with the engagement of six research trainees.

Next Steps

Next steps in this program of research include finalizing and disseminating the systematic review, and applying for funding to support a mixed-methods, longitudinal, quasi-experimental outcome evaluation examining the impact of the program on violence outcomes.



Raising Spirit: the Opokaa'sin Digital Storytelling Project

- *Dr. Jan Newberry, University of Lethbridge and Dr. Kristine Alexander, University of Lethbridge*

Completed

Raising Spirit is a collaborative project between Opokaa'sin Early Intervention Society and the University of Lethbridge's Institute for Child and Youth Studies (I-CYS). I-CYS research team worked with community members and students to create a digital library of images and words that demonstrate the resilience of local Indigenous families with young people.



The first phase of the project produced 8,000 photographs of everyday moments of Blackfoot family life. These photographs then formed the basis of a series of open-ended interviews about child-rearing and values. The phase of the project supported by PolicyWise included interviewing Indigenous children about these images, and using the photos as prompts for recorded storytelling sessions by Blackfoot Elders.

Highlights

The Raising Spirit team conducted two summers of fieldwork on the land. This fieldwork gathered more images and stories for the digital library. This team also organized capacity camps for adolescents associated with Opokaa'sin to introduce them to the university and to research-based and Indigenous protocols. Workshops and community consultations were used to index the images and stories in relationship to values that were identified during the research. Finally, a functional digital library was built via the open-access online platform ThingLink and launched in September 2017 through an exhibition at Lethbridge's CASA Community Arts Centre. The deliverable for this project was a digital storytelling library, available through a mobile app and built on the open-source ThingLink platform.

Next Steps

Further dissemination work is planned for sharing the library in classrooms on the Kainai and Piikani reserves and in urban classrooms of District 51. Further work needs to focus on privacy settings for the app and the level of distribution that is to be used. These decisions lie with Opokaa'sin and its board of directors.

Relationship between Lifestyle Behaviours, Social Determinants of Health, and Mental Health in Canadian Immigrants across the Life Course

- **Dr. Bukola Salami, University of Alberta and Dr. Kathleen Hegadoren, University of Alberta**

Completed

While evidence indicates that immigrants internationally have poorer mental health status than the host-country population, the evidence for Canada is mixed. Data from the Canadian Community Health Survey point to a lower incidence of mental health problems among immigrants. Regional studies, however, do not always concur with this national data. Investigators sought to clarify these mixed findings by using another source of data – the Canadian Health Measures Survey – to examine the relationship between self-perceived mental health and self-reported diagnosis of mood disorders with age, gender, migration status, time since migration, and social determinants of health.

Highlights

The team analyzed three cycles of the Canadian Health Measures Survey to examine the relationship between self-perceived mental health and self-reported diagnosis of mood disorders to vital social determinants of health, including income, community belonging, country of birth (i.e. born inside or outside Canada), time since migration, age, gender, employment status, and education. The analysis revealed that recent migrants were almost four times more likely to report better mental health than Canadian-born residents. However, this advantage decreased with time spent in Canada.

Next Steps

The results from this research can be used to guide further work and program development addressing the mental health service needs of immigrants across the duration of their residence in Canada while attending to the diverse social determinants of health.

School Integration among Newcomer Youth: a Community Perspective

- **Dr. Anusha Kassan, University of Calgary**

Completed

The aim of this study was to develop an in-depth, multi-layered, contextual understanding of school integration as it pertains to newcomer youth in Calgary, Alberta. Defined broadly, school integration was conceptualized as adjustment across all aspects of students' lives (e.g., academic performance, occupational transition, peer relationships, home life, emotional wellbeing, etc.). This study was conducted as part of a larger research project where a collective case study methodology was employed to elicit the perspectives of multiple groups of individuals (both within the school setting as well as the community) with respect to the phenomenon of school integration.

Highlights

Preliminary results demonstrated that pre-service teachers discussed their experiences with respect to the following areas: a) influence of personal experience on teaching; b) modifications for newcomer students; c) balancing students' needs; and d) roles within and beyond the classroom. Findings also indicated that newcomer youth need more meaningful means of engaging with the research process in order to share the depth of their experiences related to school integration.

Next Steps

This study provided an important, untapped, perspective on pre-service teachers and community service providers who work with newcomer youth in Calgary, Alberta. Results have important implications for practice, training, research, and policy. Specifically, future research will examine the experiences of newcomer youth through an arts-based research design in order to allow for more meaningful, ethical, and culturally sensitive data collection.

Searching for Pathways to Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations for Social Work

- Dr. Peter Choate, Mount Royal University and
Bruce MacLaurin, University of Calgary

Ongoing

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) has issued a call to action that includes the social work profession, including educators, particularly in the child protection field. This call challenges new ways of understanding the history of public policies aimed at assimilating Aboriginal Peoples and the ways in which those policies created a “cultural genocide.” This project is a first step in that direction, aiming to understand how both social work students and educators understand the term “cultural genocide” and what it means for practice with Aboriginal children and families. This project seeks to understand how the TRC language is being interpreted and the implications for learning.

Highlights

Project initiated, no additional highlights or next steps at this stage.

SKIP Program: Supporting Kids Inclusion and Participation (Autism Focus)

- Dr. Sandra Hodgetts, University of Alberta

Ongoing

Funded through PolicyWise’s Early Career Award, this program of research relates to multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary treatment approaches to improve participation, inclusion, and well-being for people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. The research is focused on interventions and treatment approaches embedded within the context of daily life (home, school, and community environments), based on philosophies of family-centered care and inclusion.

Highlights

Two projects have been completed and data collection is complete for a third project. Dr. Hodgetts has successfully secured additional funding for this program of research, and has recruited several high-caliber trainees.

Next Steps

Data analysis and manuscript writing for the final project was completed in the spring of 2018. The team is looking towards a future multi-site trial evaluating outcomes of disclosure/non-disclosure on social engagement and inclusion in community contexts.



The International Kite Festival (Uttarayan) is one of the most renowned festivals in the world. The festival takes place in Gujarat, India, on January 14 every year. This day is observed as a sacred public holiday that celebrates the end of winter.

Sustaining the Life Skills Journey Program for Métis Children & Youth

- Dr. Fay Fletcher, University of Alberta

Completed

This is the fifth project since 2005 that PolicyWise has funded related to the Life Skill Training Substance Abuse Prevention Program.

Over the past 7 years, a research partnership between the University of Alberta and Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement has completed a community needs and readiness assessment and developed, delivered, and evaluated the Life Skills Journey program for 7-10 and 11-14 year olds. Over 120 children from four Settlements have participated. This research project was funded to explore models for program sustainability that include annual training for program facilitators, KM strategies within the Settlement and the academic community, and building supportive networks within and between communities to sustain program impact.

Highlights

Lessons learned from this 7-year partnership include:

- Community capabilities ultimately determine the success of the Métis Settlement Life Skills Journey (MSLSJ) program.
- Inter-settlement collaboration encourages the development of positive relationships among youth attending camp.

Long-term sustainable funding commitments are needed to provide communities with reliable supports; funding must be generational (10-25 years) to have lasting impact on community capabilities as a whole. Continuous year-round skills training helps maintain facilitator engagement, and provide positive social networks.

Next Steps

In 2017/2018, the MSLSJ team will pilot implementation of the Youth Leadership Series with program facilitators as well as additional community members. This series will be primarily led by youth peer mentors. The program has developed three workshops on job skills, public speaking, and identities. MSLSJ will also deliver accredited Standard First Aid to program facilitators.



*Inter-settlement
collaboration encourages
the development of
positive relationships
among youth attending
camp.*

Training Parents and Service Providers to Promote Healthy Sexuality and Relationships Among Youth with Intellectual Disabilities

- Dr. Sandra Reilly, University of Calgary and Dr. Wendi Lokanc-Diluzio, University of Calgary

Completed

Sexuality is a significant aspect of the overall wellness of individuals, including those with intellectual disabilities. The purpose of this study was to explore and compare the effectiveness of two kinds of training programs (face-to-face and blended learning) that aimed to build capacity of parents and service providers to promote healthy sexuality and relationships among youth with intellectual disabilities.

Highlights

Participants' overall reactions to both training programs were evaluated as well as five outcomes related to capacity development: knowledge, perceived comfort, self-efficacy, attitudes, and use of training. Participants' reactions to the training program were measured immediately after the training program, and use of training was measured six weeks after the training program. Participants of both training programs had positive learning experiences, and experienced an increase in knowledge, perceived comfort, self-efficacy, and improved attitudes, both immediately after the training and six weeks later. Six weeks later, over half of the participants had used their new knowledge.

Next Steps

The research team plans to conduct focus groups with youth regarding what they want to learn about sexuality. This will be done in partnership with Prep School, a school for youth with Down syndrome.

Understanding the Experiences and Outcomes of Teen Families Involved in a Supportive Housing Program

- Melissa Tremblay, University of Alberta

Initiated

This dissertation project will investigate the impact of the Successful Families (SF) supportive housing program model, and the partnership developed between the Terra Centre for Teen Parents, Brentwood Community Development Group, and the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (CUP).

Highlights

The project will also investigate teen parents' perspectives on the SF program model, using photovoice research methods, and will examine how the research and evaluation capacity of SF staff has been built through the partnership with CUP.

Next Steps

An interim report on the project is anticipated in January 2019.

Utilization-focused Evaluation of a First Nation School's Nutrition Policy and Activities

- Dr. Noreen Willows, University of Alberta

Ongoing

This research project is focused on a newly-developed school nutrition policy at Kipohtakaw Education Centre (KEC) in Alexander First Nation. The project will evaluate the policy and its relevance to, and acceptability by, school staff, students, and families. The findings will inform the development of effective policies to improve healthy eating in other First Nations schools.

Highlights

Data collection is complete for the evaluation of the implementation, and investigators are consulting with community members about appropriate interpretation.

Next Steps

A PhD dissertation and two manuscripts will be developed as a result of this work. Materials for community use, such as pamphlets about the school nutrition policy, will also be developed.

The project findings will inform the development of effective policies to improve healthy eating in other First Nations schools.

Views and Preferences of Alberta Birth Cohort Parent Participants on Secondary Use of Research Data

- Dr. Suzanne Tough, University of Calgary and
Kiran Pohar Manhas, University of Calgary

Complete

Secondary use of research data is increasingly mandated by numerous funding and institutional bodies. Secondary data use, particularly that relating to biologic and genetic information has generated much debate; the inclusion of pediatric data demands special considerations relating to capacity and consent. This research project described the views and preferences of two Alberta stakeholder groups (parent participants and health researchers) about sharing health research data, and focused on consent, governance and privacy considerations.

Highlights

With parent respondents, qualitative themes emerged such as: altruism has limits; ongoing privacy concerns; and, congruence in values between participants and researchers/research questions is important. Privacy concerns manifested in three ways: (a) concern around unwanted publication of personal information, (b) concern that an unknown third party would make contact for nefarious or unconsented purposes and (c) concern that use of their data would lead to negative consequences for the participant's family or others. Most parents preferred a broad, one-time consent model, or a tiered model.

Next Steps

The custodians of data repositories must consider stakeholder perspectives, or at least evidence about stakeholder perspectives, in establishing the platform's governance framework. Parents highly value clear governance practices, which should include standardization, criteria, applications, security, reviews, as well as post-access monitoring. Repositories need to address how channels of communication are best maintained.

Who are the Homeless in Slave Lake?

- *Dr. Anne Marie McLaughlin, University of Calgary*

Ongoing

In partnership with the Slave Lake Friendship Centre, this research project attempts to explore the question “who are the homeless in Slave Lake?” Homelessness in Slave Lake has taken on a high profile in the community, in part due to the wildfire that caused many to be homeless. Beyond the fire and the rebuilding, both chronic and episodic homelessness are ongoing. This project will explore who is homeless in Slave Lake, who is at risk of homelessness, and what supports are necessary to prevent and ameliorate the issue.

Highlights

The final report was presented to the Leadership of the Slave Lake Native Friendship Center, and copies were shared with the Mayor and town council.

Next Steps

Together with the Friendship Center, the research team is planning a community information session to share their findings. The community information session will take place in May 2018. The team is also exploring further research in the areas of rural homelessness issues, services and interventions that incorporate traditional healing practices, and precariously housed youth.

Youth and Community Engagement for Improving Community Practice and Policy to Support High-risk Youth

- *Dr. Yoshitaka Iwasaki, University of Alberta and Pushpanjali Dashora, University of Alberta*

Ongoing

This research project will address how practices and policies around engagement can be changed to enhance youth capacity to mobilize resources for promoting youth development. Using participatory action research (PAR), the team will engage marginalized youth, including as youth leaders on the research team, to improve community practice and policy around supporting high-risk youth.

Highlights

With the guidance of a group of youth leaders, the PAR study protocol was developed to examine important factors when working with and engaging marginalized youth. The project is now engaging youth participants living with high-risk conditions such as poverty, homelessness, abuse, addictive behaviours, and social exclusion.

Next Steps

The lessons learned from this case study will inform knowledge mobilization strategies.

The team will engage marginalized youth, including youth leaders on the research team, to improve community practice and policy around supporting high-risk youth.

Questions?

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