

INNOVATION INITIATIVES 2021–22

Application guide

Integrating virtual care options in
mental health service delivery for
children and youth in Ontario

The application deadline is
5 p.m. on January 25, 2021.
Incomplete or late applications
will not be reviewed. Email
initiatives@cheo.on.ca
for more information.

INNOVATION INITIATIVES



The Innovation Initiatives grant provides funding and consultation **to lead and core service providing agencies** in Ontario's child and youth mental health sector to test innovative solutions to pressing problems in the system.

Grants of up to \$50,000 will be awarded for an 18-month term (April 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022). Projects should be focused on testing innovative, evidence-based approaches to integrate high quality virtual care options into their suite of mental health services for Ontario's children and youth.

We define virtual care broadly, as any type of child and youth mental health service delivered using telecommunication technology. This includes services and support provided over videoconference, phone, chat and text.

Background:

In recent years, service providers in Ontario's child and youth mental health sector have been exploring how best to integrate virtual care options into service delivery as a complement to providing in-person supports. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, has accelerated these efforts.

The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (the Centre), along with our sector partners, recently completed an evaluation project to learn about the process of implementing virtual care during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of this transition on clients and service providers. Looking ahead, most agencies have indicated that virtual care will continue to be offered on an ongoing basis.

The results of this study have helped us to a) understand what is working well and b) identify recommendations to support agencies' integration of virtual care into their suite of mental health services as we continue to deal with the pandemic and plan for service delivery post-pandemic.

As child and youth mental health organizations integrate virtual care as an ongoing service delivery option, it will be important to leverage opportunities and resources and have a planned approach for enabling high quality virtual care. A coordinated, system-level effort will help ensure children and youth across Ontario have access to high quality, consistent and equitable services.

To facilitate this transition across our sector, the Centre is offering Innovation Initiative grants to lead agencies and core service providing agencies (and their partners) to address one or more of the following recommendations. (NOTE: Detailed information about these and other recommendations can be found in the [Transition to virtual care report](#))

- a. Offer virtual care as part of a menu of services that a client, in consultation with their service provider, can choose. Evaluate under what conditions and for which populations virtual care is most effective.
 - For example: Evaluate the effectiveness of virtual care in specific therapies (e.g. trauma-informed approaches, dialectical behavior therapy) and populations or groups (children with co-occurring diagnosis of ADHD), or of conducting group sessions using virtual services.
 - In addition to client preference, the service provider should consider the complexity of mental health concerns, efficacy of the intervention, privacy issues and potential access issues when creating an individualized treatment plan for their client. The service provider and client may decide on in-person services, virtual services or a combination of the two approaches.
- b. Consider how best to engage a greater number of diverse children, youth and families in virtual care.
 - It is well established that certain populations experience more barriers in access to mental health services than others, such as newcomers, individuals identifying as 2SLGBTQI+ and those from Indigenous communities. In particular, homeless youth, children and youth in rural and remote locations where the internet is not easily accessible and those with older parents or guardians who may have low technological skills are more difficult to engage in virtual care. Youth in these smaller communities may also experience more stigma and have privacy concerns when accessing services in their local community.

- c. Enhance staff training and support knowledge exchange.
 - With virtual services becoming the new norm, service providers' needs have moved beyond basic to more advanced training. High quality, evidence-based training focused on specific types of therapy and population groups is necessary to ensure that staff have the skills and competencies needed to continue to meet clients' needs effectively and with confidence.
- d. Promote staff wellness and prevent fatigue from delivering virtual care.
 - Service providers were vocal about their fatigue at the pace of change, need to balance childcare and work and the additional energy required to conduct virtual sessions. Agencies responded to this by encouraging staff to take frequent breaks throughout the day, flex their hours and engage in self-care activities. Despite these efforts, service providers still reported feeling exhausted. To prevent burnout, it may be necessary to re-evaluate caseloads, conduct targeted education around self-care or plan periodic wellness activities for staff.



Funding conditions

Timelines

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|--------------|---|
| Dec 15, 2020 | Launch call for applications |
| Jan 25, 2021 | Applications due at 5 p.m. |
| Mar 5, 2021 | Feedback and decisions to be communicated |
| Apr 1, 2020 | Award term begins |
| Spring 2020 | Project kick-off meetings |
| Sep 30, 2022 | Project conclusion |
| Oct 30, 2022 | Final reports due |

Eligibility

Innovation Initiative project proposals must:

- be submitted by a MOH-funded lead or core service agency providing child and youth mental health services.
- describe an evidence-based intervention or practice to integrate virtual care into the suite of available mental health services for children and youth in Ontario.
- demonstrate alignment with one (or more) of the recommendations outlined in this application.
- demonstrate potential for impact on the broader child and youth mental health system in Ontario (i.e. potential to spread or scale the intervention or approach).
- demonstrate partnership within the broader community or service area.
- include a plan to engage young people or family members in meaningful ways.

Expectations of applicants:

- This grant is intended to provide resources and consultation supports to advance and implement plans to pilot an innovative practice or intervention. While the Centre will work with project teams during the term of the grant to refine implementation and evaluation plans, proposals should demonstrate clear, preliminary directions for the work.

Budget

ELIGIBLE items include:

- backfill or salary costs for personnel
- external consultant or contractor fees (up to a maximum of 50% of the total budget, unless negotiated otherwise with the Centre)
- honoraria for students
- honoraria or consultant fees for youth or family members for activities related to youth or family engagement
- training fees
- travel expenses associated with data collection, meetings or training
- knowledge mobilization activities (up to a maximum of \$5,000)
- computer software costs
- language translation of materials
- administrative costs associated with the project (e.g. photocopying, purchase of evaluation measures) (up to a maximum of 10% of the total budget)

INELIGIBLE items include:

- capital and operational expenses associated with existing services, such as buildings and facilities (e.g. rent, utilities), furniture, phones and computer hardware (e.g. laptops, tablets). Innovation Initiatives are not intended to supplement organizational operating budgets.
- salaries for personnel providing direct service to children, youth and families

Centre support and expectations of grantees

A Centre staff member will coordinate tailored supports (re: engagement, implementation and evaluation planning) for project teams based on identified priorities, needs and capacity. Regular updates on project progress will be negotiated at the start of the funding term. We anticipate holding quarterly calls between the project lead and a Centre staff member to discuss progress and required supports.

Welcome webinar – April 2021

- a. Project teams will introduce their work, learn about others' projects and identify opportunities to share knowledge and collaborate.

Kick-off meeting – May 2021

- b. Innovation Initiative recipients are asked to participate in a kick-off meeting to review project plans and discuss potential support needs.

Final report and knowledge product –October 30, 2022

- c. Innovation Initiative recipients are required to submit a final report one month following the end of the award term, on or before October 30, 2022. More information about the requirements for the final report will be shared after funding announcements have been made. The project team will be asked to address the following questions to share the story of the project, its outcomes, lessons learned and next steps.
 - What was the overall goal (or goals) of the initiative?
 - What were the main activities of the project?
 - What did you learn while implementing the project? What were key factors that contributed to its success? What challenges did you encounter along the way and how were these resolved?
 - What were the outcomes achieved through the course of this work? How did you measure these?
 - How have you or how do you plan to share and mobilize knowledge gained through this initiative?
 - What are your next steps?

- d. Innovation Initiative recipients are asked to create a knowledge product (to be shared publicly) to share their stories, evaluation results and lessons learned with sector stakeholders. The project team is encouraged to be creative and consider engaging formats appropriate to their work and context. Relevant members of the Centre's team will be available for consultation for product development.

Knowledge sharing and mobilization

Innovation Initiative recipients will partner with the Centre to share information about their projects in various ways. These may include:

- participating in knowledge mobilization and communications efforts before, during and after the award term (e.g. developing a knowledge product to communicate about the project)
- co-developing and presenting information at learning events
- being available to discuss their project and lessons learned with provincial colleagues and stakeholders

Innovation Initiative recipients must notify the Centre of all knowledge mobilization and communications activities related to the project and should appropriately acknowledge the Centre as a partner and supporter of the work. This includes ensuring the inclusion of the Centre's logo or a statement of acknowledgement on all electronic and printed products and all posters and presentations.



**Share your bold ideas now.
Apply by January 25.**

[Apply now](#)