



## 15 years, 15 milestones

### **2004: The Centre was created**

On June 6, the Knowledge Institute (formerly know as the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health) opened its doors with a small staff and a big vision: “Daring to dream of an integrated system meeting the mental health needs of children, youth and their families.” Our vision has been refined over the years, but our core purpose remains the same: “the best mental health and well-being for every child, young person and family”.

### **2005: First evaluation grants**

One of the first big projects we launched was an evaluation program to set the groundwork for a more effective and accessible system. Within our first 10 years of operations, we supported more than 160 agencies in close to 300 evaluation projects, building knowledge, capacity and systemic change every step of the way.

### **2007: Youth engagement**

Building on the successful launch of The New Mentality, we released Ready, Set, Engage! a practical primer on meaningful youth engagement in child and youth mental health. We took it a step further in 2010, partnering with youth to bringing evidence-based youth engagement training to agencies for the first time. In 2019 we set the bar for the entire sector with the establishment of provincial quality standard for youth engagement.

### **2008: First policy paper**

Our first policy paper hits the streets just in time to inform the development of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy. Since then we have produced 18 papers specifically tailored to support evidence-based decision-making at the agency, community and provincial levels. Individually they have helped shape Ontario's approach to complex challenges and together they have been downloaded over 165,000 times.



## **2011: Measures database**

We launched our online measures database, designed to help agencies and service providers generate and use evidence to strengthen care. Collectively, the various measures have been viewed over 150,000 times by more than 25,000 unique visitors from across Ontario – and well beyond!

## **2011: Supporting implementation**

As the sector evolved, we moved beyond evaluation and began offering innovative implementation supports to agencies. Services included funding, consultation, toolkits and learning modules. Many of these services became integrated into the very fabric of who we are and what we do at the Centre and this program continues to influence new projects and programs that we develop.

## **2012: Family engagement**

We saw the gap between agency operations and the real-life experience of Ontario families and knew that we could do something. Building on the success of our youth engagement training and in partnership with families we developed and delivered Bringing Family Engagement into Action to help agencies tap into the transformative power of family engagement. Later, we worked with Parents for Children's Mental Health to develop a family engagement road map and resource guide. But we did not stop there – in 2019 we laid the foundation for consistent, measurable family engagement across Ontario with the establishment of a provincial quality standard for family engagement.

## **2015: Youth advisors**

We recognized that to be true leaders in youth engagement, we needed to walk the talk. We expanded our youth team to support us in building our own capacity to enhance youth programs with the hiring of three part-time youth advisors. Since then we've always had a few youth advisors on staff and in 2019, these became full-time positions.



## **2016: Strategic advisory council**

After years of operating with separate governance and advisory committees, we opted to launch a new streamlined strategic advisory council to advise us, create with us and keep us on track. Combining the responsibilities of a traditional board of directors – reviewing finances and performance metrics – with hands-on strategic work, our new council was designed to push us in new and innovative directions. The 12 members are made up of youth with lived experience, parents or family members of a child or youth with lived experience, organizational leaders representing lead and core service agencies and individuals with expertise in finances and management.

## **2016: Innovation Initiatives**

We created our Innovation Initiatives grants to help agencies and services providers across Ontario test new ideas to test system priorities. Through three cycles, we have supported 23 projects with up to \$50,000 each to implement new, evidence-based or promising practices that demonstrate potential for broader impact in the provincial child and youth mental health system. Along with the funding, we provide 12 to 18 months of tailored coaching support to implement and evaluate each initiative.

## **2017: Focus on quality**

We are always adapting to meet the evolving needs of our sector. When agencies told us they needed better support to deal with specific and complex issues, we listened. From 2016 to 2017, we responded by re-organizing our staff and leadership structure to make room for more people with expertise in quality improvement, performance measurement and system planning. In 2018 we hosted a quality symposium and now we're focusing on helping agencies build a culture of continuous quality improvement through our new Quest program, which officially launches in January 2020.

## **2018: From recommendations to action**

Rather than waiting for someone else to pick up our policy recommendations and run with them, we decided that we would start putting key recommendations from our policy papers into action ourselves, and along with key partners. Starting off small, we began to test primary care pathways with two partner communities, to bridge the gap between primary care providers



and community-based mental health agencies. Now, the project includes six demonstration sites and we are taking the same approach with recommendations from our latest policy paper focused on early childhood mental health.

## **2018: Pillars of youth support**

Together with young people, community experts and the Community Suicide Prevention Network of Ottawa (CSPN), we developed a nine-part video learning series. This collection was created to introduce young people to key elements of peer support and build their confidence in providing support to peers, while ensuring that they are also able to take good care of themselves in the process.

## **2019: Youth advisory council**

While we have long included youth with lived experience in our governance bodies, we knew that we could better reflect our commitment to meaningful youth engagement and build on the capacity of young people to improve child and youth mental health across Ontario by establishing a youth advisory council. Made up of a dozen diverse youth from across the province, the youth council provides valuable perspectives and integral input, expertise and guidance to ensure our policies, approaches, initiatives and other work are responsive to the evolving needs of young people.

## **2019: Refreshed look, refined strategic directions**

In 2018 we debuted a new five-year strategic plan and then entered a year of transition, at the Centre, in our sector and throughout the province. So, we sharpened our focus to four key areas and refined our strategic directions, doubling down on our commitment to mobilize knowledge and improve quality across the child and youth mental health sector. In November 2019 we also launched a brand-new website, complete with a refreshed logo and visual identity to improve our online presence and reflect our constant progression to meet the evolving needs of our sector and all who work within it or are impacted by it.