

N.B. Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) for Children and Youth with Emotional Behavioral and Mental Health issues

Background: During the past several years, New Brunswick has seen the release of several high profile reports indicating that the current service delivery system that responds to children and youth with significant mental health issues is not providing the necessary services that the children and youth require. The Province is investing significant financial resources each year on youth services delivered by multiple departments and agencies, yet families and youth continue to express concerns regarding such issues as long wait periods for critical programs and duplication of services. This service delivery structure of working in silos does not respond to the needs of the youth in the province.

In order to respond to this critical need and deliver a more effective and innovative approach, the Province of New Brunswick adopted a strength based, research driven child and youth-centered Integrated Service Delivery framework, intended to improve services and programs to children and youth (aged 0-21) having significant social, emotional, physical and/or mental-health needs. This innovative, proactive approach involving multiple departments and agencies is transformational and has the cooperation of all partner departments (Education and Early Childhood Development, Health, Social Development, Justice and Public Safety) and agencies (School Districts, Regional Health Authorities). It is transforming the way existing programs and services are delivered by incorporating a framework that follows the pathway of a child or youth to access services and works horizontally across mandates. To put a plan into action, this approach was first implemented in two demonstration sites. Key integrated features enabling access to the right intensity of services at the right time are: the Education Support Services teams in schools, the formation of multidisciplinary and multi-departmental child and youth teams delivering services in schools and community, and the development of integrated common plans.

The Integrated Service Delivery initiative has been challenging at times to establish, yet highly successful in supporting children and youth. It encompasses many entrenched policies and practices imbedded in departmental mandates, legislation and budgeting structures. There are many competing priorities across departments and changes in decision makers within departments and agencies. The framework has facilitated ongoing commitment by successive interdepartmental provincial leaders and the necessity of the front line interdepartmental/agency Regional leaders to work together and “make it happen”.

Over the course of the past six years, through the developmental phase of ISD, implementation and evaluation, significant change processes and activities occurred in order to adhere to the efficacy based framework. A two year formal evaluation was undertaken by the Université de Moncton (submitted October 2013). During the evaluation phase which was informed by leadership in the demonstration sites, proactive steps were undertaken to mitigate challenges and issues. Evaluation results demonstrated: positive feedback from parents, school personnel and clinical professionals on the new strength-based approach, the elimination of wait lists for services; doubling of the number of youth receiving services; pre and post psychological assessments indicated significant improvement in youth functioning. Additional findings found there were significant reductions in the duplications of services. Over the past three years a number of interdepartmental initiatives have been undertaken to address

recommendations from the evaluation report in order to strengthen the model and entrench the new approach to service delivery.

Leadership at various levels of government has been vital in ensuring the successful transformation of the ISD model. Throughout the past six years and at various stages of development, forums, decision-making teams and working committees have been established involving membership from all sectors. Examples of bold process initiatives undertaken requiring team-based leadership and timely decision-making include:

- a mandate letter signed by respective Deputy Ministers which committed departments to this work;
- approval of the Integrated Framework by multiple departments and agencies committing to the ISD approach;
- an extensive business process analysis involving the continuing collaboration of all sectors was completed detailing the new way of work;
- change management details were mapped to ensure a more proactive rather than reactive approach to service delivery;
- corporate and regional governance structures with committees and terms of reference has informed the decision making structure;
- an extensive competency-based training framework was established and implemented;
- multiple pieces of legislation were amended thereby enabling the sharing of personal and personal health information amongst public bodies for the purposes of delivering or providing an integrated service program or activity;
- an in-depth Privacy Impact Assessment on the business approach and electronic systems application was completed and the mitigation of the reports' recommendations is underway;
- a significant number of interdepartmental professionals were re-profiled, as well as new staff allocated to work together on child and youth teams. This required collaboration with multiple Human Resources departments, unions, associations and affected staff.
- an Indicators of change tool was developed and implemented to monitor and evaluate change management and change readiness and,
- integrated key performance measurements have been developed by partner departments and agencies.

Next Steps

Expansion to 47% of schools and 33k students is underway as of September 2016. The expansion of the ISD model province wide by 2018 is a platform commitment of the current government. Continuing efforts to improve on the existing model are ongoing. Transforming how the public service can channel its collective resources to respond to vulnerable children and youth continues to be absolutely critical to the success of this model.