

Supporting Children & Youth Who Use Substances: Creation of a New Clinical Care Pathway Tool

Guided by the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Community of Practice (CYMHSU CoP) in collaboration with UBC CPD

Introduction

Youth substance use has become increasingly hazardous in BC. Primary care providers may have limited training or experience in assessing and managing substance use in youth, which contributes to adverse outcomes for patients and moral distress for providers.

Unregulated drug toxicity has surpassed suicide and motor vehicle accidents as the foremost unnatural cause of death in BC's under-19 population, with 142 deaths between 2017-2022¹.



Objective

The goal of this project was to improve provider confidence in supporting children/youth who use substances and thus improve patient experience as a result.

Methods

Diverse expert group

A clinical care pathway was developed via evidence-informed expert consensus.

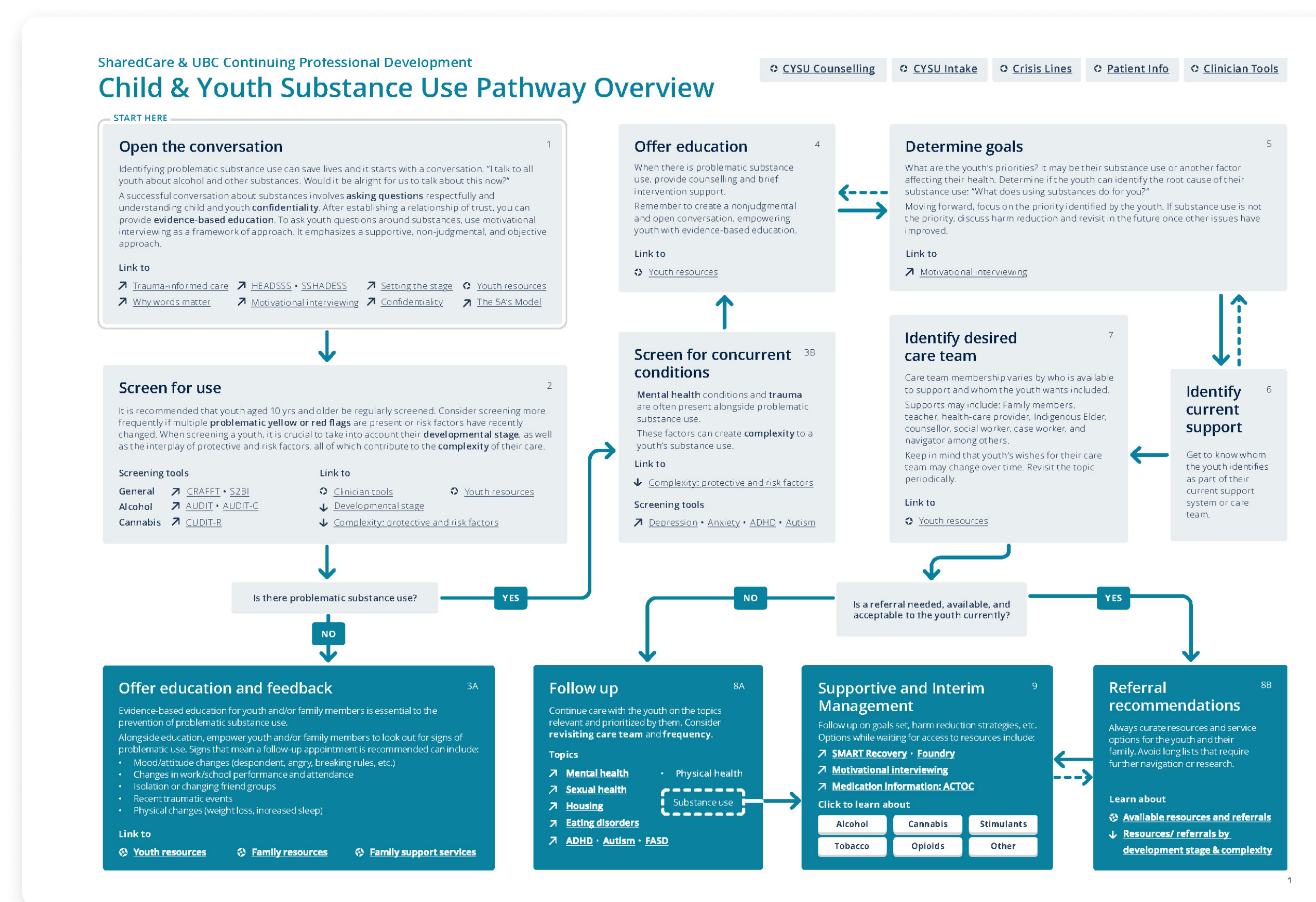
The working group consisted of family physicians and specialists who provide substance use care for youth in a diversity of clinical settings in BC.



Funding was provided by Shared Care and work led by the Child & Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Community of Practice in partnership with UBC Division of Continuing Professional Development (UBC CPD).

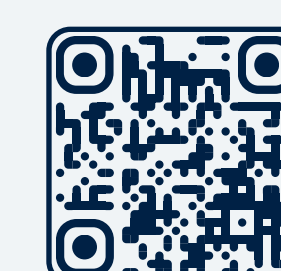
Results

The pathway highlights youth-specific communication strategies, navigates youth's confidentiality while facilitating family involvement, and uses age-specific screening tools for substance use and mental health. Youth are a heterogeneous population, so clinical recommendations are organized by stages of cognitive development (early adolescence to young adulthood) and psychosocial complexity (from low to high complexity across six domains). Taking these stages and complexity into consideration leads to improved patient experience while also improving providers' confidence. The resultant pathway is uploaded onto Pathways BC to allow widespread access and use in practice.



702 requests to access the pathway

As of October 7 since its December 2023 launch.



Scan to view the CYSU Pathway

Use the QR code to see the rest of this pathway.

Strong engagement is seen with high page views in Pathways BC and high registration and attendance numbers for synchronous education offerings.



526 registrants for the webinar

A webinar that took place in June 2024.

510 webinar recording views

As of September 13 2024.

Discussion

Partnership with organizations with similar goals and complementary expertise is key to success in both creation and dissemination of the tool.



Although the pathway's hyperlinked resources are BC-oriented, the framework is applicable to other jurisdictions with parallel services.



Service gaps for youth may be more readily identifiable using the development-complexity grid.



This pathway is intended to be a living document with updates as resources change and user feedback is collected.

Conclusion

Education on this topic continues to be a key priority for Shared Care and the CYMHSU CoP. An educational plan is underway to orient primary care providers to using the pathway, including two workshops in October 2024, and an online module and additional workshops in 2025/26. Based on the popularity of the webinar and workshops, it is clear that BC care providers want more information on this topic. Jurisdictions outside of BC would benefit from partnerships of similar organizations and creation of pathways with local resources.

This project is brought to you by



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¹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-drug-overdoses-children-bc/>

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