

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONS?

The primary goal of Intersections is to **help at-risk youth access appropriate services** in order to reduce the likelihood of becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

Intersections is a voluntary, rapid response program that has a child, youth, and family-centered approach. Intersections closes a critical gap between the justice system and the mental health and addictions system. It's a program that provides a way for police to intervene early and redirect youth (up to age 17) to the right services, with the long-term goal of improving their well-being and reducing future police contact.

Intersections focuses on youth who have not been charged with a criminal offense. Youth with mental health and addictions problems are at risk of becoming justice-involved if they don't get the help they need. Police are often called to incidents involving youth—and youth become involved in the justice system. But many of these occurrences can be better resolved if youth receive proper health and social supports.

It's not recognized as a diversion program under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. And it's not a replacement for any current protection or supervision protocols under the Child and Family Services Act.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

01

POLICE CONTACT

The police recognize a youth who is at-risk of becoming involved in the justice system. Police make the initial referral to an Intersections coordinator at the host agency, along with the consent of the youth and/or their family/caregivers.

02

ENGAGEMENT & SCREENING

The Intersections coordinator receives the referral, and contacts the youth and/or their family/caregivers. Together, they determine which services are most appropriate.

03

INTERVENTIONS & PATHWAYS

Next, the Intersections coordinator completes the referral(s) and continues to provide support until the youth has been actively engaged in the right services. At this time, the Intersections coordinator can close the file. On occasion, the file may be reopened if needs change or are unmet.



WHY IS INTERSECTIONS IMPORTANT?

While existing diversion programs aim to help youth who are already justice-involved with mental health, substance use, and/or developmental issues avoid further involvement with the law, Intersections is uniquely positioned to intervene even earlier. The goal is to help youth, who have not been formally charged with a crime, access appropriate services before they become justice-involved. Youth and families become healthier and more productive; police have reduced calls related to the youth.

Rates of serious mental health disorders among young offenders is estimated to be as high as 20%, with over 80% of youth who have a history of displaying serious delinquent behaviour meeting the criteria for diagnosis of a mental disorder.¹

Intersections is based on evidence and practices from the Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion (YJLD) model. In Ontario, the first program began in Stormont, and the most recent program opened in Bancroft in 2019. In April 2019, Intersections was designated a Leading Practice by the Health Standards Organization. It continues to garner interest from communities and policing services across our province and beyond.²

SCALING OPPORTUNITIES

Intersections requires high buy-in from police services, the primary referral source. It requires communities to come together and customize the implementation and ongoing sustainability of the program. The level of customization needed; readiness for collaborative cross-sectoral improvement work; and the level of expertise or support in implementation expertise will lead to different facilitators, barriers, speed, and quality of implementation and program success.

¹ Reviewed in Pullman et al. (2006). Juvenile offenders with mental health needs: Reducing recidivism using wraparound. *Crime & Delinquency*, 52(3), 375-397.

² Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion: Practical Toolkit. (2016) National Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network. Public Health England.