

## WHAT IS THE YOUTH COURT SCREENING MODEL?

The Youth Court Screening model represents a single point of contact for community services and supports for youth presenting for their first appearance at court. Members of a Screening Team are present in the courthouse to engage youth and their families/guardians, and to complete screening for mental health, addiction, and other health and social needs. The Screening Team consists of members from various health, justice, Indigenous, Francophone and child-welfare agencies. The intervention requires in-kind contributions by agencies (but no net new investments required), is fairly easy to implement, and quickly shows positive impacts. Support from an Intermediary (PSSP) will ensure successful implementation, and consistent quality standards and measurement.

Participation in Youth Court Screening is voluntary, but is available to all youth present for their first appearance at court. Members of the Screening Team administer an evidence-based tool (either the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-Version 2 (MAYSI-2) or the GAIN-SS) to flag possible mental health and/or addiction issues. Based on the outcomes of screening, discussion with youth/families/guardians, and collaborative decision making with other members of the Screening Team, clear pathways to appropriate services are determined.

The Youth Court Screening Model is not a diversion program; it is about identifying need and providing resources for health-related issues. The model has seen great success at improving both the identification of need and access to services for justice-involved youth, as well as improving community collaboration across agencies and sectors.

## WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

01

### IN ADVANCE OF COURT

The Screening Team Lead will receive the docket from the Crown Attorney's office, to flag First Appearance Youth.

02

### YOUTH COURT DAY

The Screening Team is present at Youth Court to provide the screening. First Appearance youth are often referred to the Screening Team through Duty Counsel. The Screening Team engages in a case conference following all screenings to ensure each youth has clear pathways to service.

03

### ACCESS AND PATHWAYS TO SERVICE

For youth with identified mental health needs, an immediate referral to the Youth Mental Health Court Worker Program takes place. For addictions or any other identified need (e.g. housing, employment, health, etc.), the youth is connected with local services and supports.



## WHY IS THE YOUTH COURT SCREENING MODEL IMPORTANT?

Upwards of 65-70% of youth who are involved with the justice system have one or more mental health challenges, addiction issues, developmental disorders, intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injury and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (Drerup, Croysdale, & Hoffmann, 2008). Many of these challenges go unaddressed, and can be associated with school difficulties, unemployment, poverty, and future incarceration. Evidence shows that early identification and intervention of mental health and addiction needs can help prevent some of these negative outcomes, with the longer-term goal of preventing youth from re-offending (Leschied, Chiodo, Nowicki, and & Rodger, 2008).

In many communities, there is no consistent, evidence-based approach for identifying the mental health and addiction needs of youth who have had contact with the justice system. The Youth Court Screening model offers a standardized, evidence-informed approach to screening that will address the needs of youth in contact with the justice system.

### SCALING OPPORTUNITIES

The Youth Court Screening model is a highly adaptable model to fit the needs of communities. Three years of data from the original pilot site, St. Catharines, have been collected to understand the needs of court-involved youth. Over 2/3's of the youth screened identify mental health concerns, with another 40% identifying substance use needs. It is clear that justice workers and health workers need to work together better to ensure the needs of this population are met.

The Youth Court Screening model has been implemented in four diverse communities in Ontario to date (St. Catharines, Welland, Windsor and 311 Jarvis St) with plans to scale further. Evaluation of the model has shown that participating organizations have been energized by the experience of building formal and informal partnerships and learning to work collaboratively across sectors in a coordinated way. Thus, the implementation of the Youth Court Screening model is both beneficial to justice involved youth as it creates clear paths to accessing needed services and beneficial to organizations and sector stakeholders that gain experience and skill in increasing integration, access, and coordination of services.