

PRISM-ACCESS OPEN MINDS CASE STUDY

Pathway for Rapid Self-Referral to Mental Health Services for Youth

THE CLIENT

PRISM-ACCESS Open Minds (PRISM-AOM) is a services research project led by Shalini Lal, Ph.D. through the Youth Mental Health and Technology Lab at the **University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre**. In collaboration with **ACCESS Open Minds** mental health service providers, youth and family representatives, mental health researchers, and Canadian health technology companies - notably Strata Health in partnership with Tickit Health - PRISM-AOM aims to develop, implement, and evaluate the use of an online self-referral pathway to facilitate rapid and direct access to mental health services for youth.

THE PROBLEM

Canadian youth face barriers to accessing appropriate and effective mental health services, which can have severe repercussions for their mental health and quality of life. Barriers include, but are not limited to:

- ⊕ Limited knowledge of where and how to seek help
- ⊕ Limited choice regarding when and how to access services
- ⊕ Insecure, but popular channels of engagement (e.g., social media)
- ⊕ Inefficient referral management systems, reliant on phone and paper-based methods
- ⊕ Human data entry errors and mistakes, loss of referrals, missing paperwork
- ⊕ Limited structures for tracking referrals and outcomes



THE SOLUTION

The PRISM-ACCESS Open Minds team worked with Strata Health and Tickit Health to develop an online referral pathway that facilitates direct access to public mental health services for young people.

The patient flow and referral management system included three key components:

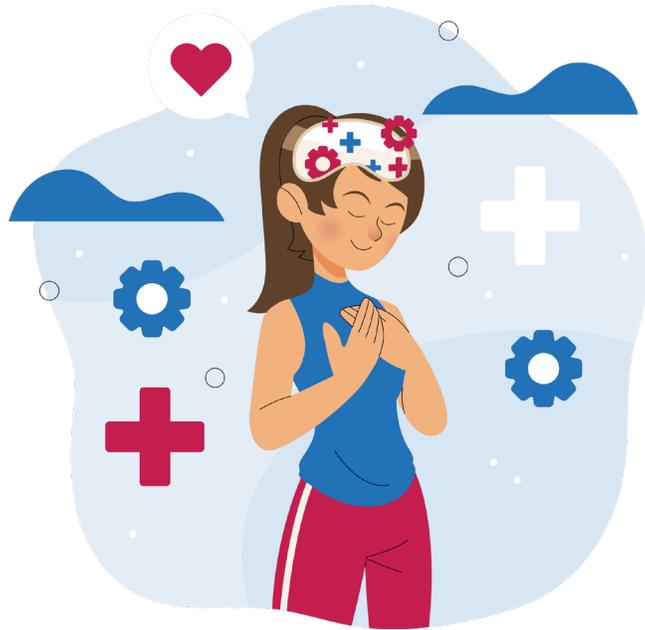
- 1. A landing page/website** that is accessible by both youth and third parties, providing critical information needed to complete referrals.
- 2. An online referral form** that youth can use to refer themselves directly to a youth mental health team located in their community using their phone, computer, or tablet.
- 3. A referral management system** that enables site teams to receive, triage and track referrals received through the web form. As well as providing workflow management, notifications, prioritization, scheduling, and auditability on inbound clients.

THE RESULTS

From November 2020 – December 31, 2022, PRISM-AOM will be implemented and tested as part of a pilot project across two ACCESS Open Minds health service settings:

1. Chatham-Kent, Ontario
2. RIPAJ-Montréal/Homeless Youth Network, Québec

Through this pathway, youth with mental health concerns will be able to connect with and refer themselves directly to a local team specializing in youth mental health care using their phone, computer, or tablet. Parents and service providers will also be able to refer a young person to mental health services via PRISM-AOM, and clinicians will be able to manage referrals through a secure platform. Engaging with youth using modern tools will improve access to youth mental health services.



“This innovative services research project will advance knowledge of how technology can be used to facilitate rapid and direct access to mental health services. The referral pathway that we have developed has the potential to serve as a model for how referrals can be better managed in our mental health care system.”

Many mental health teams use a range of paper, fax, email, phone, and other methods to receive referrals, but do not have an efficient way of keeping track of these referrals. Clinicians often lack information to determine what would be the next best step. A robust referral platform that allows for self-referral as well as third-party referral has the potential to be a game-changer for optimizing referral practices in the mental health care system.”

– **Shalini Lal, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Innovation and Technology for Youth Mental Health Services at the University of Montreal, Researcher at the University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre and the Douglas Mental Health University Institute

