



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 PM04 Facing Every Emotional Limit for Summer 2025

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1. What is the issue? Why is it important?

Members of Youth Council are deeply concerned about the lack of accessible mental health services. Many people, particularly those in the first third of life, are facing mental health challenges but are not being adequately supported by the health care system. This is hurting our children and the children in our communities - there is not enough help coming from others, and we need all the help we can get.

There is a lack of adequate services for all mental health challenges, not just acute or life-threatening ones. Everyone deserves to thrive. This requires investment in mental health support services.

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. So having the proper resources, destigmatizing the issue, and normalizing conversations about mental health can sustain a healthy life, and in turn healthy communities.

2. What is happening now?

The mental health of Canadians, and young Canadians in particular, has been declining since before the pandemic. 25% of youth in Canada are currently reported to be experiencing mental health challenges; challenges which have also been found to disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth as well as youth of diverse gender and sexual

identities (Globe and Mail Article).

There are many barriers to receiving mental health services. The lack of available resources means that people experiencing mild or moderate impairment of mental wellness may struggle to access services, until they are experiencing severe impairments or a mental health crisis. It feels dismissive to be told that you are not struggling enough to receive mental health services - everyone deserves to feel seen and heard, and to be supported when they reach out for help. Further, more robust mental healthcare solutions may reduce the severity of impairment and may preempt crises/hospitalizations.

Getting a diagnosis is challenging: it takes a long time, usually involves a waiting list, and is most accessible for those with severe conditions.

See the above statistics and resources for more context:

Barriers reported by children and youth accessing mental health and substance use include:
86% said they were overwhelmed and didn't know how to continue

67% said the long wait times and services not being provided when needed were barriers

64% said limitations of when and where to get services

59% said being misunderstood or dismissed (including by provider)

54% said fear of what others would think (Early Intervention for Mental Health and Substance Use Among Children and Youth Survey, 2022 - Canadian Institute for Health Information)

Over half of the people who visit the ER frequently for mental health and substance use help are under the age of 36 (CIHI 2022).

3. What is the recommendation?

The Youth Council of Pacific Mountain Regional Council, in partnership with the Youth Council of Chinook Winds Regional Council, recommends that the Pacific Mountain Regional Council and the General Council of the United Church of Canada have a conversation about ways the church might respond to the ongoing mental health crisis.

4. Background information:

Part of the church's job is to counsel - given that Canada is underfunding mental health support services in ways that are harmful and unjust, Youth Council feels that the church is

called to cry out in response. The church is called to be in healing relationships with others; and to advocate for justice and for those who need healing.

The United Church of Canada has a history of involvement in health care in Canada, including providing health care services, providing educational resources, or participating in advocacy. This tradition goes back at least as far as the 16th General Council in 1954, which passed policy in support of a national health insurance plan.

The 41st General Council directed specific actions on mental health, including requests to federal, provincial, and territorial governments to increase funding for mental health services and for the compilation of resources concerning mental health to be created for the benefit of the churches (Policy GC41 2012 - 032). The United Church has designated the first Sunday in May as Mental Health Sunday, since 2023.

5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

This proposal would help the church live into the commitment to be an open, accessible, and barrier-free church. Normalizing conversations about mental health helps the church destigmatize people struggling with mental health & opposes discrimination. And, encouraging an increase in mental health resources and supports may address impairments that might inhibit participation in the full life of the church for those struggling with acute or chronic mental health challenges.

The proposal would also have implications for the church's commitments towards other equity-denied groups. See above background information on how children & youth who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ and racialized children & youth experience mental health challenges at heightened rates.

For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Please select the appropriate option and provide the key discussion points for items being forwarded to the General Council:

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree without forwarding to the General Council
- ☐ Disagree and forwarding to the General Council

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to: GCinfo@united-church.ca

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