

A Knowledge Series about Integrated Youth Services

DAY 3 IMPACT STATEMENT

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Over the past two days we have heard from across our sector about the importance of coming together to lay a path forward and continue our transformative efforts to better serve youth and caregivers. We heard about the depth of need, the complexity of implementation, and the monumental sense of accountability and responsibility we all feel in getting it better and getting it right. We heard about the critical role that integrating lived experience plays in helping us to co-design programming and systems of service.

Today, we are tasked with mobilizing all the discussion into a set of next steps and recommendations. This is no small effort and we have clearly heard that to be able to achieve the transformation we are all envisioning and continue our paradigm shift we must step into deep collaboration across service providers, researchers, those with lived experience, policy makers and funders. We have established that we have the goodwill, we have the alignment, we have a shared vision and we have many strengths collectively to leverage. To propel us into a national stage of action and implementation we have identified key themes for our panel and discussions today.

Firstly, we highlighted the importance of moving high-impact services from periphery to core delivery that both address under-included services and under-served populations. We heard about eating disorders, peer support and family integration as all serving diverse youth across a continuum of care. These services help to give us a more complete opportunity to serve youth based on youth-identified needs. Pairing this with the importance of moving to communityship and leveraging localized strengths and context, we will be driven to ask: who do these models work for and who do they not yet serve? We heard about the reality that communities across this country experience disparity in how they are resourced, supported, and able to implement service models with quality. How do we hold collective accountability to make space and place for true conversation about the realities of various contexts across communities and for youth and caregivers depending on where they live and how they identify?

Additionally, discussions highlighted the critical importance of moving to a fully client-centered approach in continuums of care in which comprehensive, whole-person data is owned and mobilized by clients themselves to direct their service journey. We discussed consent and transparency in purpose, use and ownership of client data. We centered around the concept that data must fundamentally be of purpose to youth in their journey to wellness. This was identified as something where we may need to start small, start strong and get better and layer in data over time. Moving to a national measurement-based care framework will require alignment in what we should measure, and the best people to tell us what that is are young people and caregivers themselves.

To further this concept of client empowerment, we also discussed moving to a dismantled and rebuilt process of democratizing systems and structures that inform how our YMHSU system works and that moves us from power-imbalance and elitism around evidence. We asked critical questions about what constitutes evidence and why. We talked about who leads research, who funds programming, who determines priorities....and who does not. To create enabling contexts for this dismantling and rebuilding it was highlighted how important it is when we engage with lived experts and experts who have been marginalized from our discussions that we not only focus on service design but we also build capacity, skill and acceptance for their participation and expertise to be integrated. To further support this, we discussed moving to comprehensive investment in skill and capacity enhancement and leveraging beyond the YMHSU sector. The importance of having engagement practices focus on building skill in areas needed to participate and integrate lived expertise meaningfully was paramount. How do we ensure we are committed to creating meaningful and enabled opportunities for the integration of expertise we have made marginalized?

The alignment of national vision and the need for collaboration to achieve it was a resonant theme throughout the past two days. It was highlighted that moving forward with one voice around our national agenda and learning system goals need to be based on a shared vision, alignment and collaboration about our national priorities for youth and caregivers. The last few days have been expressed to be an opportunity to start that discussion, however, more discussion and leadership is needed in championing this effort. How can we establish mechanisms and facilitate the pathway forward so that momentum is not lost to inaction?

Finally, we discussed that we have much to leverage beyond our own sector and that comprehensive responses to implementation are needed. Moving from funding that focuses investment in services or models exclusively to collaborative funding that supports the enabling contexts needed to implement these services and models with accessibility, quality and client-centeredness in mind will allow for the greatest impact. Building in implementation support, communication and knowledge sharing support, co-designed research support, engagement and lived expertise integration support and mobilizing more flexible investment dollars were all highlighted as key considerations. How can we contribute from our various vantage points to create this cohesive funding model and approach?