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The Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health Launches in Canada to Prioritize Mental Health Around the World

Coalition Asks Organizations and Youth to Spread Social Media Messages of Awareness and Support

September 12, 2017 – Toronto, Canada – Launched today at an event during the first week of classes at the University of Toronto, the Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health will engage the mental health community to amplify the many voices advocating for youth mental health worldwide. The Coalition is an inclusive, youth-inspired initiative that asks leading mental health organizations, young people experiencing mental illness, and their communities to share the Coalition's and its partners' supportive social media messages, empowering young leaders to be mental health advocates. The Coalition was developed by a Steering Committee with members from Jack.org, the University of Toronto, iFred, batyr, and the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies.

"It is critical to engage youth in mental health efforts, because the majority of these conditions manifest by the age of 24," said Janine Robb, Executive Director, Health and Wellness, University of Toronto. "The Coalition invites mental health organizations, advocates, and individuals to join us and share messages that reach people during this pivotal time when they are beginning to build independent lives and careers. We are engaging mental health organizations in Canada and around the globe to join a community that will amplify constructive social media voices and share resources for young people."

Beginning at the launch, the Coalition asks organizations, advocates, and individuals to share positive social media messages using the hashtag, #195forMentalHealth. The hashtag represents the question: what if all 195 countries prioritized youth mental health? The campaign will focus on helping its member organizations amplify each other's social voices and activate the voice of young people across the world, initially in Canada and advancing to include other countries. By doing so, the Coalition hopes to create a groundswell that global leaders cannot ignore, prompting a much-needed focus on youth mental health.

"This is an important moment for the mental health community, and we are inspired to be a part of this collaboration," said Eric Windeler, Founder & Executive Director, Jack.org, a Canadian network of young leaders in mental health. "The Coalition is in no way intended to compete with or replace the great work happening around the world. Rather, it hopes to serve as a social movement designed to amplify the importance of our collective work, encouraging collaboration and the sharing of best-practices globally. If we can all work together our messages will be louder, and mental wellbeing of youth across the world will be better off for it."

Members of the Steering Committee announced the Coalition's launch today at the University of Toronto, at an event held to coincide with the first week of classes. Organizations in Canada and other countries participated in person and virtually. The Steering Committee developed the strategic framework for the Coalition and planned its initial activities in collaboration with those affected by mental illness, academic institutions, healthcare leadership, social media influencers, and mental health organizations and networks. The Coalition invites members of the mental health community to join its efforts by signing onto the Coalition and sharing the social media messages of the Coalition and its partners throughout the year. Sign on at www.ymentalhealth.org.

"The Coalition will help organizations create an energized, vocal community that is committed to combatting stigma and improving mental health responses," said Craig Kramer, Mental Health Ambassador, Neuroscience External Affairs, Janssen Research & Development, LLC, and Chair, Global Campaign for Mental Health, Johnson & Johnson. "The key is the Coalition's strategy of directly engaging mental health leaders and unleashing their ability

to drive meaningful change, both among youth and in society overall. We envision the Coalition to be a sustained engine to assist progress on mental health, not just today, but in the years to come.”

“I’m living proof that depression is treatable and suicide is preventable,” said Kathryn Goetzke, iFred Founder and President of The Mood Factory. “I see good mental health as a human right, and believe everyone deserves the ability to access and receive treatment. The sooner we reach children and young people, the more we can positively impact their mental health trajectory. Through the Coalition, we hope organizations amplify this message and encourage peers and communities to work together to end stigma, increase the reach of resources, and insist that governments and businesses prioritize mental health.”

About the [Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health](http://www.ymentalhealth.org) (www.ymentalhealth.org)

The Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health is an inclusive, youth-inspired initiative that aims to amplify the many voices on youth mental health worldwide. Around the globe, the Coalition is engaging with leading mental health organizations, young people experiencing mental illness, and the communities that support them to galvanize awareness, collaboration, and action.

About Jack.org

Jack.org trains and empowers young leaders who are revolutionizing mental health in Canada. Through Jack Talks, Jack Chapters and Jack Summits, young leaders identify and break down barriers to positive mental health in their communities. Jack.org is working towards a Canada where young people are comfortable talking about mental health, and those that need support get the help they deserve. With a national network of 2,500 young leaders, they’re only just getting started.

About the University of Toronto

Founded in 1827, the University of Toronto has evolved into Canada’s leading institution of learning, discovery and knowledge creation. The University of Toronto is proud to be one of the world’s top research-intensive universities, driven to invent and innovate. Its students have the opportunity to learn from and work with preeminent thought leaders through the University’s multidisciplinary network of teaching and research faculty, alumni, and partners. The ideas, innovations, and actions of more than 500,000 graduates continue to have a positive impact on the world.

About iFred

The mission of International Foundation for Research and Education on Depression (iFred) is to shine a positive light on depression and eliminate the stigma associated with the disease through prevention, research and education. Its goal is to ensure 100% of the 350 million people affected by depression seek and receive treatment. iFred has a curriculum available free online that teaches Hope to young kids, based on research that Hope is a teachable skill.

About batyr

batyr is a for purpose organisation that focuses on preventative education in the area of youth mental health. batyr provides programs that train young people to speak about their personal experience with mental ill health and start a conversation in their community. batyr takes these speakers into schools, universities and corporate arenas to continue this conversation around mental health. The programs engage, educate and empower the audience to learn from the experiences of others and to reach out to the great services around them.

Coalition Members: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Child Mind Institute, citiesRISE, Crisis Text Line, DMAX Foundation, Flawless Foundation, IAM Prize, International Bipolar Foundation, It Gets Brighter, Kids Help Phone, Leading Minds, One Mind at Work, Project Heal, Student Minds, Teenmentalhealth.org, University College Dublin, Yale University Program for Recovery and Community Health