

BRITISH COLUMBIA CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR COVID-19 Child, Youth & Family Mental Health Impact Grant

COVID-19 is having a tremendous impact on life in British Columbia and beyond. The Secretary General of the UN released a statement in May 2020 highlighting in particular COVID-19's extensive impact on mental health, and how critical mental health is to our collective wellbeing.¹ In this global crisis, anxiety, depression, and social isolation affect all Canadians and those with more acute needs struggle with reduced engagement with their mental health services. Children, youth and families who are now dealing with disrupted routines, isolation from friends, potential job losses among parents, and the struggles of maintaining a quality of education from home are a particularly affected group.

Families and caregivers who are looking after children and youth experiencing, or are at risk of, developmental delay or disability and whose children and youth require support to have the opportunities, environments and experiences that will optimize their development, functional abilities and quality of life, may be especially vulnerable during the pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of this population is not yet well understood, yet evidence suggests that families and/or caregivers raising children with special needs may be at greater risk of experiencing poor mental health than less vulnerable families during this time.^{2,3}

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC), the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) and the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) are partnering to offer a grant of **\$50,000** to advance our understanding of:

- 1. the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of families and caregivers who have children and youth with special needs in British Columbia, and**
- 2. the identification of existing evidence-based and promising approaches to mitigating these impacts.**

¹ Guterres, A. (2020). Launch of the policy brief on covid-19 and mental health: "Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19". *United Nations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/mental-health-services-are-essential-part-all-government-responses-covid-19> [Accessed 2020-07-17]

² Asbury, K., Fox, L., Deniz, E., Code, A., & Toseeb, U. (2020). How is COVID-19 Affecting the Mental Health of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Their Families? *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 1–9. Advance online publication. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04577-2>

³ Charlesworth, J. (2020). Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic. B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth. Retrieved from: https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CYSN_Report.pdf [Accessed 2020-12-14]

The Research Challenge:

Understanding and mitigating the mental health impact of COVID-19 on British Columbia's families and caregivers with children and youth with special needs

KEY RESEARCH AREAS

- 1. Advancing our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of families and caregivers who have children and youth with special needs in British Columbia**

Examples of research questions that could meet this deliverable are:

- What are the impacts, both positive and negative, of COVID-19 on the mental health of families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs in B.C.?
- What are the cultural and/or geographical differences in how the pandemic has impacted the mental health of families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs in B.C.?
- Are families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs considered a homogenous group or are there qualitative differences between them that would result in their mental health being differentially impacted by COVID-19? If there are differences, what are they and how are they differentially impacted?

- 2. Identifying evidence-based supports, services, programs, interventions, and/or promising and innovative practices that currently exist to mitigate the mental health impacts identified through #1 above. It will be important that the research not be limited to Canadian sources as valuable insights can be gathered from other jurisdictions with similar demographics, such as Great Britain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland.**

Examples of research questions that could meet this deliverable are:

- What evidence-based programs and interventions currently exist to support mental health outcomes of families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs? Do they differ between families and caregivers?
- What meaningful mental health supports⁴ do families and caregivers use when they are unable to access the services they typically rely on to support their child? How could these supports be made more accessible?
- What best practices support successful mitigation of the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs? Do they differ between families and caregivers? If 'yes', how do they differ?

⁴ Supports could include evidence-based mental health services and interventions or other supports that contribute to overall stress reduction.

- What short, medium and long-term mitigation strategies could help families and caregivers maintain positive mental health and adjust to the 'new normal' during and after COVID-19?
- What factors build resilience and lead to good mental health outcomes for families and caregivers who have children and youth with special needs? Do these factors differ between families and caregivers? How can these factors be nurtured and supported at individual, family and systems levels?
- What promising alternate service delivery methods (like increased access to tele-mental health) have been used by families and caregivers and how effective are they?

Applicants should note that, if their research approach includes the need for access to BC Ministry data, staff or clients, MCFD will require a copy of their ethics application for review by Government privacy and security experts for any issues. This is consistent with all external research proposals.

HOW MUCH IS THE GRANT & WHAT IS THE TERM OF THE GRANT?

The grant is valued at up to \$50,000, and term of the grant is 12 months.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

*To be eligible for the grant, you must be affiliated with an accredited BC-based academic institution, health authority or community organization. Your research team must include **two** principal investigators who are British Columbia residents and who are supported by a **team**.*

The **co-principal investigators** must be:

- A **researcher/academic**⁵ from an accredited British Columbia-based academic institution, health authority or community organization **AND**
- A leader or member of a British Columbia-based care or service provider with direct experience in the proposed research and interest in its intended outcomes.

In addition to the co-principal investigators, your **team** must include either a child, youth, family member and/or caregiver who has lived experience with the **topic of research focus**⁶.

⁵ **Researcher/academic:** defined as an individual who has an academic or research appointment and who can pursue the proposed research project as part of the duties of their appointment.

⁶ **Families and/or caregivers with children/youth with special needs:** Children and youth with special needs are defined in this call as those up to 19 years of age who are experiencing, or are at risk of, developmental delay or disability and who require support to have the opportunities, environments and experiences that will optimize their development, functional abilities and quality of life. 'Families' include parents, grandparents, siblings or other relatives responsible for the care of said child and/or youth; 'caregivers' refer to foster parents or legal guardians

You can also choose to involve other health care providers, community organizations, additional researchers and possibly entrepreneurs to enhance the depth and scope of your team and support your proposed activities. The team must include expert knowledge and experience with the following to be eligible:

- Provision of mental health services for families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs
- Access to an academic database

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Your proposal will be assessed according to the following criteria and must clearly explain how it meets all of the below.

A. RELEVANCE/NEED (20%)¹	
1. Demonstrated understanding of research evidence need	<p>The proposal clearly demonstrates understanding of the goals of the research as it relates to the local context.</p> <p>It includes a high-level overview of work that has already been done in the sector, and how the current project complements (and does not duplicate) work that is already underway.</p> <p>Please cite your sources in-text using an (Author, Year) format. A full reference list is not necessary.</p>
2. Meaningful engagement of persons with lived experience	<p>The proposal ensures the meaningful engagement of a child, youth, family member and/or caregiver from the relevant community (in this case, from families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs) at every stage throughout the research project including the proposal development.</p>
3. Letters of support from the community	<p>The proposal includes up to 3 letters of support from members of the community, (and their contact information) who will directly benefit from the proposal/project.</p>
B. MERIT OF PROPOSED RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODOLOGY (50%)	
4. Approach – clarity, rationale, evidence-based	<p>The research proposal clearly demonstrates understanding of the requirements of the work.</p> <p>The proposed approach for data collection/research methods is clear, feasible and likely to be effective.</p> <p>Methodology addresses cultural considerations (e.g., Indigenous perspectives) as well as supports a gender-based analysis (GBA+) lens.</p> <p>Proposed activities are well-suited to addressing the stated evidence needs. The proposed approach is informed by evidence.</p>

5. Family, child, youth and caregiver engagement	The proposal demonstrates a commitment to and plans for meaningful and appropriate engagement of those with lived experience, in this case, children, youth caregivers and/or family members from relevant communities <u>throughout all stages</u> of the research project including the proposal development.
6. Workplan	The project workplan is reasonable and feasible given proposed objectives, timelines and budget. The workplan includes activities, deliverables, roles of project team members and timelines.
7. Collaboration	The proposal demonstrates plans for collaboration and meaningful engagement with the broader community/service area (e.g., among lead and core service agencies and/or with cross-sectoral partners).
8. Budget	<p>A budget has been provided using the given template (See Appendix A, page 7). Budget appears reasonable for work being proposed. Please note that travel, hardware, and overhead costs are NOT eligible for funding. People with lived experience should be compensated for their contribution to the project, such as through a stipend or gift card.</p> <p>Funds will be disbursed based on the achievement of project milestone(s). Your budget must also include a proposed fund-disbursement schedule based on project milestones (we recommend two project milestones with an amount payable on signing of contract, and a 10% hold-back of the grant total until receipt of the final report).</p>
11. Ethical standards	<p>The team must follow ethical standards and procedures for research at all stages of the research project. Proof of ethics approval will be required at a later date. (Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)).</p> <p>Should the application require access to data, staff, or clients from the BC Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), the successful applicants must provide a copy of their ethics application to MCFD. MCFD staff will be available to discuss data needs with researchers on an individual basis.</p>
C. POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT (30%)¹	
12. Transformative potential	The proposal demonstrates that the research has potential to advance broader provincial priorities to child and youth mental health services in British Columbia.
13. Knowledge mobilization plans	The proposal demonstrates short-term and long-term plans to mobilize knowledge generated through this work, including a dissemination strategy to inform the broader community of research relevance and findings.

¹A score of at least 70% must be achieved in both subcategories A and C to be considered for the grant

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Visit the website of Mental Health Research Canada (www.mhrc.ca) to apply via MHRC's Submittable portal and fill out the application form. Provide supporting documents, if applicable.

An independent Advisory Group made up of academics, subject matter experts, and people with lived experience, will assess the proposals and make recommendations for funding.

WHAT RESOURCES SHOULD YOU ACCESS?

The following resources may be useful in preparing your proposal:

Ethics, respect & inclusivity:

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html

Knowledge mobilization:

Doing more with what you know: Knowledge Mobilization Toolkit

www.kmbtoolkit.ca

Knowledge translation:

Resources on how to do research co-production and collaboration with end users (e.g., community members, people with lived experience)

<https://ktpathways.ca/>

REPORT-BACK MECHANISM FOR WINNING PROJECT TEAM

There will be multiple check-ins at various points with MHRC, MSFHR and MCFD, as well as a requirement to report back on the research findings.

MHRC, MSFHR and MCFD will provide guidance and support as needed to ensure the success of the project.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

MHRC, MCFD and MSFHR acknowledge and agree that the applicant retains all right, title and interest to the material produced from the research project funded by this agreement, with the understanding that the applicant will grant MCFD a perpetual, non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free license to use, make, copy, and distribute the material produced under this agreement for non-commercial purposes. MHRC, MCFD, and MSFHR will work with the lead investigators to ensure MCFD's usage of these rights will not compromise the investigator's ability to publish their work.

MHRC, MSFHR, & MCFD'S RIGHT TO A SECOND CALL

MHRC, MSFHR and MCFR reserve the right to put forth a second call for proposals if the submissions received do not fulfill the criteria of the grant.

ABOUT THE GRANT FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS:

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC):

MHRC is a national, charitable organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of the one in five Canadians – over 7 million people – living with mental illness. We advance mental health research that is problem-solving, cost-effective and usable in the real world, transforming treatments and prevention in creative and collaborative ways. Because we are committed to building knowledge that will have practical application and deep impact, we begin with those who will use it – people with lived experience. We also consult and partner with other stakeholders, including other mental health organizations, social agencies, entrepreneurs, business and government. www.mhrc.ca

Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR):

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR), funded by the Province of British Columbia, is BC's health research funding agency. MSFHR helps develop, retain and recruit the talented people whose research improves the health of British Columbians, addresses health system priorities, creates jobs and adds to the knowledge economy. Since its inception in 2001, MSFHR has been a key participant in BC's health research and life sciences ecosystem. The Foundation works as a trusted partner with government, the health research community and the health system to support better health outcomes through research and its translation into new treatments, cures, practices and solutions. Learn more at www.msfhr.org.

Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD):

The Ministry of Children and Family Development's primary focus is to support all children and youth in British Columbia to live in safe, healthy and nurturing families and be strongly connected to their communities and culture. The ministry's approach is to provide inclusive, culturally respectful, responsive and accessible services that support the well-being of children, youth and families in B.C. The ministry delivers its mandate through approximately 5,400 ministry staff working in partnership with Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, Indigenous service partners, approximately 6,000 contracted community social service agencies and foster homes, as well as cross-government and social-sector partners

Appendix A: Budget Template

Please detail all costs for this project as per the categories below; to add a line, insert an extra row in the relevant category. Please note that travel, hardware and overhead costs are NOT eligible for funding. People with lived experience should be compensated for their contributions to the project.

BUDGET FOR PROJECT: [INSERT TITLE]		
A. Employment and Compensation (including salaries, hourly wages, stipends, etc.)	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Employment and Compensation	\$ -	\$ -
B. Goods and Services	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Goods and Services	\$ -	\$ -
C. Gifts, Honoraria and Incentives	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Gifts, Honoraria and Incentives	\$ -	\$ -
E. Other (specify)	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Other	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL FOR THIS PROJECT	\$ -	\$ -

Project Milestones & Disbursement Schedule:

Project Milestone	Anticipated Date of Completion:	Proposed Amount to be Disbursed:
1. Signing of Contract & Submission of Ethics Approval		\$
2. [Milestone 1]		\$
3. [Milestone 2]		\$
4. Final Report Submission (Recommended 10%)		\$ 5,000
Total MHRC Payout:		\$ 50,000