

Brighter
tomorrows



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We recognize the history, strengths and diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

This land, known as Ontario, is covered by 46 treaties and other agreements. As a provincial organization, the Knowledge Institute operates throughout the many traditional territories relevant to these agreements. Our office is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin nation.

We are committed to engaging respectfully with Indigenous children, young people and families within and across nations.

Introduction

For more than two decades, the Knowledge Institute has worked alongside partners across Ontario to strengthen the systems that support infants, children, young people and families. This year has been one of transformation for us as we welcomed new leadership, expanded our work in key areas and deepened collaboration.

We've taken on new Ministry-directed initiatives, grown our implementation and evaluation supports, and launched resources that help turn knowledge into action. Most importantly, we've done this work together – with service providers, young people, caregivers and sector leaders – [building a shared vision for the future](#).

Change happens through collaboration and together, we're shaping a stronger mental health and addictions system for Ontario's infants, children, young people and families. And for that, we want to extend our deepest thanks to our partners across the sectors.



Leader messages

Joining the Knowledge Institute at the 20th year mark has been both an honour and a privilege. This past year has been one of evolution—welcoming new perspectives, deepening our partnerships and setting a course for the future with our strategic plan. Through it all, one thing has united all of us across the sector at every level: we all care deeply about the mental health and wellbeing of every infant, child, young person and family in the province.

Something I've observed as someone still new to the Knowledge Institute is that the strength of our impact comes from the trust and collaboration we've built with agencies, partners and communities. Whether it's through our grants, quality improvement program or our work alongside agencies, we help amplify the voices of

those doing important work on the ground, ensuring that people in Ontario know their voices are heard and valued.

At the heart of it all is access—to services, to knowledge and to the opportunities that drive real change.

True impact happens when everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, has a seat at the table. That's why our work is rooted in a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism, ensuring that the system we have a hand in shaping is one where every voice matters. I couldn't be more proud of our staff, councils and partners for their hard work and commitment to this shared vision and look forward to building on this momentum together.



Nicholas Watters
Executive Director

Through a year of change, the Knowledge Institute team has remained steadfast in its commitment to progress. Their dedication kept momentum strong, ensuring that important work continued without pause, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

Equally important is the role of young people and caregivers in shaping our work. Their voices push us to ask the right questions, challenge assumptions, and advance meaningful change in mental health and addictions care. By working together, we continue to move the yardstick toward a stronger system for children, youth and families.



Louis Doyle
*Chair, Strategic
Advisory Committee*

In my time working with the Knowledge Institute, I've seen just how essential their leadership has become in the child and youth mental health and addictions sector. Whether it's through the development of standards for live-in treatment or their continued focus on meaningful youth and family engagement, the Knowledge Institute is helping the sector make real, evidence-based advancements.

More and more, the sector is looking to the Knowledge Institute for

guidance, and for good reason. The team's expertise is exceptional. They offer a trusted source of truth that helps organizations stay aligned, informed and focused, without having to replicate efforts. Their work provides both a goalpost and a pathway for sustainable change.

As I prepare to retire this summer, I do so with deep appreciation for the Knowledge Institute's role in shaping a stronger, more connected system for children, young people and families in Ontario.



Joanne Bezzubetz
*Vice President, Integrated Mental Health
and Addictions Care at YSB and CHEO*

Financials

Salaries and benefits	\$5,641,389
Office supplies and expenses	\$144,153
Office equipment	\$32,944
Staff development	\$72,405
Staff travel	\$109,340
Meeting expenses	\$87,782
Communications and sponsorships	\$37,124
Professional fees	\$128,873
Distributed funds	\$909,309
Rent @ 695 Industrial Ave (admin)	\$92,513
CHEO Administration Fee (admin)	\$794,768
Total	\$8,050,600



Empowering youth voices

The Knowledge Institute's Youth Advisory council plays a vital role in shaping research, policies and practices that directly impact young people. By centering the voices and lived expertise of young people, the council helps us ensure mental health and substance use health initiatives are relevant, inclusive and effective.

Notable achievements this year include:

- **Co-creating an EDI-AR tipsheet for staff members to understand how young people would like to see efforts supporting equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism meaningfully embedded in youth engagement activities.**
- **Co-developing a youth-friendly harm reduction resource.**
- **Onboarding seven new members to our Youth council.**
- **Hosting our yearly in-person meeting (October 2024) to connect on our shared goals for the sector.**



Their dedication empowers young people across Ontario to be loud advocates, driving forward a system that truly reflects their needs and aspirations. I'm excited about all we've accomplished as a team, and I look forward to seeing advisory members flourish in their roles as active agents of system change.



Shreya Sivaloganathan
(she/her), Youth Advisor

What does **connection** mean to our **Youth council?**



A willingness and mutual want to be on the same page.

Ozzy



Feeling seen and understood by others, sharing experiences that build trust and empathy.

Sabriya



Belonging.

Alisha



Feeling a sense of belonging while feeling seen, heard and understood.

Camille



Connection : Interlinked. Or a sense of closeness between people.

Alissa



Building community and creating meaningful ties.

Maryam



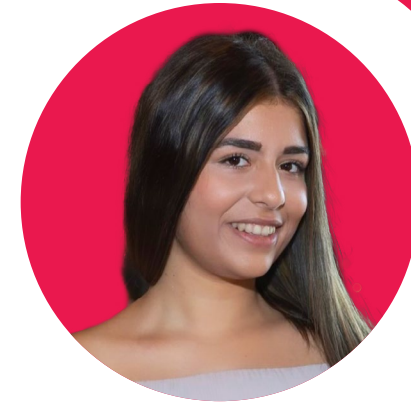
Being able to show up and listen, especially during difficult conversations.

Hajar



Having someone in my corner in the different spaces I take up. Connection means I don't have shame in my questions nor do I have to face my struggles alone.

Samarah



The quiet certainty that I can show up as I am, curious, uncertain, or struggling and still belong because someone is willing to meet me there.

Sophia

System **transformation**

Collaborating to strengthen care

Transforming care for children and young people begins with a shared vision. The voices of young people, caregivers, service providers and sector leaders across Ontario have been our guiding light in launching the Knowledge Institute's [Levels of Care \(LoC\) quality standard](#). Through surveys, focus groups, consultations and one-on-one conversations, we engaged 111 individuals from 55 organizations to help us shape this standard. Their insights, together with those gathered from advisory councils, our Quality Standard Advisory Committee (QSAC) and partner tables, helped us ensure the standard reflects the needs of those it's designed to support.

Momentum

Voluntary standards like LoC rely on awareness, engagement and commitment across the sector. Achieving alignment takes time, but the passion and enthusiasm we've seen this year reflect a strong belief in this work. This shared belief is already fueling excitement for future initiatives, including the development of our next [quality standard on live-in treatment](#), which is well underway and will support the [Ontario Intensive Treatment Pathway \(OITP\)](#).

In the next year, we look forward to continuing to work with our OITP partners in laying the groundwork for the implementation of clearer and stronger pathways to intensive services in the province.



Young people and families see what others may miss — what's working, what's not and where collaboration can drive change. Their voices have helped shape every stage of the standard's development.



Louise Murray-Leung
Family Advisory Council
LoC QSAC

From shared vision to implementation

[The Right Time, Right Care \(RTRC\)](#) initiative is built on collaboration across Ontario’s mental health, education and youth services sectors. Over the past year, we’ve transitioned from aligning with this vision to taking tangible steps toward implementing, laying the groundwork for meaningful change.

Coaches from three organizations — the Knowledge Institute, School Mental Health Ontario, and Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario - have **connected with all 72 school boards and 31 lead agencies**, fostering collaboration and ensuring consistent understanding of the initiative. Coaches are committed to supporting communities at every stage, encouraging existing efforts and developing a shared commitment to the initiative’s goals.



In my community, the Knowledge Institute has come and provided education and resources to help enhance family engagement at our local level. To me that shows the importance and value of family members at our local level and I would like to see other organizations jump on having the Knowledge Institute at their tables to teach, enhance and encourage family engagement in their communities.



Kelly-Lynn Musico
Family Advisory Council member

Innovating for the future

Used across Ontario and beyond, the [HEADS-ED and HEADS-ED Under 6 screening tools](#) help standardize assessments and guide clinical decision-making in hospital emergency departments, primary care and community settings.

Through 1Call1Click.ca, every child and young person seeking mental health, substance use health or addictions care undergoes HEADS-ED screening, helping intake workers assess different needs effectively. To refine service recommendations, we are currently studying how intake workers integrate additional tools, such as Ask Suicide Questions and CRAFFT.

The Knowledge Institute continues to advance research on HEADS-ED, publishing two key studies this year to further strengthen evidence-based mental health care.



> 200

**service providers were
trained on HEADS-ED
screening tools this year.**

Tools and resources

Breaking down harm reduction myths

[Harm reduction: myth vs. reality](#) builds on last year's report on [Harm reduction and young people](#) and dives deeper into the myths and misconceptions that can create barriers to substance use health and addictions care. The findings in these reports are designed to spark honest and informed conversations between service providers, young people and families. When we debunk myths and uncover the realities, we open the door to better support, better care and a brighter future.



Bridging knowledge gaps

This year, we heard the need for guidance on technology use and how it impacts the mental health and well-being of children and young people – so we went to the evidence. The result is two new resources: [Technology use: Early years to transition years](#) and [Young people in the digital era: Understanding risks and promoting well-being](#).



Top resources of the year

From big ideas to real world impact, with the right tools and the latest knowledge, we can create lasting change. This year, thousands of you turned to our [toolkits](#):



[Moving ideas to action: An implementation toolkit](#)
326 downloads



[Doing more with what you know: Knowledge mobilization toolkit](#)
925 downloads



[Clearer insights, greater impact: A program evaluation toolkit](#)
841 downloads

Find these and more in our [Resource hub](#), where knowledge and tools come together to create impact.

Powering the future

To strengthen Ontario's child and youth mental health and addictions sector, the Knowledge Institute is tackling today's challenges with innovative, practical solutions and leveraging our engagement and quality improvement (QI) expertise.

Engagement grants:

- Funded nine agencies this year.
- Helped agencies gain community buy-in for the importance of including engagement.
- Ensured meaningful participation from young people and families.



See why engagement matters to our grantees and their work.



My direction as to 'why I was at the table' became very clear and so I had an 'aha' moment at our in-person meeting. Working within our agency, I know how much they value the Knowledge Institute and what they bring to the table; what the Knowledge Institute does and can provide to agencies.



RoxAnne Daigneault,
Family Advisory Council member

Quest for **quality improvement:**

Over the years, we've seen the growth and deepening of [QI culture](#) in agencies across the sector. Here's what this year's [Quest](#) cohort and coaches achieved:

- Delivered three Lean Six Sigma white belt sessions.
- Trained and certified 36 participants.
- Gained tools and training to enhance care pathways.



95%

of Quest participants
reported satisfaction
with their training.



Karina Santiago, the QI manager at ROCK (Reach out Centre for Kids) rolled out the inaugural internal Lean Six Sigma White Belt training at ROCK in January 2025. ROCK is the first in our province to take and adapt our White Belt programming for use internally to train staff at their agency. So far, 27 staff members have received their LSS White Belt certification through the program with more training sessions planned in the months to come.

Building capacity is just one part of the equation. The Knowledge Institute is also advancing innovation by developing accessible, inclusive programs that respond to systemic inequities. This year's [Innovation Initiatives funded five projects](#), demonstrating that culturally responsive care leads to better outcomes and stronger community connections.

Another key initiative is the release of a new provincial health equity strategy, led by Children's Mental Health Ontario. This strategy will provide actionable steps for embedding EDIA-R principles across the sector, ensuring our collective efforts are as inclusive and impactful as possible.

As we look to the future, we know the road ahead will bring both uncertainty and opportunity. The progress we've made through collaboration and innovation positions us well to meet the future with confidence.





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