

# MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

## INDICATOR #22 Incidence & Prevalence of the Most Common Mental Health Disorders

### DEFINITION

**INDICATOR #22** — Incidence and prevalence of the five most common mental health disorders for children younger than 19 years.

### KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ Mental health—or social and emotional well-being—is fundamental to human development and essential for all children to flourish;<sup>1</sup> therefore, it is important for measuring the health of children and youth.
- ▶ A number of mental health disorders that present throughout childhood and adolescence negatively influence cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of development. Left unaddressed, these disorders tend to reoccur and negatively affect an individual throughout life.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Research shows that 70 per cent of adults with mental health disorders report that their symptoms began in childhood or adolescence. Promotion and prevention of these conditions can reduce demand on health services and the criminal justice system,<sup>3</sup> an outcome that is beneficial for individuals, their families, and society.
- ▶ Data regarding incidence and prevalence of mental health disorders in children and youth under age 19 are currently unavailable. Using estimates derived from recent prevalence surveys in other countries, it is estimated that as many as 12.6 per cent of children and youth age 4–17 (approximately 84,000 children and youth in BC) experience clinically significant mental disorders at any given time.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ It is important to determine which mental health disorders are most common in children and youth in BC, in order to monitor this issue, and to provide a focus for efforts to improve the incidence and prevalence of these disorders. There is currently work underway to achieve this using BC Ministry of Health data (e.g., data from PharmaNet, Medical Services Plan and the Discharge Abstract Database). It is anticipated that this work will be reported on in future reports.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>Waddell C, Shepherd CA, Chen A. Creating comprehensive children's mental health indicators for British Columbia. *Can J Commun Ment Health*. 2013;32:1.
- <sup>2</sup>Somers JM, Currie L, Eiboff F. Child and youth health and well-being indicators project: appendix G – mental and emotional health and well-being evidence review [prepared for the Office of the Provincial Health Officer for British Columbia and the Canadian Institute for Health Information]. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Institute for Health Information; 2011.
- <sup>3</sup>Mental Health Commission of Canada. Changing directions, changing lives: The mental health strategy for Canada. Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada; 2012 [cited 2016 Mar 4]. Available from: [http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/system/files/private/MHStrategy\\_StrategyText\\_ENG\\_0.pdf](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/system/files/private/MHStrategy_StrategyText_ENG_0.pdf).
- <sup>4</sup>Waddell C, Shepherd CA, Schwartz C, Barican J. Child and youth mental disorders: prevalence and evidence-based interventions. Vancouver, BC: Children's Health Policy Centre, Simon Fraser University; 2014.