The interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH) and Rapid Screener (ChYMH-RS) instruments: Personal experiences from mental health professionals in Ontario

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1. Overview of interRAI

Researchers and practitioners from around the world are collaborating to create the interRAI Child and Youth Suite of mental health assessments.

interRAI is an international organization that brings together experts to create comprehensive, valid and reliable health assessments for vulnerable persons. The family of interRAI assessments is unique because they share a common language, which promotes information sharing across health sectors and services. They are also unique because one assessment provides information for many different applications:

- One of the major initiatives in children’s mental health is the development of the interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health Instrument…

Dr. Sandra Fisman, Chair, Dept. of Psychiatry, Western University

The applications have utility for a wide array of stakeholders across the service system. More information on each application can be found at www.interrai.org.

2. Overview of the Child and Youth Suite

The Child and Youth Suite is currently in development at the Child and Parent Resource Institute in London, Ontario. The suite is comprised of assessments for children from birth to age 20 with mental health and/or developmental issues.

3. Overview of pilot project

The ChYMH and the ChYMH-RS are being piloted across sites in Ontario, including 13 local Community Care and Access Centres (CCACs).

At the CCACs, assessments are being used in the Mental Health and Addictions Nurse (MHAN) project.

4. Role of the Assessor in the Pilot Project

The assessors from 21 sites across Ontario have been trained on Child and Youth Suite instruments. Analysis of training feedback indicates trainees appreciate (1) the use of vignettes (2) peer support, and (3) working with the assessment software at computers during training. CPRI has been responsive to training feedback by making it more flexible (e.g., teleconferences) and adding follow up sessions.

5. Assessor experiences: How has the assessment helped?

Analysis of preliminary feedback from assessors has revealed a number of areas where the interRAI instruments have supported information gathering, care planning, and decision making:

- Supporting information gathering for clinician assessment. “[The ChYMH] pulled out information about constipation due to a drug side effect, that would not have been collected previously.”

- Supporting care planning. “[Evidence-based care guidelines embedded in the instrument] can help us share information with members of the community who have never worked with kids who have these needs.”

- Supporting triage decisions. “[With two very similar cases] the ChYMH helped clearly identify the families. It makes you feel like you really know the client well.”

For more information on the suite visit www.interrai.org and click on Research.