

Briefing Notes

The prevalence of mental health issues in children and youth involved with Child Welfare Services in Ontario

This paper examines the prevalence of mental health issues among children and youth served by child welfare services in Ontario and reviews academic literature, agency reports, and newspaper articles on the topic. The prevalence of mental health issues among young people involved with child welfare services is due not only to individual and family difficulties, but also to structural issues within the service sectors. Statistics illustrate a severe lack of accessible and timely services in both the child welfare and the children's mental health sectors. Inadequate access to services for young people involved in the child welfare system is considered in relation to neoliberal policy development, social stigma, the Children and Family Services Act, and the experiences reported by families and service providers. Involvement with child welfare agencies, mental health, and structural factors such as poverty, racism, and income inequality, are interrelated. Because these factors have been linked to child maltreatment, providing timely mental health services for children and families involved in the child welfare system is especially important.