

PROJECT FACT SHEET

Building the Tools to Assess Adolescent Health in Nova Scotia

Investigators: Donald Langille
Department of Community Health and Epidemiology
Faculty of Medicine
Dalhousie University

Gail Tomblin Murphy
School of Nursing/Community Health and Epidemiology
Health Professions
Dalhousie University

Adolescence is a time of intense growth and experimentation, and a risky time for teen health. In order to enhance health services to Nova Scotia's youth, school-based health centers are evolving throughout the province, and across the country. Canadians increasingly recognize the need to assess these school-based health centres, and to keep an eye on youth health generally.

Donald Langille and Gail Tomblin Murphy developed a specialized survey to help measure the health of students in Grades 9-12.

"The survey offers a standardized way to measure youth health in the province," says Dr. Langille, a professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University.

This project focused on identifying the necessary components of a school-based self-completion survey that could effectively measure youth health. In preparation for developing their survey, Dr. Langille and Dr. Tomblin Murphy held focus groups of youth and parents in Sydney, Truro, Halifax, and Kentville. They also interviewed individuals in the field of youth health and administered a survey to health professionals across the province.

Once a draft of the youth survey was developed, it was tested in Amherst and Sydney, NS. "The result is a completed survey that is a reliable method for gathering information," says Dr. Tomblin Murphy, a member of the School of Nursing at Dalhousie.

The researchers found that all of the people involved in youth health agree it is a complex issue involving school factors, health services factors, and individual factors. "It is not enough to address a single facet of the issue," says Dr. Langille. "We found that most believe the issue of youth health should be approached broadly."

The completed survey represents a well-developed consensus of what should be measured, and provides tested instrumentation for doing so. The survey will be made available freely to all those with an interest in youth health research in Nova Scotia. However, its main application will be to assess the needs of school-based youth health centers, and to monitor health conditions within schools, or specified areas of the province, such as district health authorities.

Contact information:

Donald Langille
Department of Community Health and Epidemiology
Faculty of Medicine
Dalhousie University
Phone: (902) 494-1312
Email: Donald.Langille@Dal.Ca