

Pathstone Mental Health

2022 PARTNERSHIP UPDATE



▲ Brock students Zihang Bu, Masum Patel, and Lauren Stepien demonstrate the electroencephalogram set-up for a brain activity study.

In March 2019, Pathstone Mental Health and Brock University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize a shared commitment to improving mental health outcomes for youth and children in Niagara and beyond. The agreement represents the mutual advantage of working together through research, knowledge mobilization and experiential learning to better understand and address challenges and barriers to increasing mental health support for children. This collaborative partnership is a reflection of Brock's commitment to community engagement, knowledge mobilization, experiential learning, and the shared priority of research and increasing support for childhood mental health.

Projects and Initiatives in 2022

The partnership between Pathstone and Brock University solidifies a collaboration that positively impacts children suffering with mental health in Niagara and beyond. It has created the opportunity for co-developed research to advance brain health knowledge, and provide students with invaluable hands-on experience as they work alongside Pathstone's team of support workers and clinicians.

Research

Pathstone Mental Health and Brock worked in partnership on numerous studies and co-created research in 2022 with faculty from across the university. This includes:

Institute for Lifespan Development Research

The institute involves over 88 faculty members representing Social Sciences, Applied Health Sciences, Education, and Business, as well as 40 community agencies, who collaborate to investigate psychological, social, health and neurophysiological and educational aspects of life from infancy to old age.

In 2022, researchers from the Institute for Lifespan Development Research collaborated with Pathstone Mental Health on a variety of research projects including:

- An integrated approach of Recreational Dance and Behaviour Therapy: Evaluating Psychological and Physical Benefits for Children and Youth with Neurodevelopmental Disorders
 - Collaborated with Tricia Vause, Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies (CHYS). 2 undergraduate and 5 graduate students evaluated the psychological and physical benefits of recreational dance and behavior therapy for children with neurodevelopmental disorders.
- Cognitive, emotional, sensory processing and neurophysiological activity in children and youth with anxiety and ADHD.
 - Partnered with researchers:
 - Ayda Tekok-Kilic, Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies
 - Tricia Vause, Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies
 - Eric Panda, Assistant Professor, Child and Youth Studies
 - Sid Segalowitz, Professor Emeritus, Psychology
 - Researching:
 - The temperamental, cognitive, and sensory transdiagnostic risk factors underlying anxiety and attention deficit spectrum in youth ages 8-17 years using parent questionnaires.

- EEG data to study the neurophysiological correlates of attention systems and how it may vary as a function of temperament and executive functions in children and youth with externalizing and internalizing challenges.
 - Sensory, temperament and cognitive risk factors in anxiety and attention spectrum using parent questionnaires in a younger group of children (5-8 years).
 - Neurophysiological correlates and predictors of intervention outcomes.
- Neurophysiological Predictors of Adaptive Behaviors Among Children and Youth
 - In partnership with Dawn Good, Associate Professor, Psychology.
 - Understanding the complex mental health needs of children and youth in Niagara and exploring how to improve pathways to care, identifying shared factors among children/youth that predict long-term complicated/dual diagnosis status and failed treatment/recidivism.
 - Parental Relationships and At-Risk Traits Among Children and Youth
 - In partnership with Dawn Good and Angela Book, Associate Professors, Psychology.
 - Investigating the bi-directional influence of parental relationships on at-risk youth (e.g., those with executive functioning challenges) to understand, and better inform, parenting intervention programming.

Interprofessional Education for Quality Improvement Program (I-EQUIP)

I-EQUIP was created in 2012 by Dr. Madelyn Law at Brock University in the Department of Health Sciences. I-EQUIP aims to provide experiential education opportunities for students to learn about and apply change management, quality improvement and teamwork principles to projects to enhance health services and programs.

I-EQUIP collaborated with Pathstone Mental Health on several key research initiatives:

- Youth suicide: Through this project, students work with Pathstone to evaluate and help to optimize the care pathway for youth who present at hospital for self-injury and/or suicidality so they receive timely follow-up with the most effective and appropriate outpatient mental health counselling/therapy program(s). Students work collaboratively with Pathstone Mental Health and community partners in researching developing, implementing, and measuring outcomes of a self-injury/suicide screener.
- High Risk Youth: Through this project the current Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol is reviewed to measure the effectiveness of interventions and create a

feedback loop to optimize this care pathway for high-risk youth. Student work collaboratively with Pathstone Mental Health and community partners to collect and analyze data, as well as plan and enact changes to the VTRA protocol and relevant intervention programs.

- Virtual Care: Through this project student engage with Pathstone to evaluate current practice and develop a decision guide/aid which will support a standard in opting to use a virtual or in person service pathway. The focus is to measure the impacts of the traditional method of service delivery as compared to a virtual pathway.

Faculty of Education

- Investigating Caregiver/Family Experiences of Supporting Youth with Mental Health Challenges at Pathstone Mental Health Services
 - Supported by:
 - Michael Savage, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies Program Director, Master of Education
 - Ann-Marie DiBase, Associate Professor and Educational Psychology Concentration Leader, Department of Educational Studies
 - Vera Woloshyn, Professor, Department of Education Studies, Bed Program Director, Masters Preparation Certificate in Education
 - Phase 1: Establishing a baseline for family/caregiver experiences with Pathstone Mental Health Services.
 - Phase 2: Use the data obtained in Phase 1 to develop and test a psychoeducational program for family/caregivers that is designed to lessen caregiver strain and improve satisfaction with Pathstone's services.
 - Phase 3: Integrate the Psychoeducation Program into Pathstone's treatment process. Researchers will compare its efficacy for reducing caregiver strain, increasing caregiver understanding and empathy towards their child/adolescent's mental health challenge and increasing caregiver satisfaction with Pathstone services to the data obtained at baseline in Phase 1.

Faculty of Social Sciences

- Delivery of mental health services for Ontario youth using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) in virtual reality.
 - Pathstone Mental Health, in partnership with Brock University and XpertVR, is offering CBT using a virtual reality model of delivery to children and young people with anxiety. Unlike typical modes of distance delivery, virtual reality facilitates the important social connection between therapists and clients. While virtual reality has been used to deliver CBT, it has never been used on children, young people or in Ontario.

- Investigating individual difference in children's thinking daily life using a parent questionnaire.
 - Supported by Caitlin Mahy, Associate Professor, Psychology
 - Examining the future-oriented cognitive abilities of young children with autism spectrum disorder and attentional deficit hyperactivity disorder compared to typically developing children. Five key future thinking domains will be examined (prospective memory, delay of gratification, planning, episodic foresight, and saving behaviour) to see if children with autism spectrum disorder or attentional difficulties differ from typically developing children.

- Attentional networks and cognitive emotional and sensory processing in children and youth.
 - The objective of this project is to develop an EEG and psychological measures-based intake assessment that will help predict intervention success patterns for children with attention and anxiety related concerns.
 - Collaborated with:
 - Sid Segalowitz, Professor Emeritus, Psychology and Ayda Tekok-Kilic and Erin Panda, Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Grant.
 - The impact of technology use on adolescent risk behaviours and wellbeing over time: A collaborative approach focusing on partnerships and comparisons across different research approaches
 - Collaborated with Teena Willoughby, Brock Professor of Psychology, and Linda Morrice, Clinical Manager at Pathstone.

Service

Pathstone Mental Health and Brock University supported each other through service-led initiatives to increase mental health support and research for children.

This included:

- Suzanne Curtin, Vice-Provost, Graduate Studies and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, served as a Director on Pathstone's Board of Directors.

- Brock continues to support the CHYS-Pathstone Child and Youth Mental Health and Wellness Committee that was established in 2018.

- Brock's department of Child and Youth Studies held a two-day conference in partnership with Pathstone in September 2022.
- Pathstone participated in Brock's Fall 2022 Volunteer Fair to create volunteer opportunities awareness.
- Pathstone's former Director of Mental Health Services, Bill Helmeczi participated in the Professional and Continuing Studies Community Consultation.

Student Experiential Learning

Student experiential learning provides unique opportunities for students at the university to gain real world experience as part of their studies.

In 2022, the partnership between Brock University and Pathstone Mental Health led to meaningful experiential opportunities for students including:

- Pathstone and Brock's Faculty of Social Sciences and Applied Disability Studies partnered to have a student research assistant on a project that ran from December 2021 to April 2022.
- Brock's Co-op Education program provided a Psychology student to Pathstone in the Spring/Summer 2022 term. The student supported the Clinical Therapist at Pathstone with direct and indirect client service. She attended group programming and has researched various policies as it relates to their EDI initiatives.
- Brock's Career Education had four students from January to November 2022 at Pathstone assisting with their Supervised Parenting time, Childcare Support, and Rotary House programs.