

A young person with dark hair, wearing a red and black plaid shirt, is speaking enthusiastically into a silver microphone. They are pointing forward with their right hand. In the background, a young woman with long dark hair is smiling and looking towards the speaker. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting like a school or community center.

Peer-to-peer mental health education will bolster the resilience of Canada's youth, enabling them to thrive in a post-COVID-19 environment

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Recommendations.

The Federal Government should:

1. Continue to demonstrate national and global leadership by supporting the mental health of youth to ensure they have the necessary tools, knowledge, and support to thrive in a post-COVID economy.
2. Fill a void in federal mental health funding to date by embracing the known benefits of Jack.org's globally recognized, best-practice, peer-to-peer education in the mental health space.
3. Invest \$5.5 million (over five years) into the expansion of Jack.org's upstream youth mental health education programming (includes \$500,000 of flow-through funding to collaborative partner organizations).





Canada's Youth Mental Health Crisis

Canada is experiencing a youth mental health crisis. Suicide is the leading health-related cause of death among young people, accounting for 25% of youth deaths.¹ Sadly, most young people don't receive the support they need when they are struggling with their mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this crisis. Across the country, youth mental health crisis lines have seen sharp increases in demand. Statistics Canada data indicates a decline in the number of young people aged 15-24 who perceived their mental health to be excellent or good, from 62% in 2018 to 42% during the COVID-19 pandemic.²

The youth mental health crisis in Canada is costly. The Mental Health Commission of Canada estimates the economic impact of mental illness to be well over \$50 billion annually.³ The average economic impact of suicide alone in Canada is \$593,927 per life lost.⁴ Higher rates of mental illness and mental health struggle also lead to greater absenteeism and employee turnover, private and public disability insurance costs, public income support costs, caregiver costs, and lost tax revenue. Youth with a mental health condition are also 29% less likely to enroll in post-secondary education.⁵

Given 70% of mental health issues have their onset during childhood or adolescence, early education and interventions addressing youth mental health are integral to preventing or mitigating the impacts of lifelong mental health struggle.⁶ In Ontario, 54% of youth mental health emergency department visits are by those with no prior outpatient mental health care.⁷ Given the

increase in mental health struggles amongst young people and ongoing economic uncertainty presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now more important than ever to invest in the mental health of Canada's youth.

Jack.org's nation-wide, best-practice, upstream education and awareness programs directly address this crisis by increasing the mental health literacy of young people, decreasing shame that stops them from reaching out for help, and increasing their awareness of available supports. Our programs are playing a significant part in ensuring the positive mental health of young people as they face the challenges of COVID-19 and beyond, while also helping to prevent acute crisis thus reducing the costly burden on the healthcare system. Jack.org's upstream work also complements and promotes the vital mental health work being done by organizations like [Kids Help Phone](#), [Frayme](#), [CMHA](#), and provincial Integrated Youth Services ([Foundry BC](#), [Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario](#), [Alberta Integrated Youth Services Initiative](#), etc.), many of which receive federal funding.

In order to more rapidly expand the reach, effectiveness, and impact of Jack.org's programs and foster better health outcomes for Canada's youth and economy, **we recommend that the government invest \$5.5 million in best-in-class upstream youth mental health education and programs over the next five years.**

1. [Statistics Canada \(2018\)](#)
2. [Statistics Canada \(2020\)](#)
3. [MHCC \(2017\)](#)
4. [Vasiliadis et al. \(2015\)](#)

5. [Statistics Canada \(2019\)](#)
6. [PHAC \(2006\)](#)
7. [Gill et al. \(2018\)](#)



Northern Jack Summit - Yellowknife

History

Jack.org was founded by Eric Windeler and Sandra Hanington in 2010, after they lost their son Jack to suicide. This tragedy completely shocked Jack's family and peers who had no idea he was struggling. Sadly, those around him weren't educated enough about mental health to recognize any signs of distress. Eric and Sandra started Jack.org, initially as an initiative of Kids Help Phone, to engage youth in the most critical health issue of their generation, and to ensure that they are able to identify mental health struggles in themselves and others and have access to the support they need.

Vision

We're working towards a country where every young person is comfortable talking about their mental health and has the necessary skills and education to take care of their own mental health and look out for their peers who are struggling - a country where every young person who needs help has access to the support they deserve.

Our Model

Jack.org ensures young people are at the centre of our program design and evaluation process. Our staff of 48 works with approximately 3,000 young leaders across every province and territory who volunteer to identify barriers to positive mental health and co-design strategies to dismantle them.

Programs

Through our programs:

- [Jack Talks](#)
- [Jack Chapters](#)
- [Jack Summits](#)
- [Be There](#)
- and [Do Something](#),

we deliver peer-to-peer education to ensure young people can recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health distress, understand how to support themselves and others through mental health struggle, and know where to seek help if needed. We ensure that our work is evidence-based and regularly informed and overseen by an expert [Board](#) and a diverse range of [experts](#) in advisory roles.

Equity

There is a clear intersection between mental health and issues of equity, anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion. While we've always been diligent to ensure anyone, no matter their background, felt at home in our programming, we have learned many ways we can do better. We are undergoing a programmatic review to identify gaps and further prioritize these areas, so we can continue to learn and even better represent and educate young people in an equitable manner.



COVID-19 Impact & Jack.org's Response

Across the country young people are reporting increased sadness, boredom, and anxiety.⁸ Now, more than ever, there is a need for easily accessible resources to support youth in coping with the extraordinary stressors they face. Jack.org has been sprinting to respond to the mental health needs of young people during the pandemic with the following initiatives:

- Launching a youth-facing [COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#) in partnership with Kids Help Phone and School Mental Health Ontario, which has already hosted over 50,000 unique visitors.
- Since our National Jack Summit was cancelled, transitioning to a [Virtual Jack Summit Experience](#), with 250 delegates attending virtually from every province and territory.
- Piloting [Virtual Jack Talks](#) — mental health education presentations delivered by youth speakers. The [personal](#) edition has already been initiated by 750 users, and the [classroom](#) edition has been completed by 40 groups.
- Increasing our investment in [Be There](#) and partnering with Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation to teach new communities of young people how to support each other using the resource.
- Supporting our [Jack Chapters](#) and Local [Jack Summit](#) organizers in shifting to a focus on digital mental health initiatives and convening virtual collaboration sessions.

8. [Association for Canadian Studies \(2020\)](#)



Regional Jack Summit - Vancouver

Addressing the Crisis at Scale

In our new five-year strategic plan, Jack.org has set an ambitious goal to meaningfully engage with 25% of young people in Canada annually by 2025. By reaching one in four youth, we'll help ensure that every young person has at least one person in their social circle who is able to identify when a loved one or peer is struggling, and who has the education to provide appropriate support.

Jack.org is working hard to expand both the effectiveness and reach of our programs. Using youth input, evidence-based decision making, and expert oversight, we will develop and evolve our current programs. We'll prioritize issues that clearly intersect with youth mental health, such as equity, antiracism, diversity, inclusion, substance abuse, and body image. We will deepen our investment in digital programming. This will help us engage more youth online, effectively scale our work in COVID times, and act as a great complement to our in-person programming post-COVID.

How will we do this?

We'll extend the reach of our [Jack Talks](#) program, both in-person and via Virtual Jack Talks. We'll aim to deliver peer-to-peer mental health education to over 150,000 young people annually by 2025.

We'll target new audiences for our [award-winning Be There](#) resource. This includes the implementation of a new immersive training and certification program for young people to learn Be There content. Be There will reach 900,000 young people annually by July 2025.

We'll evolve our [Jack Chapters](#) and [Jack Summits](#) programs to lower barriers to entry for new communities of young people. We'll help them focus on the changes most needed in their communities. These programs will reach 213,000 young people annually by July 2025.

We'll create an innovative, youth-facing On-Demand Digital Education Library. We'll address young people's most pressing mental health education concerns through high-quality and engaging videos. This program will reach 740,000 young people annually by July 2025.

We'll reach more youth equitably by identifying barriers across the organization (and sector). We'll partner with like-minded organizations that will help keep issues of equity, accessibility, bilingualism, inclusion, and youth voice at the forefront of our work.

Flow-through Funding

We have always valued the skills, experience, and knowledge of partner organizations. Some are small, niche organizations (e.g: [We Matter](#) serving Indigenous youth) that would benefit tremendously from funding, and that should be compensated as we work together to better serve Canada's youth. We have included \$500,000 of "flow-through" funding for the benefit of these expert organizations over the five-year period.

Budget

Expense	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	Notes
Staff Costs	\$3,522,801	\$3,681,852	\$4,877,396	\$5,825,803	\$6,717,031	Staff salaries, benefits, and professional fees
Jack Chapters	\$145,200	\$294,470	\$323,920	\$377,460	\$433,680	Jack Chapter training and initiative costs
Do Something	\$17,000	\$41,722	\$19,500	\$22,400	\$25,700	Costs of Do Something initiatives, web development and maintenance
Be There	\$660,439	\$531,100	\$728,680	\$818,870	\$1,105,503	Production of video content, digital promotion, web development and maintenance, development and promotion costs for Be There Certificate
Jack Talks	\$225,000	\$283,870	\$335,998	\$423,705	\$481,891	Virtual Jack Talks pilot and launch, web development and maintenance, in-person Talks costs
Jack Summits	\$430,862	\$740,486	\$746,283	\$812,361	\$818,752	Portion of staff costs related to in-person and Virtual Jack Summits, production and promotion of Jack Summits
On-Demand Digital Education Library	\$55,000	\$66,000	\$79,200	\$95,040	\$114,048	Production of educational content and digital promotion
Jack Projects*	\$0	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	Costs related to assisting young leaders to develop and implement Jack Projects
TOTAL	\$5,056,302	\$5,689,500	\$7,210,977	\$8,525,639	\$9,896,605	
Jack.org Funding	\$750,000	\$800,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,250,000	
Partner Funding	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$100,000	\$110,000	\$120,000	Flow-through funding to Partner Organizations
Total Federal Funding Requested	\$830,000	\$890,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,310,000	\$1,370,000	\$5,500,000

* Large scale projects led by young leaders and supported by Jack.org staff, to be launched in FY22

**Jack.org's fiscal year end is on June 30th

Outcome

Jack.org is well-positioned to play a key role in addressing the youth mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. As we work collectively to recover from the pandemic, Jack.org's programs have filled a critical role in ensuring the positive mental health of young people during this uncertain time, thus providing a solid foundation for their continued contributions to the economy. Further, expanding the effectiveness and reach of our upstream education will help to prevent increased struggle that requires acute care. This will reduce the costly burden on the health care system, all while helping save lives. With support from the government, Jack.org will continue to lead Canada's youth mental health movement and ensure that a generation of young people have the skills, knowledge, and support they need to take care of their own mental health, look out for their peers, and help transform mental health across Canada.