



Wellstream

The Canadian Centre for Innovation in Child & Youth
Mental Health & Substance Use



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Wellstream Backgrounder

What is Wellstream?

Wellstream is the new Canadian Centre for Innovation in Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use. Wellstream is where child and youth mental health and substance use research meets practice and policy for real-world impact.

At Wellstream, we identify and respond to the emergent needs of children, youth and their communities. We work with them to deliver solutions that promote positive mental health and wellbeing and minimize substance use harms. Our vision is a Canada where the conditions for wellbeing exist for all children, youth, and their communities.

Housed at the University of British Columbia, Wellstream is bilingual, and national in scope and impact. The work at Wellstream is under the leadership of Dr. Emily Jenkins, Canada Research Chair in Population Health Approaches to Mental Health and Substance Use.

Why the name Wellstream?

The name "Wellstream" – or "Bienamont" in French – reflects our upstream approach to enhancing the wellbeing of children, youth, and their communities. Current support systems and services often fall short of meeting their needs. Rather than solely focusing on clinical interventions or crisis management, Wellstream takes proactive measures to create the conditions that foster positive mental health and reduce substance use harms for children, youth, and their communities.

What is Wellstream for Schools?

Wellstream for Schools is dedicated to the mental health and substance use research and programming needs of the pan-Canadian K-12 school systems.



We recognize that teachers, school administrators, and other school-based staff are important, trusted adults in the lives of children and youth.

We work to provide education professionals with low-barrier and low-cost strategies and resources they need to do their job well.

We recognize the importance of collaborating closely with distinction-based education stakeholders and experts to develop solutions that lead to positive transformations in practice in a professionally safe way.

Who will Wellstream work with?

Wellstream is a national, bilingual centre working collaboratively with education stakeholders in every jurisdiction delivering K-12 education in Canada. We work with allies in health, academia, various orders of government, and service agencies.

Wellstream meaningfully engages with youth which enriches all aspects of our work. Our approach is always trauma-informed and age and context-appropriate.

Who will benefit from Wellstream's work?

Wellstream is focused on leading innovation in upstream approaches to strengthen the wellbeing of children, youth, and their communities.

Wellstream for Schools works to support K-12 education professionals in their substance use education and school-based intervention work.

The potential impact of this work cannot be overstated. The reach is extensive and transformational with nearly 6 million children and youth enrolled in Canadian schools and over three-quarters of a million educational professionals supporting their healthy development. If we want to get this right for *everyone*, this is the place we need to work. Every community, no matter province or territory – urban, suburban, rural, or northern – has schools. There is no other path this comprehensive for building understanding and shifting trajectories.



Why is this work needed now?

Education professionals across jurisdictions have expressed a need for clear, evidence-based guidance to inform their work. The absence of such guidance leaves them feeling overwhelmed and professionally vulnerable. Inconsistent approaches to programming at the school level have resulted in troubling inequities and ineffective outcomes. Despite youth mental health and substance use prevention being recognized as priority areas by all levels of government, progress is limited without an evidence-aligned, education practice-informed strategy. There is an urgent need for coordinated, research-driven efforts that relieve the burden on education systems and support professionals in their daily work to improve substance use outcomes for youth across settings and life stages.