

1. Presentation of the Organization

Youth 4 Youth Québec (Y4Y) is a non-partisan, province-wide network organization dedicated to supporting English-speaking youth aged 16 to 30 across Québec. As the only organization whose sole constituency is Québec's English-speaking youth within the Official Language Minority Community (OLMC), Y4Y works to strengthen youth engagement through research, civic participation, project development, and policy work. The organization also promotes dialogue and bridge-building between English- and French-speaking communities across Québec.

This brief is informed primarily by findings from *A Study for the Recognition of Youth Workers*, a research report published in December 2024 by Y4Y and *Coalition Interjeunes*.

2. Key Observations Regarding Mental Health and Youth Workers

Y4Y Québec is submitting this brief in response to growing concerns about the sustainability and mental health of youth workers serving Québec's English-speaking communities. For the purposes of this brief, "youth workers" refers to individuals of all ages who work directly with English-speaking young people between the ages of 12 and 30.

Our research identified recurring concerns surrounding burnout, emotional strain, and the long-term sustainability of the youth-serving workforce itself. As our report notes, "[Unrealistic workloads and insufficient support] create an emotional and physical toll on youth workers. Survey responses mentioned 'compassion fatigue,' 'burnout,' and 'emotional and physical labour.'"

Interviewed workers also described uncertainty surrounding the limits of their responsibilities, including "[not] knowing where your responsibility in a situation ends and lands on someone else," as well as not knowing when, how, or whom to reach out to when feeling overwhelmed.

These findings are particularly concerning in the context of growing discussions surrounding youth mental health, homelessness, and dependency. Youth workers often represent one of the earliest points of intervention for vulnerable youth, helping young people navigate crises before situations escalate further. In many communities, youth

workers act not only as service providers, but also as mentors, trusted adults, and sources of social support.

3. Issues, Challenges and Problems Observed

Many organizations serving youth continue to face significant challenges related to retention, workload, precarity, and limited organizational resources. As our report further explains, “When youth workers leave the field, it is often due to a lack of respect in terms of compensation, recognition for their time and efforts, or inadequate support for their mental and physical well-being.”

Y4Y Québec is concerned that without stronger support structures for youth workers themselves, Québec risks weakening an essential part of its preventative response to youth mental health challenges, homelessness, and dependency. A system cannot effectively support vulnerable youth if the people delivering front-line support are themselves burning out.

These concerns are particularly relevant to youth and to organizations serving Québec’s English-speaking communities, many of which operate with limited human-resource capacity and small staff teams.

4. Recommendations

Supporting youth also means supporting those who work with them every day. Y4Y Québec encourages the Government of Québec to recognize youth workers as essential preventative actors within Québec’s broader mental health and social support ecosystem.

These could include:

- The development of a professional certification pathway for youth workers, recognizing skills acquired through both formal education and lived experience, and reflecting varying levels of schooling, training, and years of experience in the field.
- Greater access to mental health and wellness resources for community-sector staff;
- More stable and sustainable funding structures for organizations working directly with vulnerable youth.

