

EPION

EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION
ONTARIO NETWORK

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020

D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 0



Table of contents

Message from the Co-Chairs	3
Resilience in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic	4
Priorities for Fiscal Year 2020-21	4
Changes in our Team	5
New Approach to General Network Meetings	6
2021-2024 EPION Strategic Plan	7
Metabolic Monitoring	9
Transitions in Care	10
Partnerships, Education, Access and Knowledge Translation PEAK	11
Standards Implementation Steering Committee SISC	12
Research Working Group	14
Peer Support Worker Community of Practice	15

Message from the Co-Chairs

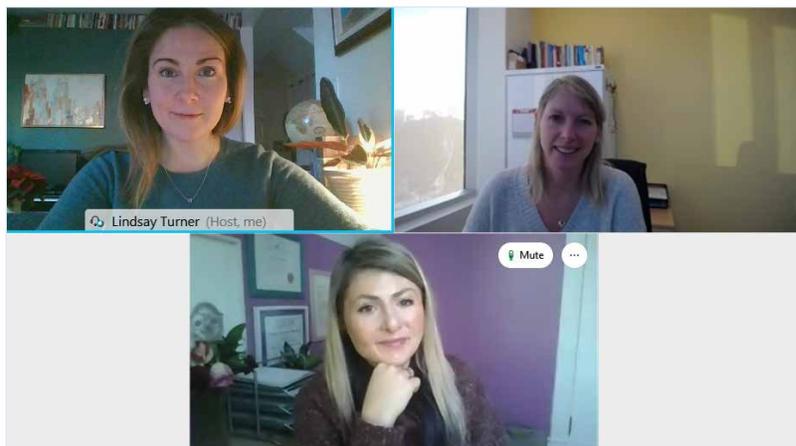
It's been a very busy and transformational period since our last annual newsletter in winter 2018. After a productive year in 2019, we were all met with some personal and professional challenges related to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This report provides a snapshot of some key accomplishments, as well as new work that we kicked off with the help of wonderful volunteer members. We continue to be recognized by the Ministry of Health and our partners for the dedication and passion of our network, and for remaining at the forefront of evidence-based, quality care for the people who we serve.

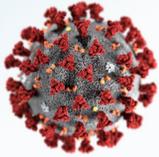
It is with great pride that we highlight that EPION continues to maintain its personal touch, even amongst it's growth and size. It is this personal touch that allows us regularly to reach out to one clinic or another with an operational question, clinical question, or even to find out the contact information of someone at another clinic. To the members of our network, this experience is one of the hallmarks of EPION, however, the way we continue to support each other on an individual and clinical level is unique and makes us distinctive within the sector.

It is with the deepest gratitude that we thank each member of our network for persisting and continuing to provide exceptional service throughout this challenging year.

We recognize that our members were not exempt from the effects of the pandemic, nevertheless, we personally witnessed the resilience and passion each day as each and every one of our members did their best, week after week. The executive team is proud to represent our network, and look forward to 2021.



*Weekly EPION Executive Videoconference, December.
Top: Lindsay Turner and Sarah Bromley. Bottom: Shannel Butt.
Missing: Matt Harrigan, Membership Chair*



Resilience in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

We are totally in awe of the amazing flexibility that members demonstrated when the pandemic turned everything upside down in March. You overcame countless technological barriers, shared challenges, success stories, and promising practices related to virtual care, and most of all: managed to participate as much—if not more—in EPION meetings and work.

We were so heartened by the commitment and can-do attitude of this network, despite the challenges stacked against it this year, including increased demands and workloads for a lot of our clinicians.

Priorities for Fiscal Year 2020-21

After leading a successful conference in fall 2019, we focused our budget for 2020 on some important projects and initiatives. You can read about them more in the sections that follow.

We focused on “getting our house in order”, developing foundational structures and business processes to support EPION’s ever-growing scope of work. For example, we identified a need to recruit for EPION roles and projects on a regular basis. We hope to share more details about that process in 2021. [If you are interested in getting involved, please do not hesitate to reach out to a member of the executive team or any one of the working group chairs.](#)

We are also pleased to say that we are working on a refreshed website which will launch in spring 2021.



I appreciate the network so much — particularly that I feel I can just reach out to anyone for a collaborative conversation to problem solve sticking points. So valuable. :)

Kim Hewitt-McVicker

Program Manager, 1st Step Program, CMHA Waterloo-Wellington

Changes in our Team

Membership Chair

2020 brought some changes in our executive team—we were sad to see some colleagues move on, but excited to welcome some new ones aboard.

Jen Bertoni was our interim EPION Membership Chair. Jen left the CMHA-Thunder Bay First Place Clinic after 15 months in the role of Recovery Supervisor/Occupational Therapist. We will miss Jen's enthusiasm for EPI work, her sharp wit, and incredible sense of humour.

In the fall, we welcomed our new interim Membership Chair, Matt Harrigan.



Matt is an OT with the 1st Step EPI team, CMHA Waterloo Wellington. Matt was an active member of EPION's Transitions in Care group, and hit the ground running in his new role, reaching out to programs and helping us make important improvements to our membership database. Matt will be covering the remainder of Maya Gupta's parental leave into 2021.

EPION Coordinator



We also bid farewell to our wonderful EPION Coordinator, Dr. Harvey Smith, who retired (sort of), and **welcomed a new Coordinator, Lindsay Turner.**

Harvey, a psychologist, joined EPION after spending 6 years with the CAMH Provincial System Support Program as a program consultant and before that other roles in CAMH, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Alberta Health Services. We will miss Harvey and his passion for EPION.

Lindsay joined us in March 2020 and took on the role full time. Lindsay joined us from the Government of Ontario. Her background is in policy development and program design and she spent 13 years working for different social and human service departments in the Ontario and Canadian governments.

New Approach to General Network Meetings

We held a total of four network meetings in 2020, with an average attendance of 31. Based on feedback from our members in January, we have developed a new approach to our General Network Meetings, which are typically 4-5 hours long.

MORNINGS

Updates from EPION working groups and details on the latest initiatives for programs.

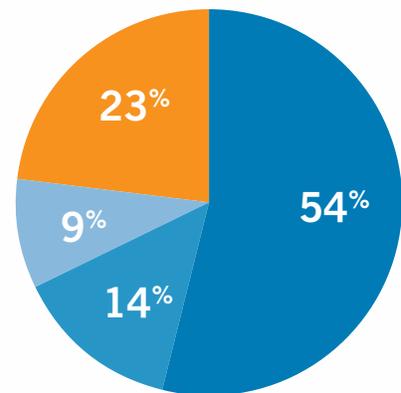
AFTERNOONS

Dedicated to in-depth frontline discussions on EPI topics that could benefit all programs.

For example, in May, we invited peer and family support staff to discuss the role that they play in EPI teams and discuss promising practices for hiring, training, development and retention.

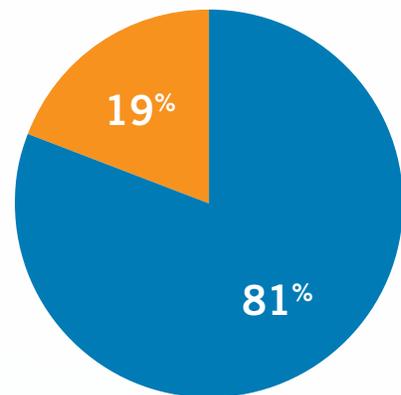
We also endeavoured to make the network meetings more accessible and engaging for additional programs and virtual participants. It seems that it was a good decision, because we were ahead of the game with the pandemic that followed. We started to use in-meeting polls to collect feedback from participants throughout the meeting. We also use the weekly e-mail digest to share key takeaways for those who are unable to attend. On the right are some examples of results from our in-meeting polls.

Does your program have a peer support worker?



- Yes
- Not currently, but we did
- Working on getting one
- No, no plans

How likely are you to join the next general network meeting (or recommend to someone else)?



- Very likely
- Likely

2021-2024 EPION Strategic Plan

We would like to sincerely thank the group of 15-20 program representatives who helped us develop a blueprint for an ambitious strategic plan for the next three years.

The strategic planning process was extensive and involved:

Research and environmental scanning

to understand what is going on in the world of EPI, including work in other jurisdictions, and government priorities for health.

6 virtual meetings:

4 meetings with program reps: 8 hours

Average group size: 19

1 discussion with a current program participant, a former program participant, and a parent.

1 meeting with all of our PSSP partners (staff and managers).

Two surveys: one to prioritize themes, and one to collect feedback on the planning process.

Many hours of behind the scenes work

to prepare for discussions and reflect on what we heard.

Five months total from initial planning and project kick-off to arriving at a plan.

The strat plan blueprint was presented to the membership at our general network meeting in November and will guide work-planning and resourcing decisions for the 2021-22 fiscal year and beyond. Look out for the report in early 2021!



The recent strat planning shows how responsive EPION is to all of its members!

Ilyas Khamis

Community Support Counsellor – Youth Mentor

Cleghorn Program, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and Chair

Peer Support Worker Community of Practice

Thank You!

And last, but definitely not least, we would like to extend our deepest and sincerest gratitude to...

- Our hard-working leadership team
Gord - Brian - Chris - Milinda - Rebecca - Ilyas - Heather
- All working group members
- Our administrative secretary, **Shiromie Muthunayagam**
- Our communications and design experts
Carole Lem - Nina Obrecht—who helped develop this report
- Our partners in **CAMH-PSSP** who provide coordination, knowledge exchange, research/evaluation and implementation support

Your time and contributions cannot really be quantified, but have made all the difference in our ability to deliver on our priorities in 2019-20.

Sarah Bromley & Shannel Butt



Transitions in Care

CO-LEADS: Brian Cooper and Milinda Alexander

Throughout 2019 and 2020, the Transitions in Care working group worked diligently to build practical tools and resources stemming from our Transitions in Care consultation report from 2018.

This summer, two task groups finalized policy and procedure templates for two domains: **Discharge Planning** and **Disengagement/Reengagement**. They helped to distill feedback from the broader working group and to determine components that could be standardized across the network and components that should be individualized at the program level.



The final templates have been designed to allow programs to tailor them based on local needs and business practices. Working with PSSP, we will support and evaluate the installation of the Policies and Procedures.

A huge thanks to the programs who have volunteered to be pilot sites so far. This will help us test and refine the policies and procedures for broader provincial implementation in the future. The pilot will get underway in early 2021.

Thank you to all of our TiC working group members and our PSSP support staff—we couldn't have done it without you!

Shannel Butt - Matt Harrigan - Michael Weyman,
Selina Buesnick - Al Cudmore - Sandy Brooks
Josette Morin - Dalete Karst-Yaacov - Rebecca Oliveira
Jennifer Jackson - Claire Kislinsky - Kayla Nicholls
Nicole Kozloff - Andrea D'Souza - Crystal Baluyut
Carrie Kelly - Tallan - Andrea D'Souza

Partnerships, Education, Access and Knowledge Translation

PEAK



Chair, Brian Cooper

Building on work in 2019 to develop a Primary Care Communication Tool, PEAK was set to present at the June Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Care Conference in Halifax.

The conference was eventually rescheduled and took place virtually in fall. The virtual presentation titled [“Increasing collaboration and conversations between Ontario’s EPI programs and primary care providers”](#) is available on the EPION website.

PEAK is also developing new resources for clients and families on medications, accessing services, urgent situations, and family guidance. One-page overviews of each topic will be made available soon to the network in English and French and hopefully more languages in the future.

In August, we held important focus groups with youth and family members on EPION’s help4psychosis.ca website. The feedback that we received is informing the website refresh—launch expected in March 2021.

The new website will be more youth friendly, while still being an important resource for EPI clinicians.

It will also include more up-to-date, detailed information about local EPI programs, so youth, their family members and caretakers can find help more easily.

PEAK is surveying existing media resources on early psychosis from around the world to share on the website.

In order to support assertive outreach with community partners working with youth, PEAK has also been developing a series of evidence based ‘Standard Presentations’ to be used as needed by early psychosis clinics across Ontario.

Thank you to everyone on the PEAK team!

Sarah Bromley - Angela Yip - Shiromie Muthunayagam
Josette Morin - Crystal Morris - Alessandra Czepit

Standards Implementation Steering Committee SISC

Chair, Gord Langill



This year, SISC is working on two large fidelity projects:

FIDELITY ASSESSMENTS

In partnership with Shannel Butt, EPION Co-Chair, and PSSP—we have officially kicked off the next round of fidelity assessments using a new “dedicated assessor” model.

The objectives and content of the fidelity assessments will be largely the same as previous rounds, but this time all assessments will be virtual and will be conducted by the same assessment team. Seven programs have signed up for assessments December through March.

FIDELITY MONITORING

SISC is also supporting a cross-sector Community of Interest (CoI) on routine fidelity monitoring. The CoI includes colleagues from other mental health and addictions sectors such as:

- ACTT
- Housing First
- Intensive Case Management
- AMHO EQIP (*Addictions and Mental Health Ontario Excellence through Quality Improvement Project*)

Together, we are exploring opportunities to build dedicated provincial infrastructure for routine fidelity monitoring and technical assistance in key sectors in the province.

In winter 2020, SISC conducted a survey QI and monitoring.

The goal of the survey was to get a sense of programs' capacity to conduct QI work and the supports that would be needed in order to collect and use QI data to support quality of care.

The response rate was lower than usual—likely due to COVID-19— and represents about half of the EPI programs in the province (25 programs). Results may not be fully representative of the whole network, but do reflect a range of regions, program sizes and caseloads, etc.

A key takeaway from the survey was that there are challenges collecting standard measures and that programs could use more support using data for QI purposes.

QI survey findings will help to inform exciting new work on measurement-based care. This latest project is just beginning to take shape as representatives from two working groups (SISC and Research) come together to look ways to synchronize outcome measurement with fidelity and QI efforts across the province. Stay tuned for more details in the new year.

Thank you to our small (but very mighty) SISC team:

Avra Selick - Janet Durbin - Sandy Brooks!

I am so glad to be a part of the EPION network. It is great to be able to collaborate across Ontario with our similar challenges and share our exciting developments. It is great teamwork and good to feel part of a larger network!

Julie Smith

Case Manager

Lynx, Peterborough

Research Working Group

Chair, Dr. Chris Bowie

Amid the pandemic, the Research Working Group developed a survey of EPI standards of care and changes in practice during COVID. The survey is being conducted on a quarterly basis in order to look at changes over time and help EPION make recommendations for supports and practice.



We had a great response to round 1 of the survey and we are hoping that clinicians will continue to participate in future rounds. All professions in EPI programs have been invited to complete the surveys.

The Working Group is also supporting several other projects, including:

The development of new “research bites”, which will summarize new research articles of interest to EPI clinicians.

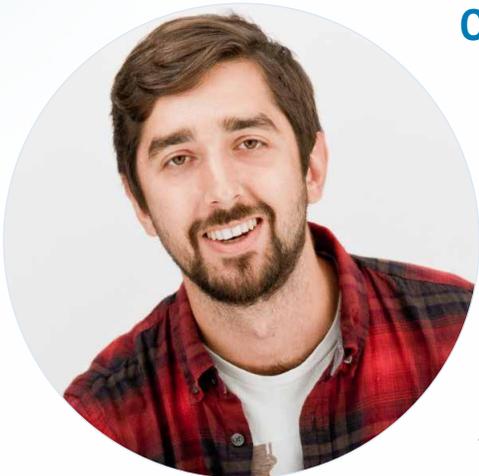
Standardized procedures for supporting research projects outside of EPION.

New work on measurement-based care, which includes representatives from both the Research and SISC groups.

A big thanks to all of the members of the group!

Sarah Bromley - Mike Best - Emily Cole - Elham Sadeh - Elmar Gardizi

Peer Support Worker Community of Practice



Chair, Ilyas Khamis

The Peer Support Community of Practice (CoP) has used 2020 to evolve and find ways to better suit the needs of its members. With a reduction in membership due to the needs of the pandemic, the CoP re-evaluated its format and purpose to provide more meaningful support to peer workers across the province.

The CoP's refresh included robust conversations about peer support at EPION's general meetings, connecting with managers of EPI programs to validate the CoP's value and that it is a priority, and finally connecting with peer workers themselves to restructure the CoP and find new ways to maintain its relevancy. The CoP had its first refreshed meeting in December 2020, and is well positioned to move forward through the coming years.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen, from peer workers to the managers to the executive team, with special thanks to [Lindsay Turner](#) for pushing the CoP forward to where it is today.



Our team values membership in EPION for the collaboration, resources, tools, and networking. Also, we value the information that is research based for families and individuals in our program

Carol Maxwell

Family Care Coordinator
First Place Program, CMHA Thunder Bay

EPI SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN 49 ONTARIO COMMUNITIES



EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION
ONTARIO NETWORK

CONNECT WITH US!



help4psychosis.ca
eenet.ca/initiatives/EPION
eenetconnect.ca/g/the-epion-group



info@epion.ca



[@help4psychosis](https://twitter.com/help4psychosis)

EPION is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The Provincial System Support Program (PSSP) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) leverages its provincial structure to support EPION's mission.