

# Facilitating the Access to English-language Mental Health Services in the Estrie Region (Quebec)

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## INTRODUCTION

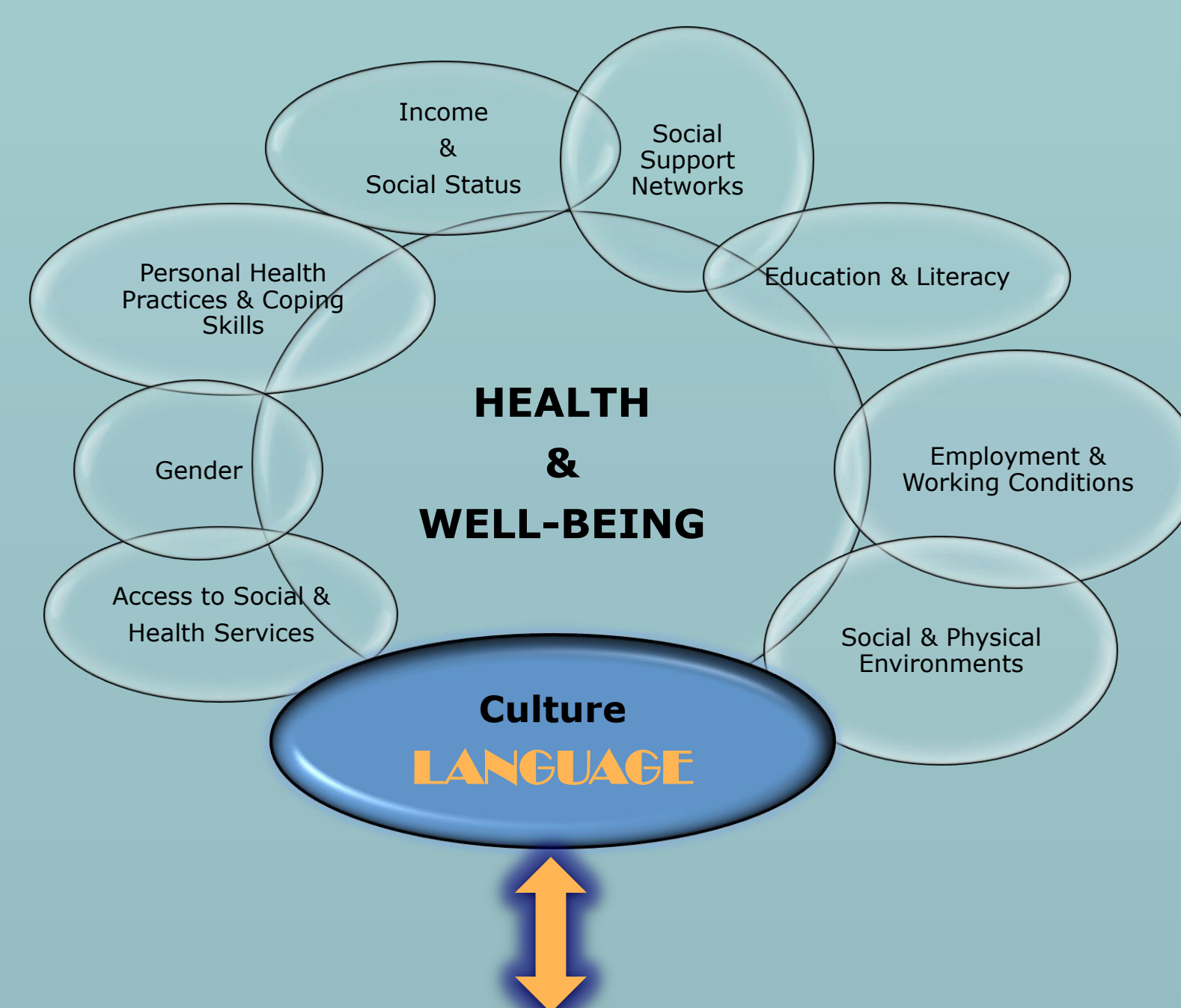
"Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." <sup>1</sup> (WHO, 2007)

- Mental illness will affect about **1 in 5** Canadians during their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>
- About 30% of people requiring help access mental health services.<sup>3</sup>
- Main reasons for unmet needs:
  - availability of services
  - accessibility
  - acceptability of available services.<sup>4</sup>

**Previous studies have revealed that, compared to the Francophone majority:** Estrie's English minority community presents certain socio-economic characteristics that place them at greater risk of developing health problems, particularly in the area of mental health:

- lower levels of education,
- lower levels of employment and income
- vulnerable status of a mostly unilingual elderly population

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE POPULATION HEALTH APPROACH



**LANGUAGE is one of culture's key characteristics**  
**Minority language status may limit Anglophones' opportunity to obtain culturally appropriate mental health services.**

**OBJECTIVE** This poster presents results from a broader project composed of three distinct phases. The aim of this initial phase was to clarify the extent of the problem regarding the availability and accessibility of English mental health services from the Anglophones' perspective.

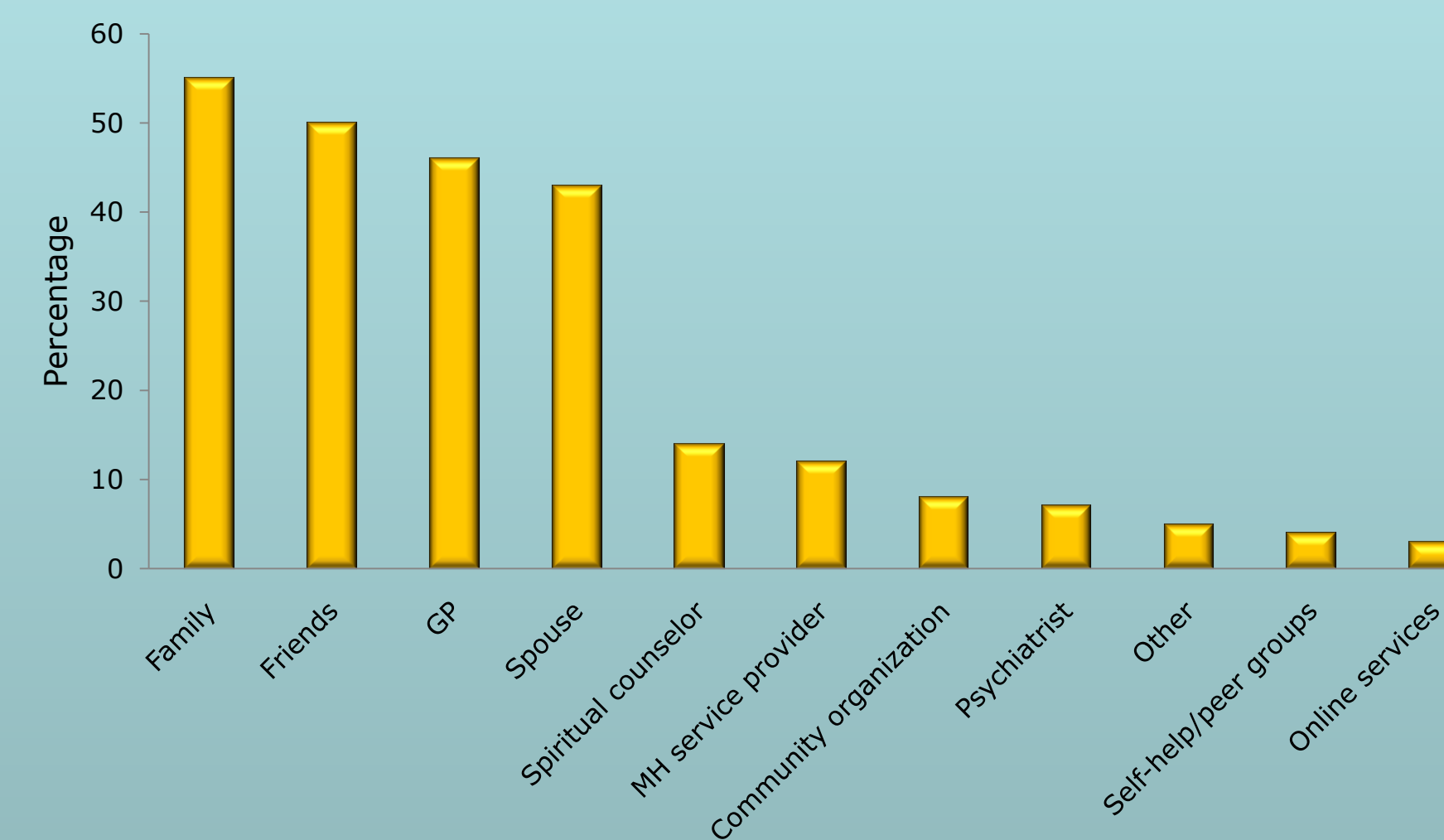
**METHODOLOGY** A mental health needs assessment questionnaire was developed, pre-tested and sent out to a stratified random sample of 1500 Anglophones living in the 7 MRCs of the Estrie region (data bank provided by the RAMQ following CAI's approval).

The questionnaire enquired about Anglophones' awareness of the availability of mental health services, their need and use of 40 different adult and youth services, and their satisfaction with services sought.

Participants' characteristics:

- 304 questionnaires returned (response rate: 20%)
- 42% men and 58% women; mean age = 58.9 (SD = 17.5)
- 59% live in a rural environment
- 67% reported an annual income of \$50 000 or less

## When looking for support and advice about mental or emotional needs, who do you turn to?



- People turn to family, friends, spouse and GP most frequently when looking for support for mental or emotional needs.
- Only 12% indicated turning to a mental health service provider, such as a psychologist.

## If family and friends are the initial front line, then:

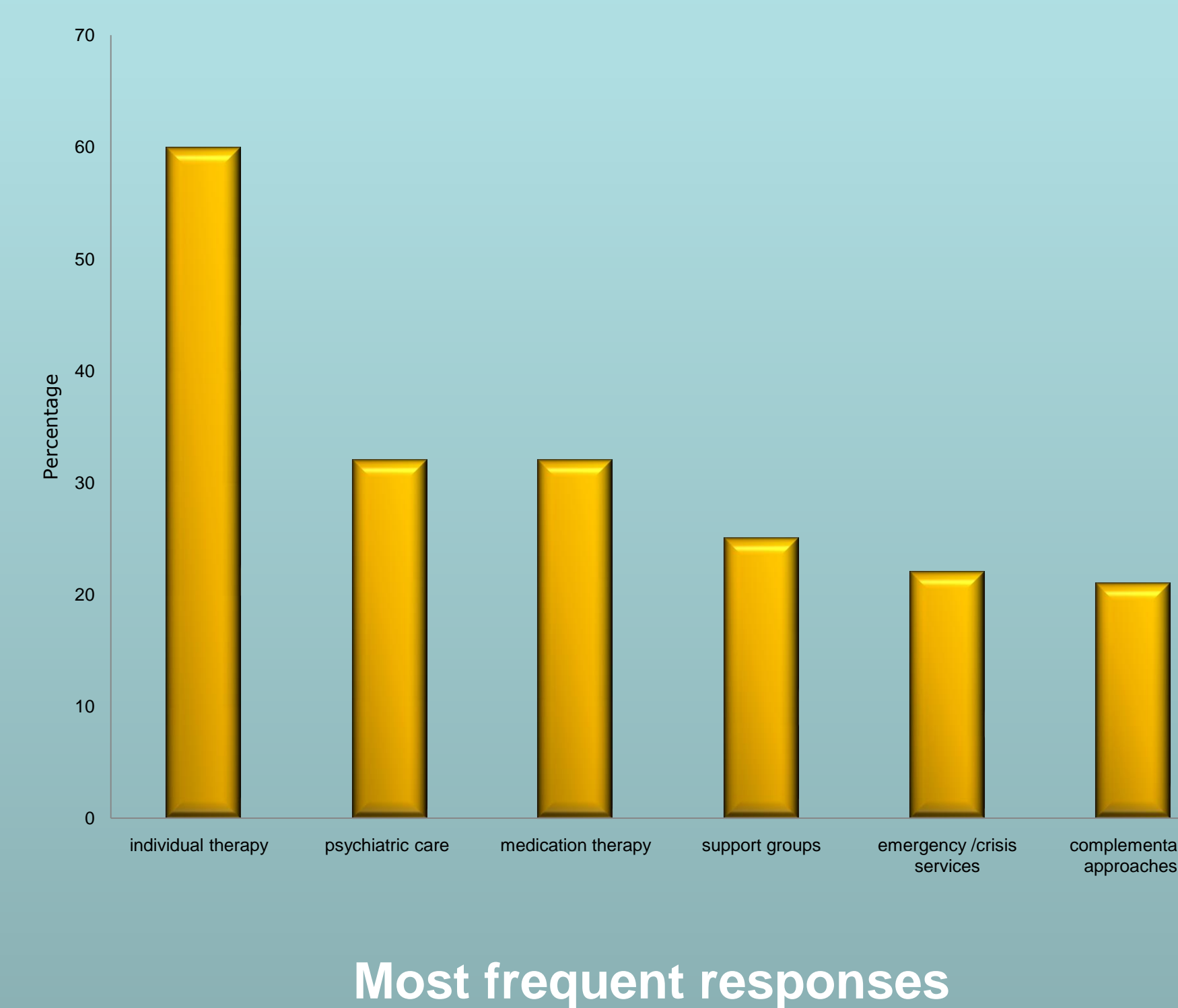
- public education on mental health issues MUST be a top priority;
- from a community health perspective, resources MUST be found to support families.

## When mental health services are needed, where do we look for English services?

- When asked if English mental health services were well advertised in their region, **90% expressed mild to strong disagreement with this statement** (N=220).
- The lack of advertising may act as an initial barrier to obtaining needed English services, and therefore negatively impact individuals' personal, social and economic well-being.

"I would like to have all services available in English much more advertised. I have friends who have required services and they have had a difficult time to find the help they require."

## What type of services did you attempt to access?



## From the 302 people who returned the questionnaire...

- 45% of respondents stated that they **would like**, or would have previously liked to use, a mental health service (N = 136, mean age 53)
- 37% reported having **needed** at least one mental health service in the past four years (N = 111, mean age 52).
- 25% of the respondents attempted **to obtain** at least one service (N=76, mean age 51).
  - When unavailable in English, 61% did not attempt to receive the service in French.
- 20% actually **received** at least one service in English (N = 60, mean age 49).
- To the statement "I find it easy to communicate in French" nearly 50% of the participants expressed mild to strong disagreement. (N = 151)
- To the statement "I am comfortable expressing my thoughts and feelings in French" 62% expressed mild to strong disagreement. (N = 187).

"Too often we are told services are available in English, but when we try to access them, they are not available."

"I can rarely receive any services in English. I speak very good French and cannot imagine what only Anglophones do to manage."

Availability and accessibility to quality English mental health services is a challenge the Estrie Anglophone community is facing.

## SOLUTIONS??

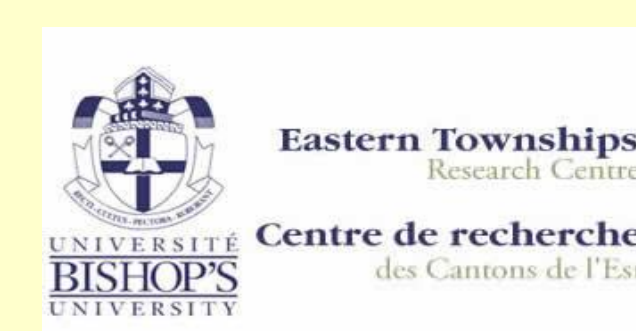
According to the Population Health Approach, solutions to enhance the availability, accessibility and quality of mental health services for the Estrie Anglophone community MUST act directly on the interwoven social determinants of the noted inequalities in this area.

## We plan to engage participants and community members as partners. Already, through the survey, respondents have identified different solutions:

- An 800 referral service
- A directory of English mental health services (paper and internet)
- More advertising in rural areas
- More bilingual staff

Living in a rural area I can not tell you what our CLSC offers in English because we never see anything posted anywhere in English.

A general telephone number (answered by an English speaking individual) 24/7 who can provide ACCURATE information as to where to call/go/contact for specific services in English.



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## References

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