

# Youth employment and health



## The Issue

- Employment and health are strongly linked.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment is associated with adverse wellbeing for individuals, as well as social, health, and economic costs to society.<sup>2</sup> However, steady attachment to paid work is a strong protective factor in avoiding low-income, while contributing to a range of positive health benefits.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Although 22% of Algoma's youth aged 15 to 24 years are unemployed (17.6% in Ontario)<sup>3</sup>, increased youth employment opportunities can help youth establish healthier life pathways, and lower their risk of poor health outcomes.
- Adolescent pregnancies and accidental overdoses are serious issues affecting Algoma's youth.<sup>3,4</sup> Interventions that go beyond traditional health care and treatment, such as completion of education and employment opportunities, are examples of preventative strategies that help create positive outcomes for youth.



## Return on Investment

- Investing in local programs that focus on job-based training can increase youth employment<sup>2</sup>, which provides a net benefit to communities as more youth enter the workforce, contributing to economic growth and decreased youth outmigration.
- Youth civic engagement helps elected officials make decisions that benefit all residents, addresses succession planning, and requires minimal funding; therefore contributing to a significant return on investment for communities.<sup>5</sup>
- More youth in the workforce can bring generational return on investment.
  - Parents who are employed are more protected from low-income<sup>1</sup>, which helps protect the next generation of children and contributes to breaking the cycle of poverty.
- Public policies that address mental health and addictions can help improve population health outcomes (e.g., illness, death, and disease), create a culture free of stigma, and ultimately reduce costs absorbed by municipalities, such as emergency medical services, fire services, and law enforcement.
- Investing in personal development and completion of education for adolescents is effective in preventing adolescent pregnancies.
  - Cost-savings may include averted health costs and productivity costs associated with employment.<sup>6</sup>



## Policy options for Municipal Governments

- Partner with local agencies to provide a range of multi-component **interventions aimed at increasing youth employment.**<sup>2</sup>
  - E.g., classroom and job-based training, internships, work experience, job placements.
- Develop and strengthen **youth councils/committees** in municipalities, using a youth engagement framework that addresses: physical and social environment, youth-adult partnerships, meaningful opportunities, positive youth outcomes, and community partnerships.<sup>7</sup>
  - Consider opportunities to include youth representation on council.<sup>5</sup>
- Address youth mental health issues with **system-level interventions** (i.e., public policies), while incorporating organizational, family, and individual-level interventions.<sup>8</sup>
  - Health programs for adolescents are most successful when supported by community leaders and decision-makers.<sup>8,9</sup> System-level changes are linked with better treatment retention among youth suffering from mental health issues, compared to person-specific strategies.<sup>8</sup>
- Support (financially or nominally) **community-based programs** that are grounded in strong research evidence to achieve positive outcomes.
  - Programs that focus on both families and communities are most effective in preventing adolescent pregnancies.<sup>6</sup>

Interested in building a healthy community? Contact Algoma Public Health at 705-942-4646 ext. 3066 or [info@algomapublichealth.com](mailto:info@algomapublichealth.com)

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