

# How to Plan a Youth Summit

## Where to Start

If you are looking to plan your own Youth Summit or mental health event, you have come to the right place! On this page, you will find information and resources to help guide you in the initial stages of your planning process. For a more detailed guide on youth summit event planning, check out the [Mental Health Commission of Canada \(MHCC\) Headstrong Anti-Stigma Summit Planning toolkit](#).

## Checklist

Here is a checklist to help guide the planning of your event. While not all of the items listed will be necessary for your specific event, the checklist can be a useful tool to keep in mind as you begin the planning process.

- Planning committee
- Event date
- Venue
- Budget
- Theme
- Agenda
- Speakers
- MC (Master of Ceremonies/Emcee/Host)
- Supportive listeners
- Local resources (community counselling, youth services, Indigenous friendship centres, etc.)
- Breakout sessions
- Food and beverage
- Audio/visual equipment (screen, projectors, speakers, etc.)
- Post-summit action plan

## Planning Committee

Forming a Planning Committee is an incredibly important first step in planning your own Youth Summit or mental health event. Planning an event takes a lot of time and effort, and having a group of passionate individuals helps to manage the workload. Planning committees also bring together people with varying skill sets and expertise.

The most successful planning committees have individuals representing the various stakeholders that make up our school communities: students, teachers, counsellors, school administrators, community members, local resources, etc. Every stakeholder group in your school community brings a valuable perspective to the table, making it important to have as many as possible represented on your planning committee.

Simply put, your planning committee will work together to make the event happen. The responsibilities of the planning committee often include:

- developing a budget
- choosing and booking a venue
- identifying a theme and creating an agenda for the day
- booking guest speakers, etc. (see the event checklist above).

Weekly or bi-weekly meetings of the planning committee can be used to finalize and discuss the important items on that list. Forming a planning committee is an important and necessary step in planning your own event, and also a great place to get started!

## Theme

Choosing a theme for the event helps guide the planning process, agenda, and speakers you have at your event. It helps to give the event focus and direction. For these reasons, deciding on a theme for your event is a great early task for your planning committee to take on. Look at past event themes to help inspire you. Some themes that have been used in previous events are: *Building a Mindful Community*, *Tools for Youth Wellness*, *Everyday Champions of Wellness*, and *Connecting for Wellness*, *Stomping Out Stigma*, *Step Into Change*, and *Creating Agents of Change*.



## **Agenda**

An agenda is a schedule of everything that occurs on the day of the event, and something you would commonly share with your attendees so they are aware of where they need to be and when. The agenda would list when registration begins, speakers, panels, breaks, lunch, breakout sessions, and everything in-between. One of the most important tasks for the planning committee is putting together and implementing the agenda. This means booking speakers and MC's, organizing breakout sessions, and deciding what to do for food and breaks.

[The MHCC Headstrong Summit Planning toolkit](#) provides sample agendas to get you started. These are great examples of what an agenda could look like for a summit event. The sample agendas can be found in the appendix of the Anti-Stigma Summit Planning tool-kit.

## **Budget**

Outlining a budget is another important first step in planning your event. Budgets can vary one event to another, and a lot of this has to do with what's available to you in your community. This could be "time in kind" donated by planning committee members and community resource organizations; a community venue made available to host the event; or food and beverage supplied by a local business. Regardless of what your budget looks like, there likely will be costs involved in planning your event. Outlining your budget when you start planning is important for figuring out what you might need, and what is possible for your event.

## **School and Community Support**

Planning a mental health summit is a large undertaking, and support from your school and community can help to make the event happen. Getting the support needed requires showing why a mental health summit is an important and impactful way to change how we discuss and experience mental health as a school community, and a worthwhile investment for those involved. Luckily, we have a few tips to help.

Start by booking a meeting with the individuals you are looking for support from. Next step: come to the meeting prepared. Be sure you can explain why these events can be impactful for youth and specific points as to how you can make the event a success. Bring a sample budget, event check-list, theme, and list of planning committee members to the meeting. The more keen and prepared you are to plan this event, the more likely people will be to support the idea.