

## Advocacy Notes for BC School Counselling

- BC Students with behaviour or mental health disabilities are far less likely to graduate on time than any other group. The regular graduation rate in B.C. is 86%. Students who have significant hearing loss or visual impairment have a graduation rate of 66%; students with behaviour or mental disabilities have only a 26% chance of graduating on time. (*BC Ministry of Education 6 Year Dogwood Completion Rate 2007*)
- As many as 1 in 5 children and youth under the age of 19 suffers from a childhood psychiatric disorder. (*Ontario Child Health Study*)
- Mental health problems, including serious mental illness, are more likely to emerge between the ages of 15-24 than at any other stage of life. 75% of mental illnesses first occur in people aged 15-24. (*Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1993*)
- Identifying youth at risk and intervening as early as possible improves their life trajectories, their productivity as Canadians and reduces the prevalence of mental health problems in adulthood. (*Mental Health Committee of Canada*)
- 75% of children and youth with mental health disorders do not obtain the specialized treatment they need. (*Children's Mental Health Ontario 2010*)
- Timely access to children's mental health services is often critical for ensuring the best possible outcomes. Youth respond well to treatment because they adapt readily and symptoms are not yet entrenched. (*Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2009*)

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-19 year olds (24% of all deaths; leading cause is accidents). (*Canada Yearbook, 1999; Statistics Canada*)
- Youth will approach school staff before doctors for help. Teens who have attempted suicide take teachers and counsellors into their confidence before other professionals. (*Kutcher et al, 1996*)
- Addressing treatment, planning, counselling and assessment within the school, by trusted and consistent staff, offered universally throughout the school, removes the stigma that is a major barrier to youth accessing mental health assessment and intervention. (*Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2010*)
- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2005) asserts that it is the right of the child to have education directed toward “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (p. 15)