

## **COVID-19 existing resource response #13**

(Last updated: 25 November 2021)

### **Question**

What are acceptable, effective approaches to organizing and delivering mental health and addictions services to adults virtually (including synchronous modalities such as phone and video, and asynchronous modalities such as email and secure messaging) by registered health professionals (e.g., physicians, psychotherapists, social workers, nurses)?

### **What we found**

We searched the COVID-END global and domestic inventories of best evidence syntheses to identify evidence documents focused on mental health and addictions services delivered virtually by registered health professionals. The search terms used were: (“mental health” OR “mental health care” OR “behavi?r” OR “addiction\*”) AND (“delivery” OR “organi?e”) AND (“virtual” or “telehealth” or “telemedicine”). In addition, given that the question is not specific to COVID-19, we search Health Systems Evidence using the open search terms of virtual OR video OR phone OR email OR "secure message" combined with topic filters under delivery arrangements for “other ICT that support individuals who provide care” and “ICT that support individuals who receive care”. We also contacted 40+ Canadian evidence-synthesis teams by email.

We identified 50 evidence documents that provide insights about the question (listed in Table 1), which include:

- one living review;
- 21 full systematic reviews;
- 17 rapid reviews;
- seven protocols for systematic reviews;
- one single study; and
- three other types of documents (a journal report and two reports from Canadian Institutes of Health Research).

### **Box 1: Our approach**

COVID-END in Canada responds to requests for evidence syntheses about topics related to COVID-19 that are likely to be explicitly considered by high-level decision-makers in multiple Canadian jurisdictions. This includes conducting rapid evidence profiles, living evidence profiles, rapid syntheses and living evidence syntheses. Examples of these evidence products can be viewed [here](#).

Sometimes requests are submitted about questions that have already been addressed by one or more recently updated, high-quality evidence syntheses or will be addressed soon by work underway (e.g., through a rapid synthesis underway with or being planned by a Canadian team, registered synthesis protocol or CIHR funding to conduct a synthesis). Other times all the requestor needs is a list of available evidence syntheses undertaken by COVID-END in Canada partners or COVID-END global partners. In these situations, we prepare a response that profiles these existing resources. These responses are typically prepared by a combination of: 1) searching both the COVID-END domestic inventory and the COVID-END global inventory; and 2) contacting 40+ Canada evidence-synthesis teams to identify any additional resources or work underway that is relevant to the question posed in a request. Such an existing resource response is equivalent to a rapid evidence profile prepared with the same turn-around time.

We followed this approach to prepare this existing resource response, which was prepared in one business day (and hence the equivalent to a one-day rapid evidence profile) to inform next steps in evidence synthesis, guideline development and/or decision-making related to the question that was posed.

**Table 1: Hyperlinked titles to evidence documents with insights about mental health and addictions services delivered virtually by registered health professionals**

Evidence type	Evidence documents identified
<b>Guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None identified</li> </ul>
<b>Living reviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Effects of COVID-19 mental health interventions among community-based children, adolescents, and adults: A living systematic review of randomised controlled trials</a> (AMSTAR rating 8/10; literature last searched 22 March 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Full systematic reviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Systematic review on the mental health and treatment impacts of COVID-19 on neurocognitive disorders</a> (no AMSTAR rating available; literature last searched December 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Interventions to mitigate COVID-19 related mental health risks for those with pre-existing chronic health conditions: A knowledge synthesis based on the English and Chinese language literature</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/9; literature last searched 17 October 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Interventions to address mental health issues in healthcare workers during infectious disease outbreaks: A systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 7/10; literature last searched 2 October 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Digital health interventions for the prevention, detection and management of mental health problems in people with chronic diseases in times of COVID-19: An overview</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/11; literature last searched 11 June 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Interventions to optimise mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic: A scoping review</a> (no AMSTAR rating available; literature last searched 10 June 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: A systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/10; literature last searched 29 May 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Adapting practice in mental healthcare settings during the COVID-19 pandemic and other contagions: Systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/10; literature last searched 30 April 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Mental health planning at a very early stage of the COVID-19 crisis: A systematic review of online international strategies and recommendations</a> (AMSTAR rating 4/10; literature last searched 14 April 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Real time video counselling for smoking cessation</a> (AMSTAR rating 9/10; literature last searched 13 August 2019)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The use of technology for mental healthcare delivery among older adults with depressive symptoms: A systematic literature review</a> (AMSTAR rating 5/10; literature last searched 26 September 2017)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The use of mobile apps and SMS messaging as physical and mental health interventions: Systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/9; literature last searched January 2017)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Application and effectiveness of telehealth to support severe mental illness management: Systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 7/10; literature last searched March 2016)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Psychotherapeutic applications of mobile phone-based technologies: A systematic review of current research and trends</a> (AMSTAR rating 5/10; literature last searched January 2016)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Acceptability of interventions delivered online and through mobile phones for people who experience severe mental health problems: A systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 5/9; literature last searched April 2015)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Establishing and governing e-mental health care in Australia: A systematic review of challenges and a call for policy-focused research</a> (AMSTAR rating 7/9; literature last searched February 2015)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The use of phone technology in outpatient populations: A systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 5/9; literature last searched November 2014)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Can mobile phone apps influence people's health behaviour change? An evidence review</a> (AMSTAR rating 2/10; literature last searched 1 June 2015)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Fundamentals for future mobile-health (mHealth): A systematic review of mobile phone and web-based text messaging in mental health</a> (AMSTAR rating 4/10; literature last searched 25 May 2015)</li> </ul>

Evidence type	Evidence documents identified
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of computer and other electronic aids for smoking cessation: A systematic review and network meta-analysis</a> (AMSTAR rating 10/11; literature last searched December 2009)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Effectiveness and impact of networked communication interventions in young people with mental health conditions: A systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/10; literature last searched 2009)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Computer-aided psychotherapy for anxiety disorders: A meta-analytic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 7/11; literature last searched 2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Rapid reviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policies to improve the mental health of people influenced by COVID-19 in China: A scoping review</a> (AMSTAR rating 7/9; literature last searched 29 October 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Supporting children and adolescents' mental health in the context of pandemic and confinement: A scoping review of repercussions, interventions and ethical challenges</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/9; literature last searched 1 September 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Tele-mental health services: A rapid umbrella review of pre-COVID-19 literature</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/10; literature last searched 26 August 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Needs and gaps for e-mental health care among at-risk populations in the Asia Pacific in the context of COVID-19: A rapid scoping review</a> (AMSTAR rating 3/9; literature last searched 1 July 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Digital interventions to support population mental health during COVID-19: A knowledge synthesis</a> (no AMSTAR rating available; literature last searched June 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Rapid evidence and gap map of virtual care solutions for youth and families to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pain, mental health, and substance use</a> (AMSTAR rating 5/9; literature last searched 18 June 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Needs, gaps and opportunities for standard and e-mental health care among at-risk populations in the Asia Pacific in the context of COVID-19: A rapid scoping review</a> (AMSTAR rating 4/9; literature last searched 12 June 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on mental health of children and adolescents: A narrative review with recommendations</a> (AMSTAR rating 4/9; literature last searched 1 June 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">A rapid review of home-based activities that can promote mental wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic</a> (AMSTAR rating 6/10; literature last searched 28 May 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Remote cognitive assessment in severe mental illness: A scoping review</a> (AMSTAR rating 5/9; literature last searched 11 May 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Telepsychiatry and the role of artificial intelligence in mental health in post-COVID-19 India: A scoping review on opportunities</a> (AMSTAR rating 4/9; literature last searched 1 May 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessing the effectiveness of virtual care for adults with mental health and/or addictions issues</a> (no AMSTAR rating available; literature last searched April 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Mental health services for infectious disease outbreaks including COVID-19: A rapid systematic review</a> (AMSTAR rating 7/10; literature last searched 15 April 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Evidence synthesis of digital interventions to mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public mental health: A rapid meta-review</a> (AMSTAR rating 4/9; literature last searched 1 April 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Harnessing digital mental health to improve equity in mental health care in the context of COVID-19: Needs, best-practices and opportunities in the Asia Pacific region</a> (AMSTAR rating 2/9; literature last searched 30 March 2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Digital interventions to support population mental health in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic: Rapid review</a> (AMSTAR rating 3/9; literature last search date not available)</li> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 et les effets du contexte de la pandémie sur la santé mentale et mesures à mettre en place pour contrer ces effets</a> (AMSTAR rating 2/9; literature last search date not available)</li> </ul>
<b>Protocols for reviews*</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Mental health interventions for healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic - A systematic review of the literature</a> (anticipated completion date: 30 April 2021)</li> </ul>

Evidence type	Evidence documents identified
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">A systematic review of the impact of tele-psychiatry interventions during COVID-19 on mental health outcomes</a> (anticipated completion date: 1 April 2021)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Effectiveness of psychological online interventions on mental health during COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review</a> (anticipated completion date: 31 March 2021)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Remote delivery of mental health services: A rapid review of COVID-19 specific literature with recommendations for clinical practice and research</a> (anticipated completion date: 20 February 2021)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The impact of eHealth group interventions on the mental, behavioral, and physical health of adults: A systematic review protocol</a> (anticipated completion date not stated)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Interventions to foster mental health, psychosocial support, resilience and/or stress management in patients with COVID-19 and patients with mental disorders in face of the COVID-19 pandemic – Protocol for a living systematic review (part of German Evidence Ecosystem CEOsys)</a> (anticipated completion date not stated)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of medical staff considering the interplay of pandemic burden and psychosocial resources – A rapid systematic review</a> (anticipated completion date not stated)</li> </ul>
<b>Titles/questions for reviews that are being planned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None identified</li> </ul>
<b>Single studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Delivering mental health care virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic: Qualitative evaluation of provider experiences in a scaled context</a> (published 21 September 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Other types of documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Niikaniganaw (All my relations) Ii – the COVID-19 rapid response: Indigenous approaches to synthesizing knowledge for culturally-safe and stigma free mental health care for underserved Indigenous communities in Ottawa-Gatineau</a> (Report from CIHR; published 22 January 2021)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Promising practices in accessing virtual mental health: Supporting refugees during COVID-19</a> (Report from CIHR; published 20 August 2021)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Population mental health apps (MH Apps) as a complement to telepsychotherapy: Guidelines for consideration</a> (Report from <i>Journal of Psychotherapy Integration</i>; published June 2020)</li> </ul>

\*Given how old most of the protocols are, we checked for full reviews but did not identify any completed reviews for them. As a result, we included the protocols older than December 2020 in case reviews based on them will become available soon.

Al-Khateeb S, Bain T, Bhuiya A, Mansilla C, Lavis JN, Wilson MG. COVID-END in Canada existing resource response #13: What are acceptable, effective approaches to organizing and delivering mental health and addictions services to adults virtually by registered health professionals? Hamilton: McMaster Health Forum, COVID-END in Canada, 25 November 2021.

The COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making (COVID-END) is supported by an investment from the Government of Canada through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). To help Canadian decision-makers as they respond to unprecedented challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, COVID-END in Canada is preparing rapid evidence responses like this one. The opinions, results, and conclusions are those of the evidence-synthesis team that prepared the rapid response, and are independent of the Government of Canada and CIHR. No endorsement by the Government of Canada or CIHR is intended or should be inferred.



**>>Contact us**

c/o McMaster Health Forum  
1280 Main St. West, M5M 4L7  
Hamilton, ON, Canada L8S 4L6  
+1.905.525.9140 x 22121  
forum@mcmaster.ca

**>> Find and follow us**

COVID-END.org  
@COVID\_E\_N\_D