



**Alberta Health  
Services**

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**Alberta Health  
Services**

**Knowledge Bites Lunch 'n' Learn**

**May 29, 2024**

# Evaluation of the Alberta Health Services Community Helpers Program

May 2024

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# Acknowledgments

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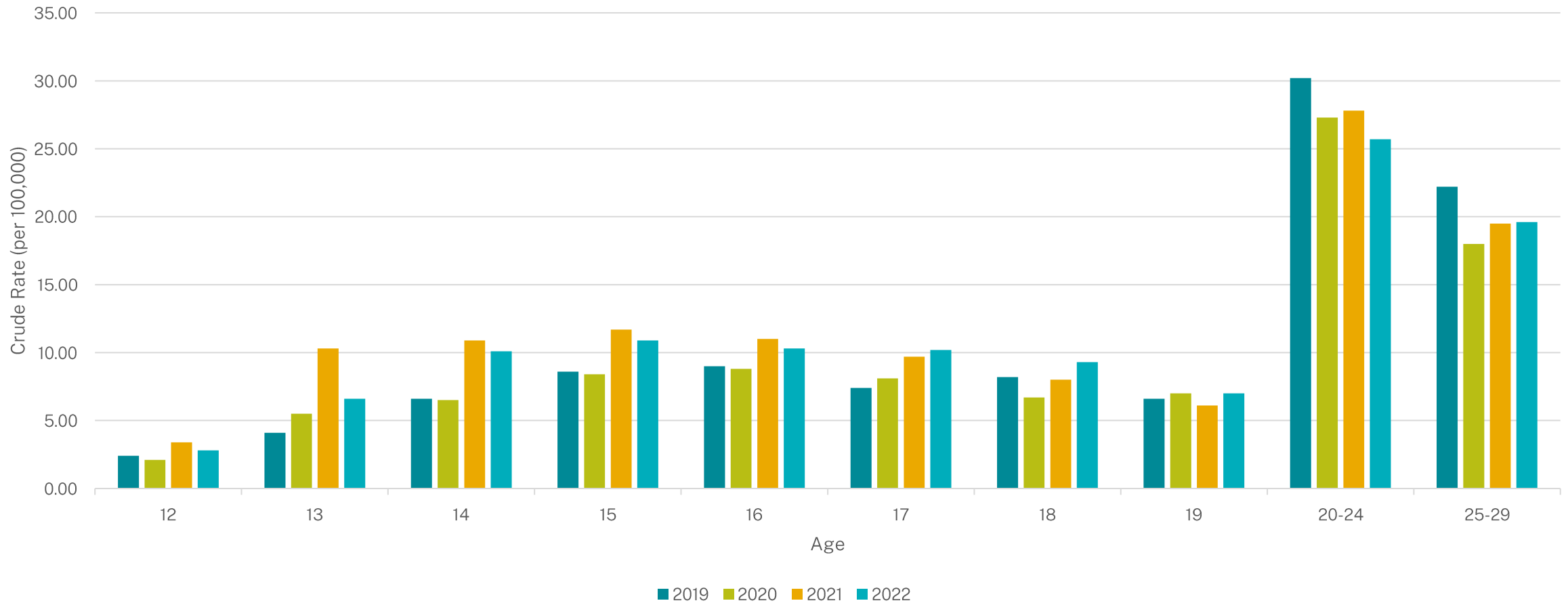
# Community Helpers Program (CHP)

# What is the CHP?

- Peer to peer helping program
- Builds a bridge between informal and formal support
- A catalyst for community capacity building
- Leverages existing community assets
- Identifies those who are already helping informally and gives them the proper skills and information to continue helping.

# Why is this work important?

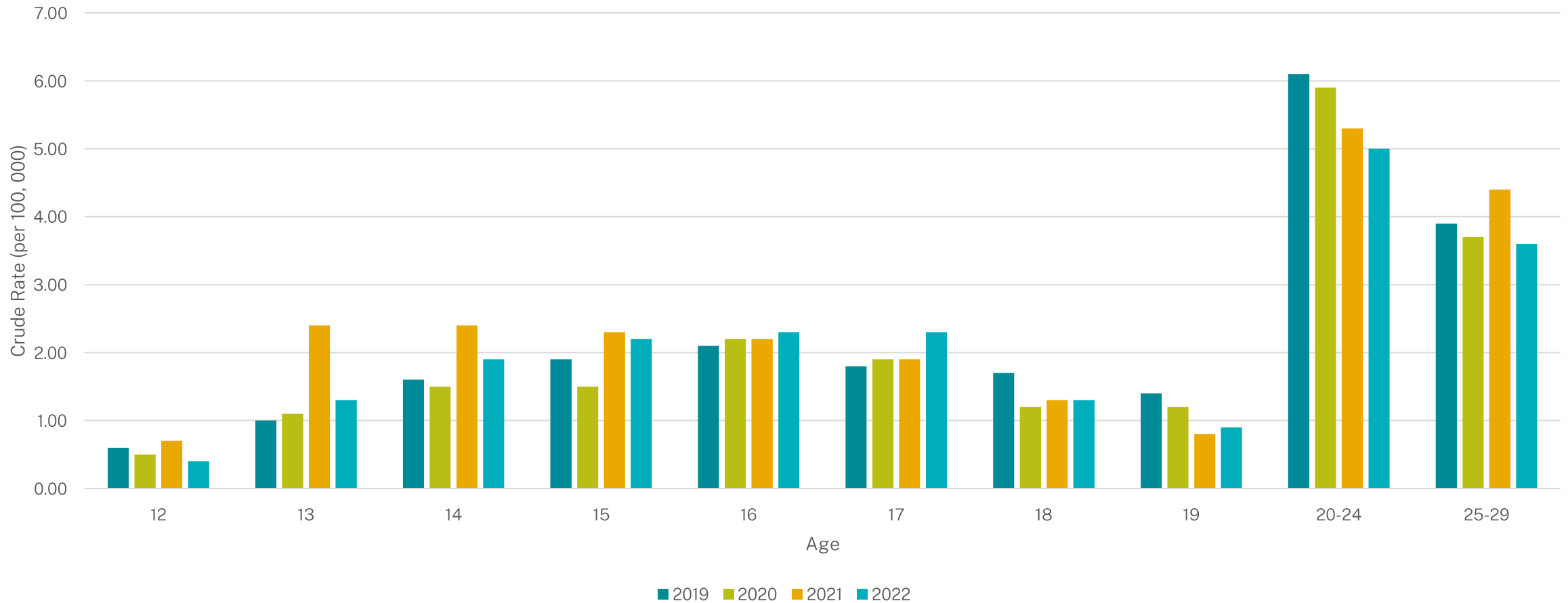
Emergency/Urgent Care Visits related to Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries in Alberta for all ages.





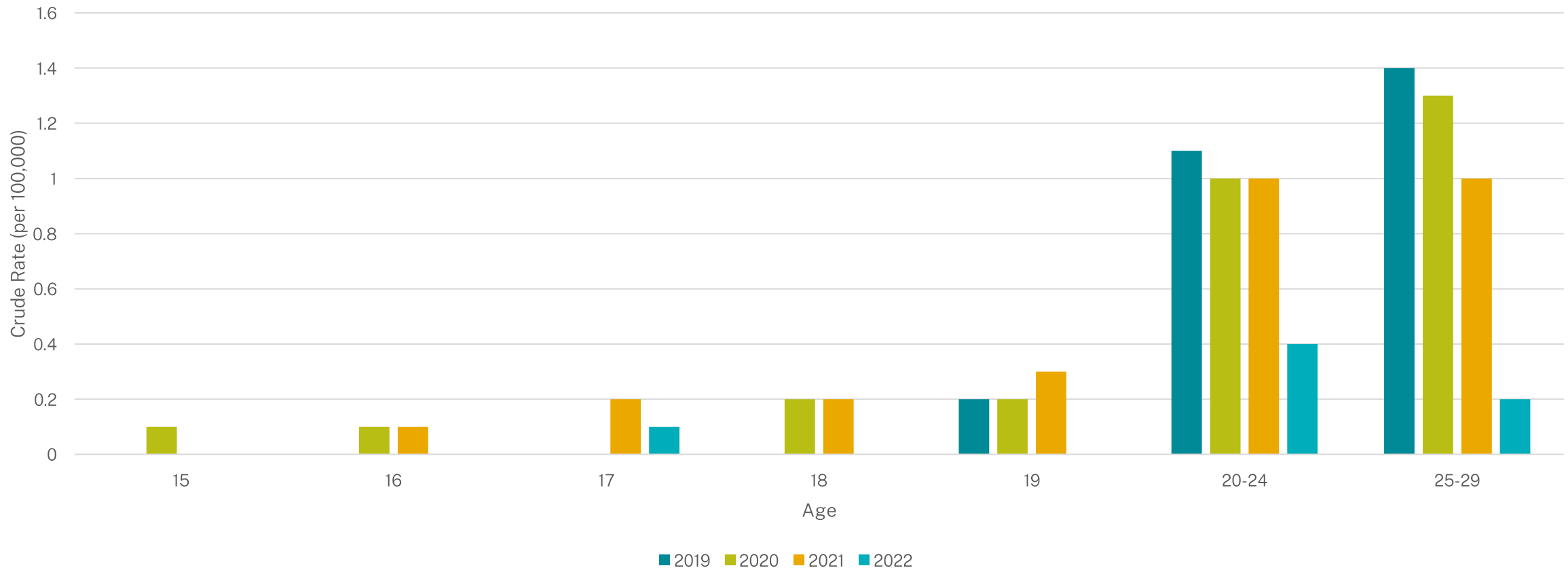
# Why is this work important?

Hospitalizations Related to Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries in Alberta for all ages.



# Why is this work important?

Mortality Related to Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries in Alberta for all ages.



Note: the cause of death coding in the mortality data for 2020, 2021, 2022 is incomplete. As a result, the data presented is preliminary and may undergo revisions.

# CHP in Alberta

- Began in 2008
- Funded and supported through AHS Provincial Injury Prevention
- 20 operational funded sites
- 11 unfunded sites

# Objectives of CHP

- Enhance mental health and well-being among Alberta's youth and young adults
- Enhance community capacity to develop and implement evidence-based programs that reduce the risk of suicide
- Increase help seeking behaviour in youth and young adults across Alberta
- Improve access to intervention and treatment for those at risk of suicide in Alberta
- Reduce stigma associated with mental health and help seeking

# Who is a Community Helper

A person identified by youth as someone they turn to for help and guidance

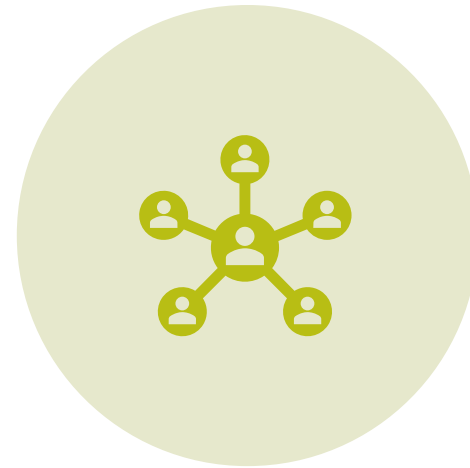
Anyone aged 12-30 or adults who are involved in the lives of youth and young adults

Friends, coaches, neighbors, teachers, spiritual leaders, etc

# Engaging with the community



TRAINING INTEGRATES LOCAL AGENCIES  
AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS



HELPS TO BUILD CONNECTIONS BETWEEN  
COMMUNITY HELPERS AND COMMUNITY  
SERVICES

# CHP Training Modules

## 9 core modules:

- Ethics, assumptions and supports
- Setting the stage for helping
- Helping as a process
- You can help yourself too
- Boundaries
- How to respond in a crisis
- Mental health awareness
- Understanding suicide
- Stress and coping

# Evaluation



# Purpose

Measure

CH knowledge, self-efficacy & awareness of stigma

Learn

how to improve CHP

Assess

experiences and outcomes

# Methods

- CHP training sessions: Sept 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020
- 20 organizations
- ~ 2,000 participants

# Methods

Method	Participant description	Number of participants
Surveys	Trained community helpers (3 time points)	T0: 674 T1: 589 T2: 190
1:1 and group interviews	Program coordinators, community helpers, AHS staff, community collaborators	55
Focus groups	Program coordinators	21

# Limitations



Low response rate

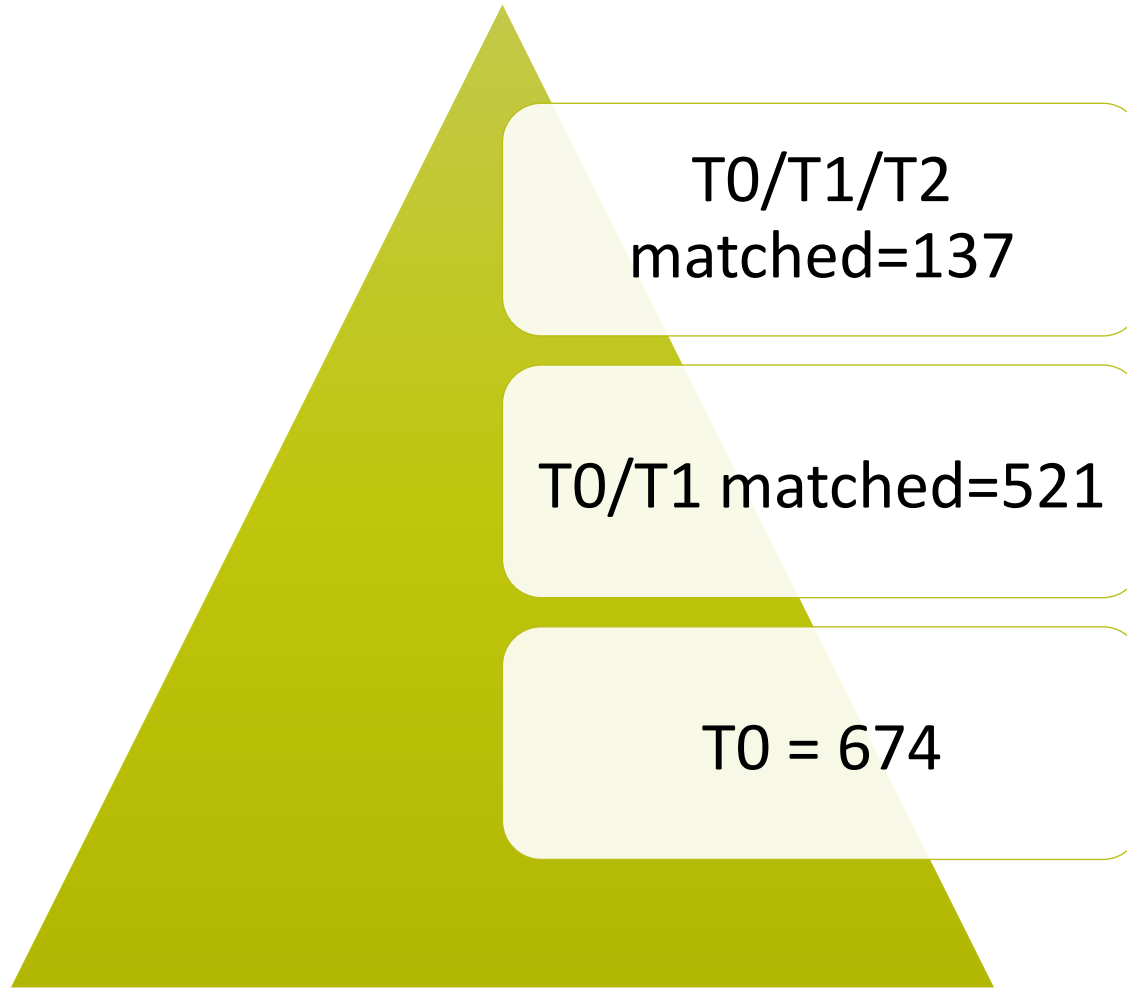


Evaluation occurred during  
the COVID-19 pandemic



CHP training interruptions

# Results - Surveys



# Surveys

## Knowledge

<i>How would you rate your knowledge in the following? (n=137)</i>	T0	T1	T2
Issues and challenges facing youth/young adults in my community.	3.01	4.10	3.93
How to approach youth/young adults who look like they are having a tough time.	2.78	4.31	3.84
How to help youth/young adults work through a problem.	2.87	4.32	3.88
My limits and how to tell when I am overwhelmed.	3.49	4.39	4.06
How important it is to take good care of myself.	4.01	4.59	4.38
The community resources that I and others can access.	2.82	4.45	3.96
How to identify situations in which confidentiality should be broken.	3.12	4.55	4.26

# Surveys

## Self-efficacy

<i>Rating level of agreement with the statements. (n=137)</i>	T0	T1	T2
I can recognize warning signs that a youth/young adult is having a tough time.	3.68	4.30	4.09
I feel confident in my ability to talk openly with youth/young adults in need of help.	3.58	4.32	4.06
I feel confident in my ability to recommend community resources to a youth or young adult in need of help.	3.28	4.39	4.05
Overall, I feel confident that I would try to help a youth/young adult experiencing a crisis or stressful event.	3.93	4.45	4.29

# Surveys

## Stigma accessing mental health services

<i>Rating level of agreement with the statements. (n=137)</i>	T0	T1	T2
People fear what others might think of them if they access mental health services.	4.05	4.16	4.02



# Interviews & Focus Groups

## Theme 1: Skill & knowledge development facilitators

### Sub-themes

Consider the needs of learners

Have passionate coordinators and instructors who use engaged learning approaches

Tailor training to meet the cultural needs of community helpers and the community

“I personally developed a lot of skills. I had such skills but I didn't realize that until we actually went to training.”

-Community helper

# Interviews & Focus Groups

## Theme 2: Sustain community helpers' connectedness

### Sub-themes

Develop CH networks

Raise awareness of local resources

Improve coordination with local resources

“I am a lot better at listening to people's situations and knowing more about the resources, so I can ... suggest the ones that might work for them.”

- Community helper

# Interviews & Focus Groups

## Theme 3: Role and impact of CHP

### Sub-themes

Address stigma associated with accessing mental health services

Shared success stories

“It's really creating that idea that it's OK to talk about these things. So that's one of the biggest things that we focus on, making it a part of your conversation.”

-CHP coordinator

# Conclusions

- CHP was effective to increase knowledge and self-efficacy of CH
- Further tailoring of content is needed
- Improve and sustain CH connectedness

# Where are we now?

# Coordinator Recommendations

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Using a more user-friendly and easily accessible platform to share program materials. Coordinators are also able to chat back and forth with one another. This has led to increased connection and collaboration.

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Created a New Coordinator Orientation guide for managers which PIP staff review with new coordinators. Meet with new coordinators weekly for the first month and a bit of their new role.

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Recorded training for new Coordinators to view when they start.

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Increased PD opportunities for coordinators including Fyrefly Institute, Our Children are Sacred Training with Ben Calf Robe Society, Tamarack Institute and National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

# Program Recommendations

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Coordinators have flexibility to create more interactive activities as part of their training, and then share those during monthly meetings with one another.

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Community resource lists updated yearly.

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Training offered to diverse groups including Indigenous youth and young adults, new Canadian, immigrant and refugees and 2SLGBTQI+ population.

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Training offered to parents, grandparents etc.

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Open expression of interest for unfunded organizations to help continue to spread the program across AB.

# AHS Required Program Deliverables

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Coordinators are required to follow up with trained helpers 4x per fiscal year.

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Coordinators are required to host two community capacity building events per fiscal year.

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Coordinators are required to promote the CHP in their communities a minimum of 3x per fiscal year.



# References

Alberta Health Services. *Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries Dashboard (2024)*. Retrieved May 17, 2024 from: [Suicide\\_Prevention: Suicide Rates and Counts-AHS Tableau Server \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](#).

Loitz, Arinde, Olaoye, Pilon, & Johansen (2024). Evaluation of a community helpers' mental health and suicide awareness training programme for youth and young adults in Alberta, Canada. *Public Health*, 228, 128-136.

# QUESTIONS & THANKS

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