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Data Collaboration Isn't Overhead—It's Essential

National Mental Health Datathon Shows What Happens When Collaboration Is Funded

CALGARY, AB — April 24, 2025 — A national Mental Health Datathon is challenging the long-held belief that agencies, researchers, and organizations can't— or won't— collaborate on data. Led by **Converge Mental Health Coalition** and **Data for Good**, the Datathon has united 800 volunteer participants from coast to coast to explore high-quality datasets contributed by nine national and regional mental health organizations, including:

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) National
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary
- CMHA Edmonton / 211 Calgary
- CMHA Alberta & Centre for Suicide Prevention
- Kids Help Phone
- Mental Health Research Canada
- 211 Canada – United Way Canada / CentreAide
- Distress Centre Calgary – 211 Calgary and ConnecTeen
- HelpSeeker Technologies

Running throughout April, the Datathon tackles real-world questions co-designed with partners—ranging from predicting mental health crises to identifying service gaps across communities. While the event wraps up with a participant and partner debrief on April 26, the work continues well beyond that date. The insights and solutions generated will inform a broader proof of concept demonstrating how collaborative, strategic data use can strengthen mental health systems nationwide.

A key issue emerging from the Datathon is the **cost of transparency**. Despite growing expectations for evidence-based decision-making, most funders still treat data infrastructure and analysis as overhead—optional rather than essential. This mindset limits agencies' ability to extract and share insights that could transform service delivery and policy.

This initiative aligns with national efforts to center data in decision-making—such as the recently launched **Youth Mental Health Data Hub** by GreenShield and Mental Health Research Canada—by reinforcing the need for timely, community-informed insights that reflect Canada's diverse populations.

The Datathon is supported by **Viewpoint Foundation**, **ATB Financial**, **YYC Data Society**, and the **Hunter Family Foundation**.

“This Datathon isn’t just about data—it’s about proving that collaboration is possible when the right supports are in place. We’re showing what happens when trust and infrastructure align with community needs. It’s also a chance to demonstrate to funders and policymakers that data collaboration isn’t a luxury—it’s the foundation for smarter, more connected care.”

— **Gena Rotstein**, Managing Director at Converge

About [Converge Mental Health Coalition](#)

Converge Mental Health Coalition is a national coalition of over 100 organizations from coast to coast to coast working to reimagine mental health and substance use care in Canada. By fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovation, Converge helps communities test and scale ideas that improve outcomes across the mental health system.

About [Data for Good](#)

Data for Good is a Canadian non-profit that mobilizes data science and analytics for social impact. Through volunteer-powered partnerships, the organization empowers nonprofits and social sector organizations to harness data to amplify their mission.