

# Service providers' needs and solutions to improve opioid treatment services for youth: Findings from a multi-site and community-based study in four diverse communities in British Columbia, Canada



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## Background

- Research suggests that existing treatments and services are not meeting the needs of youth using opioids <sup>1,2,3</sup>.
- The ongoing multi-phase **Improving Treatment Together (ITT)** project aims to inform the design of youth-centered opioid use treatments and services through a multi-stakeholder (youth, caregivers, service providers) and community-based participatory approach.

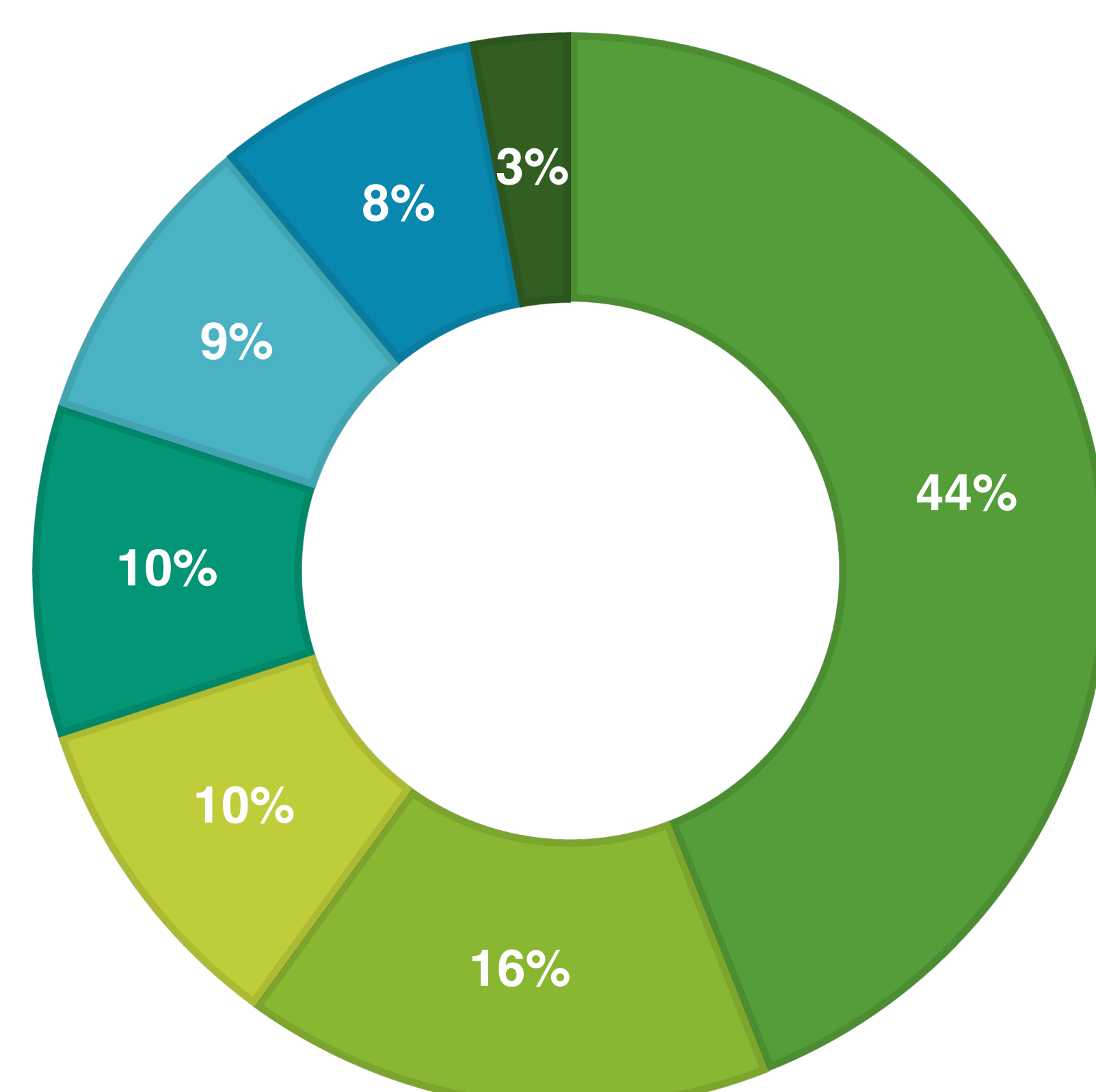
**OBJECTIVE:** To describe service providers' experiences, needs, and ideas for improving opioid use treatment and services for youth in British Columbia, Canada.

## Methods

- Four separate 1-day community-based workshops were held in Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Prince George
- Workshops included n=41 service providers delivering opioid use treatments and services to youth (Figure 1)
- Workshops followed human-centered co-design methods <sup>4</sup> to understand service providers' experiences, needs and ideas for improving opioid use treatment and services.
- A multi-site qualitative analysis was conducted to identify within- and between-site themes. Findings from the between-site themes are presented.

**Figure 1. Service Providers' Roles (n=41)**

■ Counsellor/Social Worker      ■ Nurse  
■ Program Admin/Support      ■ Youth/Family Peer Support  
■ Outreach      ■ Physician  
■ Other



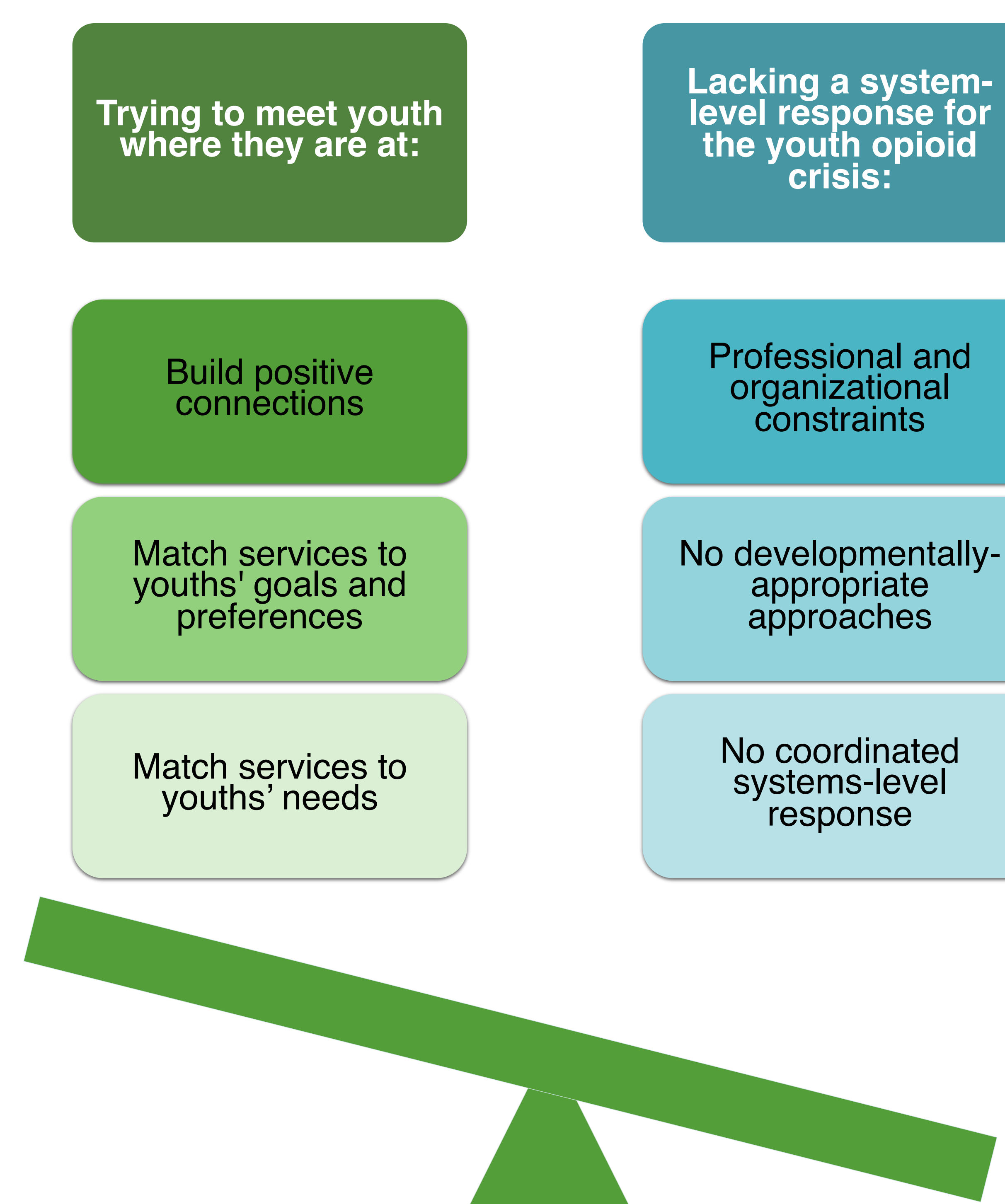
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**References:** (1) Mintz CM, et al. Drug and Alcohol Dependence. 2020, 213:108130.; (2) Hadland SE, et al. Addiction Science & Clinical Practice. 2018, 13:15.; (3) Giang V, et al., SSM Popul Health. 2020, 11:100609; (4) An introduction to design thinking: Process guide. <https://web.stanford.edu/~mshanks/MichaelShanks/files/509554.pdf>; (5) Maina G, et al. Canadian Journal of Nursing Research. 2020, 52:15-24

## Between-Site Experiences Themes

- Across communities, two main experiences themes were identified.
- Participants described how the lack of a system-level response posed substantial challenges, outweighing their efforts to meet youth where they are at during their point-of-care interactions.
- These main themes and their respective sub-themes are shown in Figure 2 and in the two supporting quotes.

**Figure 2. Between-Site Experience Themes**



“The thing that we often experience working with youth [is that] you might be talking about detox for a long time, and then [the] youth finally comes in and goes, ‘Okay. I need detox.’ And then you phone and phone, and then there's no bed or you can't access it until two days from now or whatever. And so, you've lost that opportunity. And so, **how do we try and meet immediate needs with a continuum of services that we do not have?**”

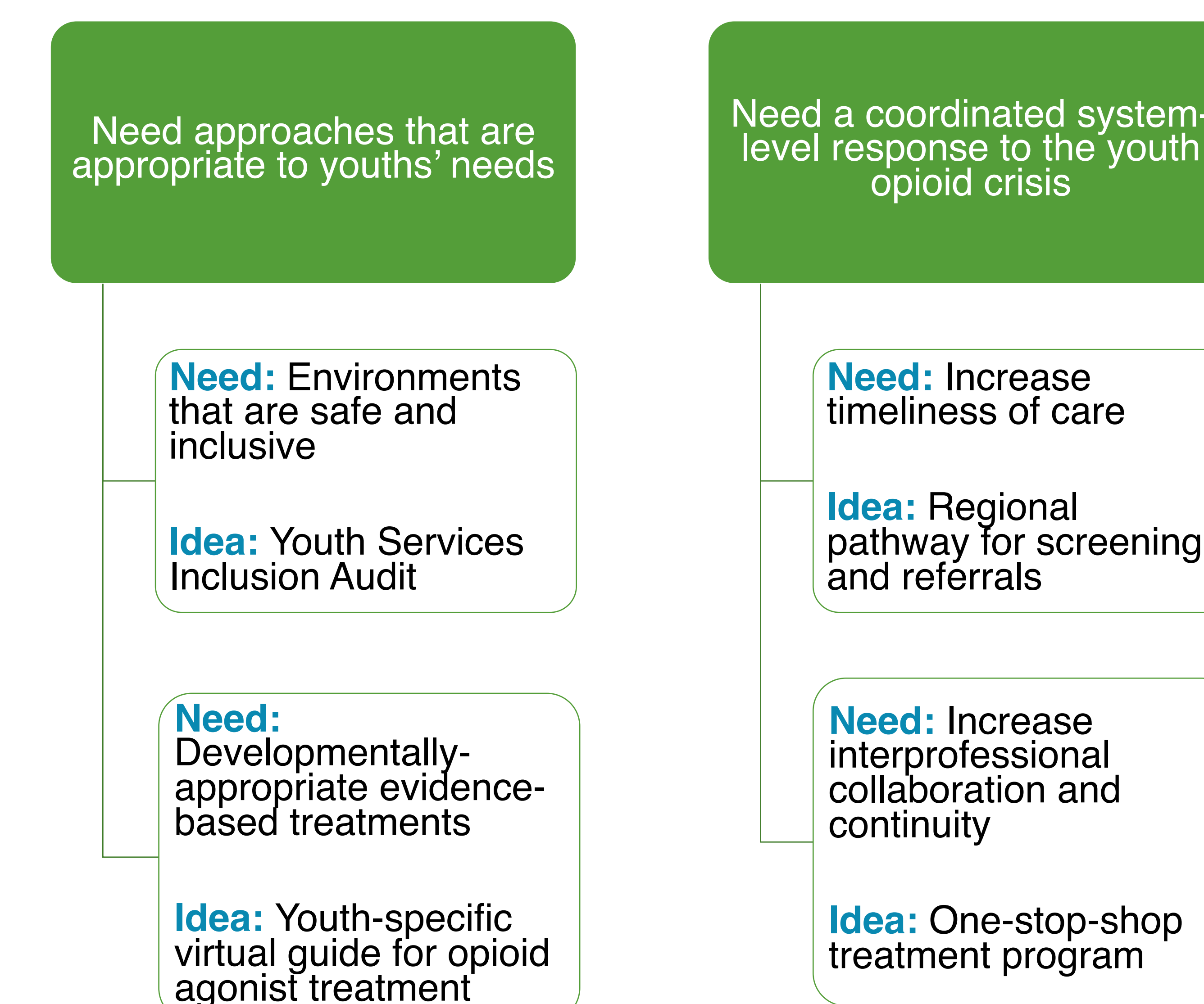
*(Supporting quote from a service provider in Vancouver)*

“I often feel like we don't have a lot of direction. **There's no clear standards of practice [as there is] in some other adult areas, or policies and procedures about what we're supposed to do.** And in this youth area, there's just not a lot. *(Supporting quote from a service provider in Vancouver)*

## Between-Site Needs Themes

- To improve these experience, participants prioritized two main needs themes, including approaches that are appropriate to youths' needs and a coordinated system-level response to the youth opioid crisis.
- Within these overarching needs themes, participants identified specific needs and potential solutions to these needs. These are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Main Needs and Ideas**



## Conclusions

- The experiences and needs themes corroborates a recent study <sup>5</sup>, which also found that service providers' encountered difficulties meeting youths' needs due to organizational challenges, such as system fragmentation, inadequate time, and competencies.
- Service providers identified innovative solutions to deliver more effective and efficient opioid use treatment and services to youth.
- Ongoing phases of the ITT project are currently co-designing the Virtual OAT guide and Inclusion Audit.