What are the primary social determinants of health for young people?

**Socioeconomic status and income**
- Income determines a family’s ability to have safe housing, proper nutrition and educational resources, which are critical to a child’s development. This trend is also true of neighbourhoods, as young people growing up in poor communities are at increased risk for poor health outcomes.

**Family structure and support**
- Youth who feel they have positive relationships with their parents in a safe and nurturing environment tend to describe themselves as healthier and happier. Lone-parent families are at higher risk and sometimes struggle to access adequate resources.

**Social support**
- Social support networks promote resiliency in young people. From early childhood through the teenage years, meaningful involvement in the community is vital for healthy development. Youth also greatly benefit from developing meaningful relationships with adults as well as their peers.

**Access to and use of health services**
- Families need access to a broad range of health care services to stay healthy including hospitals, physicians, psychologists, social workers, dentists and rehabilitation services. Struggling to access these services (e.g. when living in rural areas) can be a significant barrier for children and youth’s healthy development.

**Healthy child development**
- Early life experiences such as alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy, abuse, neglect and low birth weight can lead to lifelong negative consequences. On the other hand, secure attachment between the child and caregiver has lasting positive effects.

**Education and employment**
- Early readiness to learn in preschool years, completion of high school and participation in the labour force are all predictors of long-term health. Endorsing education as key to mental health is an effective approach in raising healthy youth.

**Gender**
- Girls tend to report more body-image issues, internalizing disorders and suicidal ideation and behaviour. Boys, on the other hand, tend to report higher rates of alcohol and tobacco consumption, more externalizing disorders and more deaths by suicide.

**Physical environment**
- Keeping our young people safe and healthy starts with the water we drink and the air we breathe. Communities can endeavour to keep children and youth away from second-hand smoke and provide them with proper nutrition.

**Personal health practices and coping skills**
- Lifestyle choices and actions youth take can prevent disease, promote self-care and help them cope with challenges, develop independence, solve problems and make choices to enhance their health and well-being.

**Biology and genetic endowment**
- The basic biology or genetic make-up of a youth can determine their health and well-being. Young people can be predisposed to different diseases or health problems affecting their health and mental health status.

**Culture**
- Some youth face additional threats because of their socio-economic environment. Environment is largely determined by dominant cultural values. Conditions such as marginalization, stigmatization, loss or devaluation of language and culture/cultural identity and lack of access to culturally appropriate health care and services.

**Reference:** Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, & Wellesley Institute, 2009; Canetto, & Sakinofsky, 1998; Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario, 2010; Currie et al., 2010; Leadbeater, Kuperminc, Blatt, & Hertzog, 1999; Lipman & Boyle, 2008; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011; Youthrive, 2012.