



Workshop 3:

Advocating for mental wellness through creating culturally safe spaces and building entrepreneurship skills to empower Black Youth

Presenters:

• Patience Simbanegavi	Case Manager of SAPACCY Program (Black Health)	Hamilton Urban Core CHC
• Cori Blake	Manager, Youth and Family Services	Rexdale CHC
• Ronaye Chester	Program Facilitator of L.E.A.R.N/FSSP	TAIBU CHC
• Chanelle Perrier-Telemaque	From School to Success Pipeline Project Coordinator	TAIBU CHC

Description:

The From School to Success Pipeline Project (FSSP) led by TAIBU Community Health Centre aims to reduce risk factors for Black youth by providing them with access to cultural support services, building their capacity to navigate the system, and addressing anti-black racism with system providers. The project involves many partners who provide services to Black youth, including the Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre and Rexdale Community Health Centre. The partners worked together with institutions, families, and youth to come up with a roadmap to address the outcomes. An external evaluator led the process.

Session objectives and learning outcomes:

- Increased understanding of the importance of culturally safe spaces
- Enhanced knowledge of the intersectionality of Black identity, entrepreneurship, and mental wellness
- Proficiency in implementing co-designed initiatives for community empowerment

Full description:

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One of the outcomes of the workshop/report-back meetings organized by TAIBU was the decision to create culturally safe spaces for Black youth where they can engage with each other to discuss issues affecting them in their communities. The program will also provide entrepreneurship skills while addressing mental well-being. Black hair was identified as one of the issues that relate to identity, self-esteem, and entrepreneurship.

Barbershops and hair salons are often seen as safe spaces where social determinants of health are discussed. The three community health centres, including TAIBU, Rexdale, and Hamilton Urban Core, have been discussing Black hair and its relationship with cultural identity and self-employment. Black Creek was far ahead in this area.

This workshop aims to showcase the Black Hair program, which has been successfully implemented and stands as a compelling model for the co-designed future of primary health care. The program addresses unique socio-economic and cultural challenges and fosters a deep sense of community and empowerment by intricately weaving cultural identity, financial literacy, and mental wellness into a comprehensive curriculum tailored for Black youth. The workshop advocates for the scaling of the

Black Hair initiative, emphasizing its co-designed approach and the significant outcomes achieved, to broaden its impact within and beyond the original communities served.

The Black Hair program was developed in response to the systemic barriers Black youth faced in accessing culturally sensitive health and wellness resources. The initiative sought to empower Black youth by integrating haircare education with broader health and wellness topics, thus addressing a critical gap in available services. The program was guided by objectives that were both ambitious and necessary, including educational empowerment, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, mental wellness, and community engagement.

The Black Hair program was characterized by its adherence to co-design principles, ensuring inclusivity, collaboration, and participant-led innovation. Black youth and community stakeholders were integral to every development stage, directly shaping the program's direction through their insights and feedback. The program's implementation showcased a dynamic adaptation process, with workshops and content continually refined based on real-time participant feedback. This iterative approach ensured the program's relevance and effectiveness, truly embodying the co-design ethos.