



# ADJUSTING THE SPOTLIGHT:

Re-centering Neglected  
BIPOC Youth Voices  
Surrounding Mental Health

REFLECTION

**The  
New  
Mentality**  
DISABLE THE LABEL

**CMHO**  
Children's Mental Health Ontario  
Santé mentale pour enfants Ontario

# REFLECTION

**Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO)** represents publicly funded Child and Youth Mental Health Centres in Ontario. Their advocacy is important in supporting investments, programs, and informing policies, with the ultimate goal of developing a mental health system which prioritizes the needs of children, youth and families.

**The New Mentality (TNM)** is a program of Children's Mental Health Ontario that engages and amplifies youth voices in the Ontario child and youth mental health system. Through our Youth Action Committee (YAC), youth members from across Ontario work together to develop youth-led policy recommendations with the goal of creating change in the mental health system.

The Youth Action Committee is a provincial advisory committee in partnership with Children's Mental Health Ontario and The New Mentality, made up of youth across Ontario between the ages of 16-25 years. With a passion for addressing issues within the mental health system, the committee works to reduce the stigma around mental health and develops youth-led policy that reflects the needs of youth.

In early 2020, YAC members decided to focus their policy recommendations on equity. After much discussion, the topic was narrowed down to racial equity and addressing how race affects mental health treatment in Ontario. Youth cited their lived experiences and persistent racial inequities worldwide that impact access and understanding of the mental health system as their reasoning for choosing this topic.

YAC members released a survey targeted to BIPOC youth aged 13-25 years old in Ontario to better understand the role that racism plays in accessing and receiving mental health services for BIPOC youth. The data collected from these surveys was followed up with two online consultations with BIPOC YAC members that resulted in insightful discussions on race, racism, and mental health.

The following recommendations are made in this policy paper as per the findings.  
Each recommendation is followed by short-term and long-term goals.

**Recommendation #1:**

Offer more relevant anti-racist and anti-oppressive training to staff working in the child and youth mental health sector, with mandated follow-ups and continuous development, to create culturally sensitive environments and increase cultural competency.

**Recommendation #2:**

Hire more diverse service providers and allow youth to make requests for specific service providers.

**Recommendation #3:**

Provide effective anti-racist education and anti-oppressive practices within schools.

**Recommendation #4:**

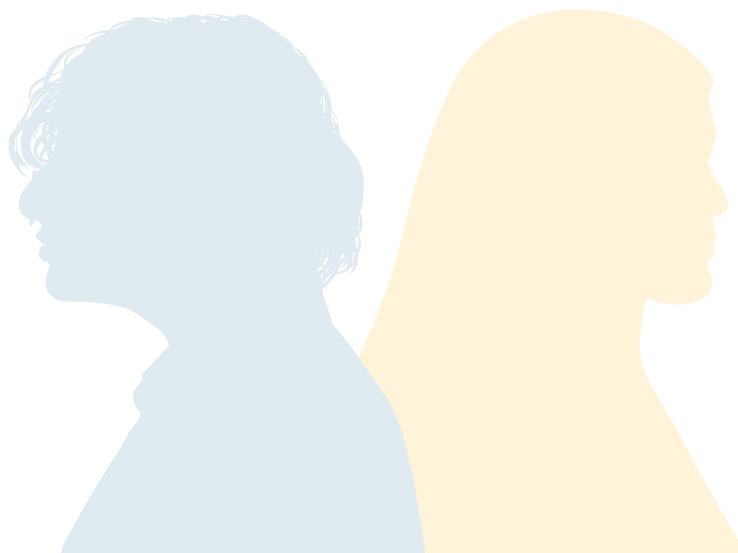
Implement more types of mental health services.

**Recommendation #5:**

Ensure effective navigation and discovery of mental health services.

**Recommendation #6:**

Mandate race-based data collection.



In 2021, The New Mentality and Children's Mental Health Ontario's Youth Action Committee released their policy paper, **Adjusting the Spotlight: Re-Centering Neglected BIPOC Youth Voices Surrounding Mental Health**. Now in 2023, the YAC is releasing the following reflection questions as an additional resource to their policy paper, that will serve as a guide for organizations and individuals to reflect on their anti-racism work.

### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE AS AN ORGANIZATION

- What is your understanding of how your organization engages in meaningful anti-racist reflection and anti-racist action?
- Are you mindful of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in all decisions in your organization?
- What are your anti-racism goals for your organization over the next year?
- How do you intend to incorporate the above mentioned recommendations provided in the **Adjusting the Spotlight** policy paper within your organization?
- How confident are you that your organization will reach these goals?
- Have you achieved the goals you intended on? *Note: Assess as an organization at the end of the year.*

### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE WITH YOURSELF

- What have you learned from reading the **Adjusting the Spotlight: Re-Centering Neglected BIPOC Youth Voices Surrounding Mental Health** policy paper?
- Do you think the changes in the system relating to anti-racism are improving services for children and youth?
- How are you personally creating a space where racialized youth in your organization feel safe from harm from racism?
- We know that anti-racism work requires both learning and unlearning. Reflecting on your journey towards unlearning, are there practices you have learned that cause harm and could be done better?
- How do you plan to continue your journey in anti-racism education, and continue to learn and develop skills to host open safe spaces in your work or practices?

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A huge thank you to all the 2022 YAC members for your insights, leadership, experiences and contributions. Your stories and voices matter.



To learn more about **Adjusting the Spotlight: Re-Centering Neglected BIPOC Youth Voices Surrounding Mental Health**, visit [www.thenewmentality.ca/adjusting-the-spotlight](http://www.thenewmentality.ca/adjusting-the-spotlight)

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