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MENTAL HEALTH & SYSTEMIC RACISM:

The effects and consequences of systemic racism on the availability of mental health services for Black Youth

Mental health is an important topic across the country, with the mental health of Black youth being no exception. There are many support services available for youth in need. However, black youth can face difficulties in accessing and feeling comfortable in such settings due to byproducts of systemic racism - threatening the “light of Black youth in a community”.

So, what are some of the barriers preventing access, and what are some possible solutions to combat the lack of accessibility?



LACK OF INCLUSIVITY

Some youth report feeling excluded and not understood by White mental healthcare providers; cultural differences are not translated



ECONOMIC & GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS

Mental health centres can be far away from the youth’s neighbourhoods.
Some feel unwelcome due to lower socio-economic status and being part of a visible minority; financial barriers can also limit accessibility



STIGMATIZATION

Families of Black and other racialized youth can normalize and judge mental states, viewing it as a “weakness” and that a person should ignore the feeling and move on



LONG WAIT TIMES

Healthcare in Canada can lead to long wait times, and mental health is no exception. Black youth can face waits that are months long.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

What can we do going forwards?

- **Diversify the mental health workforce**: this can help Black youth feel more comfortable instead of looked down upon or excluded; they can talk to someone who can understand their experiences
- **Expand and increase the number of mental health centres** so that youth have easier geographic access to such places
- **Media exposure about the importance of finding help for mental health issues** can help normalize seeking help and inform families about mental struggles that Black youth can face.

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