



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

Black Immigrant and African American

Mental Health Project

African Communities Public Health Coalition

Evaluation Final Report

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Introduction

Behavioral Assessment Inc. was contracted to conduct an independent evaluation of the APHC BIYEP program which aimed to increase awareness and advocacy for mental health services to black immigrant and African American populations. This report will provide an overview of the evaluation including results from the initial Needs Assessment study, evaluation of the advocacy training component and evaluation of the community presentations.

Summary of Needs Assessment Focus Groups

As part of the LACDMH funded project “The Black Immigrant Youth Empowerment Project”, two exploratory focus groups were conducted to assess the needs and recommendations from the community regarding mental health issues for youth and young adults. The information gained in these exploratory groups will be used to tailor community education, stigma reduction, early referral and other prevention services for the growing population of African American and African Immigrant youth and young adults.

Information was sought about current knowledge about mental health issues in the local community including stigma, cultural competence, historical trauma, and other social and cultural issues facing black immigrant and African American communities. Participants were recruited by the President of African Public Health Communities Coalition and by two youth leaders who will take an active role in “The Black Immigrant Youth Project. The adult focus group held on August 18, 2018 had 8 participants. The participants were from diverse backgrounds identifying as African American, Black, Ethiopian, and Egyptian. Respondents were asked 6 questions; their responses have been summarized into major themes discussed below. The youth focus group held on October 30, 2018 had 8 ethnically diverse participants from racial backgrounds including Black, African American, Egyptian, Jamaican, Afro-Caribbean, and Mexican American. Respondents were asked 6 questions; their responses have been summarized into major themes discussed below. Taken together from both the adult and youth focus groups, the following key themes and suggestions emerged:

- There is no one unified definition of mental health in the Black immigrant and African American community
- Generally, the concept of mental health is not widely discussed among youth or adults
- Any understanding of mental health must consider historical trauma, slavery and colonization issues
- Participants from both focus groups understood that in order to promote mental health among youth, the youth need to feel loved and accepted.
- Participants from both focus groups felt that love is important, especially self-love when discussing mental health.

- According to the adult and youth focus group having a stable family structure or support system is critical in addressing mental health.
- There is a general lack of health services and activities available for youth in the Black and African American community.
- Participants felt that it is important to create a space where youth can come together and engage in the hobby they like best. For example, social activities can be offered across the city or in a community center where youth can engage in group yoga, dance, music, basketball etc. and mental health can be incorporated to help youth learn about ways to cope with mental health issues.
- Participants understood that mental health needs to be discussed at earlier ages. A suggestion was to create a space where all neighborhood kids are invited for a night to socialize and where mental health is discussed.
- Adult and youth respondents understand that there are systemic barriers within the mental health field that persists in inhibiting individuals from seeking treatment.
- Participants identified the importance of advocating for cultural relevant mental health treatment. For example, being treated by someone who is able to understand and/or relate to their culture and norms.
- Participants discussed about the possibility of advocating having mental health assessments incorporated into current physical health assessments and restructuring the current system to make “it more welcoming” and less intimidating. For example, allowing more time when having patient and clinician interaction.

Summary of Advocacy Training Modules

An evaluation of 5 training modules was conducted using a pre and post test methodology. All participants were asked to complete a pre-test prior to beginning the training and a post-test at the end of each training module. A total of 13 trainees (6 male, 6 female, and 1 unidentified) participated in the modular training. Each module consisted of specific questions pertaining to the subject and separate pre and post test analysis are provided in the tables below.

MODULE 1: Basic Mental Health Education Module

Question	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST			
	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'
Mental Health is a state of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being which an individual can cope with	-	7.7%	15.4%	69.2%	9.1%	-	-	90.9%

stressors and contribute to society.									
Mental illness affects Black immigrants' communities and African Americans in the same way as other groups.	38.5%	-	23.1%	38.5%		36.4%	9.1%	18.2%	36.4%
An estimated one in four American adults suffer from diagnosable mental health disorders making mental illness the leading cause of disability in the US.	-	-	30.8%	69.2%		-	-	9.1%	90.9%
All individuals experiencing mental illness face stigma, discrimination, and abuse.	15.4%	-	38.5%	46.2%		9.1%	-	36.4%	54.5%
The mental health professional's lack of cultural understanding can hinder immigrant communities from accessing and utilizing mental health services.	-	-	7.7%	92.3%		-	-	-	100%
It has not yet been proven whether biological, psychological, and social factors interact to cause mental illness.	15.4%	23.1%	53.8%	7.7%		72.7%	-	18.2%	9.1%
Mental illness impairs day-to-day functions and can eventually lead to people dying young.	-	-	15.4%	84.6%		-	-	9.1%	90.9%
Most affected people by mental disorders are from first world countries.	38.5%	30.8%	23.1%	7.7%		36.4%	9.1%	36.4%	18.2%
Most people who need mental health services seek them because they know they have a mental illness and know where to get help.	46.2%	30.8%	15.4%	7.7%		45.5%	-	36.4%	18.2%
The difference between those who need treatment and those who get treatment is known as the treatment gap.	-	15.4%	23.1%	61.5%		-	9.1%	-	90.9%

Module 1 showed great improvements from a pre-to-post evaluation. For example, the percent who chose 'Very Much' for question "Mental Health is a state of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being which an individual can cope with stressors and contribute to society" had a 20 percent increase from pre to post. Trainee responses in Module 1 showed a consistent increase in basic mental health knowledge.

Module 2: Outreach and Engagement Module

Question	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST			
	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Somewh at'	3 'Very Much'
Outreach is when you spread your arms out fully to catch someone.	81.8%	9.1%	-	9.1%	63.6%	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%
Outreach allows service providers and community organizations to engage with community member where they are, and on their own terms.	-	-	18.2%	81.8%	-	-	9.1%	90.9%
As leaders in the community, outreach requires us to engage members from the community to gain their trust so we can offer knowledge and connect them to the services they need.	-	-	18.2%	81.8%	-	-	-	100%
People of African descent tend to rely more on mental health professionals, rather than their family, religious, and other social communities.	45.5%	27.3%	27.3%	-	45.5%	9.1%	18.2%	27.3%
It is important to accept that people from different backgrounds may have varying beliefs on every aspect of life, including mental health.	-	-	-	100%	-	-	18.2%	81.8%
Through the BIYE project, we want to empower high-risk populations who are African descent and equip them with more Euro-centric practices that promote mental wellness.	36.4%	-	36.4%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%	54.5%
When we engage a population, you only have to connect with them once.	81.8%	9.1%	9.1%	-	72.7%	-	18.2%	9.1%
The BIYE project aims to decrease stigma and increase mental health awareness by educating the community through a culturally appropriate way.	-	-	18.2%	81.8%	-	-	-	100%
I understand the importance of accepting community	-	-	18.2%	81.8%	-	-	9.1%	90.9%

member's ideas and not judging or telling people whether they are right or wrong.									
If needed, I know where to refer community members for mental health services.	-	9.1%	54.5%	36.4%		-	-	36.4%	63.6%

Module 2 has a fairly similar distribution of trainee responses in both pre and post. Trainees became more aware of outreach and engagement within their communities and how the BIYE project can help promote mental wellness. Most importantly, the trainees had a 27% increase in knowledge on where advocates can refer their community members for mental health services.

Module 3: Public Speaking Module

Question	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST			
	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'
Public speaking is a performance you do for an audience, of 1 person.	50%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	58.3%	-	16.7%	25%
I am confident to speak to group of 30-50 people regarding mental health.	-	16.7%	25%	58.3%	-	-	41.7%	58.3%
Being nervous is normal when speaking in public.	-	-	-	100%	-	-	16.7%	83.3%
Even with practice people cannot be comfortable when speaking in public.	25%	8.3%	8.3%	25.3%	50%	-	25%	25%
The audience is always the expert on the topic; I am there to learn from them.	8.3%	16.7%	58.3%	16.7%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	-
It is crucial to know the audience beforehand to tailor my presentation to their fundamental characteristics.	16.7%	-	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	-	16.7%	75%
When speaking in public, it is okay to go off my presentation topic.	8.3%	16.7%	41.7%	33.3%	25%	58.3%	8.3%	8.3%
As a presenter, I understand the importance of body language and how to positively use it during my presentation.	-	-	8.3%	91.7%	-	8.3%	8.3%	83.3%
When there is silence during the presentations, the presenter has to speak quickly.	75%	16.7%	8.3%	-	41.7%	8.3%	50%	-

As a public speaker, your voice and tone is the most important tool.	-	-	16.7%	83.3%		-	-	-	100%
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Generally, participants felt more comfortable about speaking at the time of the post-test. Fears and anxieties seem to improve.

Module 4: Storytelling Module

Question	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST			
	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Somewhat'	3 'Very Much'
Storytelling is an art that youth are constantly using through their daily experiences.	-	-	8.3%	91.7%	-	-	8.3%	91.7%
History is passed down through generations whether it is spoken or written.	-	8.3%	8.3%	83.3%	-	-	-	100%
Storytelling is not a way to overcome mental health problems.	91.7%	-	8.3%	-	83.3%	-	-	16.7%
Stories become cultural data sets which can reveal beliefs, norms, and values.	-	-	8.3%	91.7%	-	-	-	100%
Through stories, you gain a better understanding of the individual and their possible mental health needs.	-	-	-	100%	-	-	-	100%
Storytelling can reveal traumatic experiences that an individual has lived.	-	-	16.7%	83.3%	-	-	8.3%	91.7%
Storytelling is powerful as it can transmit and maintain knowledge of culture, increase social connectedness, and decrease stigma related to mental health services.	-	-	-	100%	-	-	-	100%
Families are not very important in storytelling as they are not the best translators of their own culture.	83.3%	-	16.7%	-	83.3%	-	8.3%	8.3%
Trauma impacts every individual of African descent similarly; they usually become depressed and isolate themselves from family.	-	25%	50%	25%	-	-	58.3%	41.7%
Storytelling can be an alternative method of healing as it offers the opportunity to shift and change the	-	-	8.3%	91.7%	-	-	-	100%

destructive effects of trauma on the family.									
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In module 4, trainees seem to have an increase in the perception of Storytelling as a means of sharing life experiences. There was a 16% increase in the acceptance of Storytelling as a way to overcome mental health problems. A quarter of the trainees in the pre-test believed that trauma affects people of African descent differently and in the post test, all trainees were able to conclude that every person of African descent is affected by trauma similarly.

Most participants acknowledge the power of Storytelling in their own communities prior to the training. The training helped to reinforce the use of Storytelling as a way to overcome stigma and to help reduce trauma in the African Immigrant and African American communities.

Module 5: Advocacy Module

Question	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST			
	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Some what'	3 'Very Much'	0 'Not at All'	1 'Very Little'	2 'Somew hat'	3 'Very Much'
Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.	-	-	9.1%	90.9%	-	-	-	100%
Advocates with mental health expertise can inform legislators to make appropriate decisions and policies to benefit the mental wellness of the community.	-	9.1%	-	90.9%	-	-	-	100%
A group of advocates cannot achieve what elected officials accomplish.	81.8%	-	18.2%	-	63.6%	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%
I am willing to become an activist in an effort to improve my community's mental health well-being.	-	-	9.1%	90.9%	-	-	9.1%	90.9%
The goal of this program is to help the youth develop a strong capacity to self-advocate and become a leader, based upon their own experience.	-	-	-	100%	-	-	9.1%	90.9%
Success from advocacy will come quickly after you begin.	27.3%	18.2%	54.5%	-	27.3%	9.1%	63.6%	-
Youth can advocate for policy change in different ways than adults.	-	-	9.1%	90.9%	-	-	-	100%

Policies are an important enabling or disabling part of the level of multicultural competence in mental health service providers.	9.1%	-	9.1%	81.8%		-	-	18.2%	81.8%
Youth can expose systemic discrimination by exposing manipulative strategies to society.	-	-	9.1%	90.9%		-	-	-	100%
I believe I currently have the skills to become an activist.	-	9.1%	27.3%	45.5%		-	9.1%	9.1%	81.8%

The final module results show an equal understanding of advocacy as a whole by the trainees. Trainee’s basic knowledge about advocacy increased by 10% for a total of 100% ‘Very much,’ which shows a greater understanding of the module and what it entails. The most significant changes are seen in the responses for “I believe I currently have the skills to become an activist.” In the pre-examination, trainees were only about 73% sure about their personal ability to become an activist. The post-modular training helped trainees boost their knowledge and confidence in becoming an activist to a total of 90%.

Overall, the evaluation of the pre-post tests for the 5 modules was in a positive direction. There were a number of areas where knowledge and skills were built for the mental health and advocacy trainings. At the same time, a lengthier training period may have resulted in even more positive outcomes.

APHC Community Workshop Evaluation

The APHC, alongside trained advocates, helped implement the BIYEP (Black Immigrant Youth Empowerment Program) in their communities. A total of 4 community events were held and evaluated between the months of March to June 2019, by on-site APHC staff and advocates who were trained recently using the modules. By using a pre and post event evaluation method, the APHC was able to receive several responses from the people participating in these community events. See results below.

Question	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST			
	0 ‘Not at All’	1 ‘Very Little’	2 ‘Some what’	3 ‘Very Much’	0 ‘Not at All’	1 ‘Very Little’	2 ‘Some what’	3 ‘Very Much’
Mental Health is a state of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being in which an individual can cope with stressors and contribute to society.	7.5%	10%	32.5%	42.5%	7.5%	5%	17.5%	60%

Mental illness affects Black immigrants' communities and African Americans in the same way as other groups.	2.5%	17.5%	42.5%	35%		2.5%	10%	17.5%	65%
The mental health professional's lack of cultural understanding can hinder immigrant communities from accessing and utilizing mental health services.	2.5%	10%	32.5%	52.5%		-	5%	22.5%	67.5%
I understand what interventions to use when I am not feeling mentally well.	7.5%	35%	42.5%	10%		5%	5%	27.5%	55%
If a friend or I need mental health services I know where to locate those services.	17.5%	30%	35%	12.5%		5%	7.5%	35%	45%
African descent individuals tend to reach out more to their religious leaders, family, and communities rather than seeking mental health services	17.5%	15%	45%	17.5%		7.5%	7.5%	17.5%	60%
Advocates with mental health expertise can inform legislators to make appropriate decisions and policies to benefit the mental wellness of the community.	-	20%	40%	37.5%		-	2.5%	22.5%	67.5%
I believe I currently have the skills to be an advocate.	15%	27.5%	25%	30%		2.5%	5%	25%	60%
Storytelling is not a way to overcome mental health problems.	25%	30%	32.5%	7.5%		25%	7.5%	27.5%	32.5%
Engaging in cultural activities can help me stay mentally healthy.	2.5%	17.5%	27.5%	50%		-	-	12.5%	77.5%

The APHC was able to help serve and prepare 40 community participants with the knowledge and resources needed in regards to Mental Health. In general, there was a 17.5% increase in the actual knowledge of the 'Mental Health' definition, 45% increase in knowledge on what interventions participants could use as a result of the community outreach events that took place. One question that asked about knowledge about interventions in case a friend requires such services saw a 32.5% increase in such knowledge. According to the data, participants had some knowledge on mental health services but with the help of APHC advocates, there was an overall percent increase in Mental Health knowledge.

APHC & the Department of Mental Health Advocacy Work

A short presentation was conducted at the Department of Mental Health in Downtown, Los Angeles on June 13, 2019. Members of the APHC were present including youth advocates who were born and raised in the Los Angeles area. Youth explained what advocacy has done for them personally, and how they have used it to help other youth in their communities. Responses varied on a scale of 'Not at All' to 'Very Much' and 'Usefulness.' Below are event satisfaction results taking from a post-event survey at the Department of Mental Health.

Question	Not at All	Very Little	Neutral	Somewhat	Very Much
How satisfied are you with the today's training?	-	-	-	11.1%	88.9%
How satisfied are you with your trainer today?	-	-	-	11.1%	88.9%
How satisfied are you with the information you have learned today?	-	-	11.1%	22.2%	66.7%
How useful is this information for your advocacy work?	-	-	11.1%	22.2%	66.7%
How much did this training help you feel better?	-	-	22.2%	-	77.8%

Key Informant Interviews

As part of the BIYEP project, a training event was held on May 15th for students at ICEF Middle School located in Inglewood, California. The training itself was an after-school event for students, who had the option to stay. Children between the ages of 11-14 were gathered around an auditorium in a circular formation. Advocate speakers were led by an APHC presenter who was familiar with the majority of the students. Interactive activities such as words of encouragement, storytelling, and introductions helped students feel comfortable enough for some to share their life stories. At the end of the training event, 4 students volunteered to participate in a key informant interview with an evaluator. Below are questions used to ask the students about their overall attitude towards the training event itself and how effective it was for them.

- 1) Why are you interested in helping out your friends at school? Why is it important?
 - Care about them and have known them for a long time (like family).
 - Care and love someone, you have to make sure they are okay.
 - Other classmates might be going through the same thing someone else is.
 - Everyone has struggles.
 - View everyone as little brothers and sisters.
- 2) From the information you heard today, how will that help you to support the well being of your community?

- Help and guide friends through any struggles they might be having.
 - How to talk to and approach fellow classmates.
 - Talk to other classmates that they haven't talked to before and get to know them better.
 - Know background information and what the person might be going through.
 - Become protective of everyone because we don't know what they might be going through at the time.
 - Put yourself in their shoes to try and help.
 - Understand friends better and friends understand me better.
- 3) How can the information you learned today help you personally?
- Nostalgia about the past and the experiences.
 - Learn from other people's experiences.
 - Can grow up to be an advocate and help people themselves.
 - Thinking about friends and their feelings too not just our own.
 - Helps me be less ungrateful and understand my peers.
 - No issue is bigger than another person's issue, everyone goes through different things.
- 4) Do you have any suggestion to improve future training or events like this one?
- Don't want to change anything about the event, it was great.
 - Put everyone on to speak publicly (the trainer) not just those who are shy.
 - Have more activities that are interactive and not be inside the whole time.
 - Provide additional resources for the future of students like education and finances.
- 5) Do you have any other comments about today's meeting?
- Event broke me, in a good way.
 - Felt comfortable enough to share my life.
 - Getting to know peers on a more personal level.
 - A very good program, glad to be a part of the event and Quinton is very inspirational.

Summary/Recommendations

The Black Immigrant and African American Mental Health Project of the APHC represents a highly innovative and culturally tailored mental health outreach and advocacy program. Through a series of qualitative and quantitative evaluations, the outreach and advocacy effort proved to be highly successful. The APHC was very successful in recruiting youth and adult advocates and provided several different layers of training and community outreach activities.

Overall, the results showed that training for mental health advocates improved knowledge about key issues by 80%. The initial training of advocates using the 5 module curricula, were evaluated and proved to demonstrate positive outcomes in terms of increased knowledge and awareness about a range of issues important to this community. Knowledge increases were found for Advocacy, Public Speaking, Basic Mental Health, Cultural Trauma, and Storytelling. These skills were then used by trained advocates in a number of community-based events and forums.

Among participants of the Community presentations, knowledge was enhanced on 100% of the mental health topics that were discussed. Importantly, at post-test 80% of the participants were knowledgeable on where to seek mental health services for themselves or for a friend. The evaluation data showed that all of these community-based awareness building activities were successful. African Immigrants and other African Americans learned

about basic mental health, available community health resources, mental health referrals, networks, and other health related issues.

The results of this evaluation suggest that more expanded advocacy and mental health awareness that addresses the needs of this African Immigrant and African American population would be highly beneficial to residents throughout the Los Angeles County. Efforts to use this approach for increasing mental health referrals and improving overall mental health in this community are likely to be successful.