

YOUTH SUPPORTING YOUTH PILOT PROGRAM

KEY ACTIONS FACT SHEET



HOW IT WORKS

The York Region Youth Supporting Youth Pilot Program implements preventative actions identified in the Region's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan that support marginalized and vulnerable youth with peer support certification and workshops at local schools and in the community on topics such as violence prevention, life skills training, building health relationships, employment skills, trauma, stress and self-care strategies.

In alignment with the CSWB Plan, the pilot program supports the four identified geographic focus areas within the Regional Municipality of York:

1. Northern Georgina
2. Central Newmarket
3. South-central Markham; and
4. South-central Richmond Hill (including the City of Vaughan)

The program serves all youth residents, especially those ages 12-26 years old who are Indigenous, Black, young women, LGBTQ2S+, immigrant and/or refugee youth.

After two years, a program evaluation and impact assessment will be conducted to inform ongoing program needs.

The goal of the Youth Supporting Youth pilot program is to equip youth with strategies and coping mechanisms to increase protective factors and prevent/reduce underlying risk factors that lead to crime, harm and victimization.

The Youth Supporting Youth pilot program uses a peer mentorship approach that supports youth mental health resiliency and assists mentors with their own personal healing from past traumas just as much as the program is intended to support the mentees.

Selection of peer mentors is determined informed by applicable lived experience, such as experience dealing with trauma.



BENEFITS

- Improves education and awareness about topics in mental health and well-being for youth participants
- Increases mental well-being for peer mentors through the completion of the certification process
- Boosts confidence for youth participants to build on their own protective factors

WHAT IS A PEER SUPPORT APPROACH?

A peer support approach emphasizes that a person who shares a lived experience in common with their peer can offer more effective support and encouragement through empathy.