

A Right to Heal: Mental Health in Diverse Communities



California Pan-Ethnic
HEALTH NETWORK



CALIFORNIA
BLACK HEALTH NETWORK



BE SMOOTH, INC.
HEAL. GROW. CHANGE.

Listening and Learning

WHY?

To improve California's failing public behavioral health system, voters passed the Mental Health Services Act, 2004 (MHSA) to fund multiple initiatives including:

1. Community Services and Supports
2. Prevention and Early Intervention
3. Testing of Innovative Programs

In 2020, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) contracted CPEHN (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network) for 3 years to engage and uplift diverse voices to influence what local programs and services are funded in their communities. Year 1 and Year 2 accomplishments can be found here.

HOW?

Listening sessions with diverse racial and ethnic communities enables CPEHN to amplify the voices of historically marginalized communities whose needs and wishes have been overlooked or assumed.

At the local level, Be Smooth, Inc. collaborated with CPEHN and its statewide partner the California Black Health Network (CBHN) to facilitate a Community Circle with 37 youth and young adult BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) participants from the Stockton area. Ages ranged from 9 to 25 years, with a concentration among those ages 13 and 14. Nearly 1/3 had experienced housing instability. Of those attending K-12 schools, over 3/4 receive free or reduced lunch.

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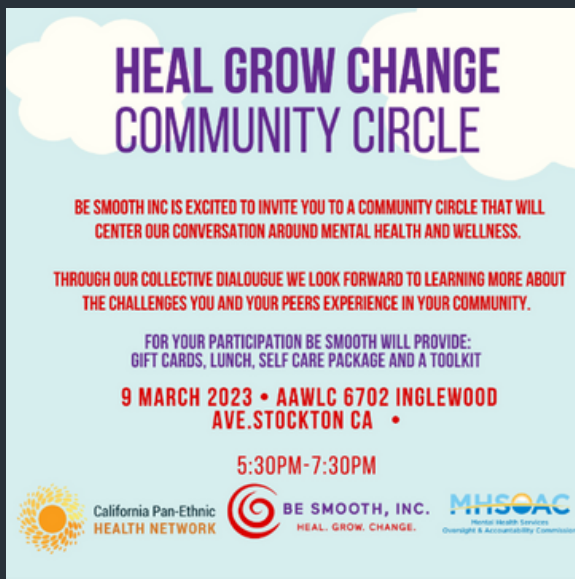
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Circle

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WHAT?

3 Themes Heard From BIPOC Stockton-Area Youth and Young Adults

- 1 Our mental well-being is important
- 2 We need you to keep it confidential
- 3 Friends are our go-to mental health providers

OUR MENTAL WELL-BEING IS IMPORTANT

"Of course," mental well-being is important. It impacts our family relationships for better and worse. Our grades and behavior have been negatively affected when our mental well-being was poor.

WE NEED YOU TO KEEP IT CONFIDENTIAL

We need to be able to trust the person who we are asking for help with our mental well-being. We don't want to be judged and we don't want our parents told.

FRIENDS ARE OUR GO-TO MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

We spend long hours with friends, who know us better than we know ourselves, and we can trust them not to share our secrets.



Pictured: Youth and young adults participating in a community circle at a listening session in Stockton.

A CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS REVEALED THE FOLLOWING:

1. Those who shared the experience of going to therapy described the experience as good
 2. Some disclosed:
 - a. using cannabis to manage symptoms of anxiety and to aid with sleep
 - b. having been suspended or expelled from school for an emotional outburst/behavior
 3. Not all felt supported at school (any school level, including post K-12)
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These results reinforce the role of schools as a support system of friends and trusted adults for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) youth and young adults in the Stockton area. Strengthening schools directly and as a means to connect youth to mental health resources in the larger community is a path towards supporting their mental health and wellness.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This is a historic opportunity to translate what we've learned into action. While A Right to Heal as a project is ending, it has paved the way for MHSA community program planning to *reflect the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of mental health consumers* moving forward by continuing to listen to and support local communities in their advocacy for their mental health.

For more about CPEHN's work mobilizing communities of color to advocate for public policies that advance health equity and improve health outcomes, visit www.cpehn.org.