

## **How YouthSpeak programs are aligned with the Provincial Mental Health Strategy for School Boards:**

### **ABOUT YOUTHSPEAK:**

- ✓ *YouthSpeak's mental health awareness programs focus on well-being, help students identify signs of mental health and substance use problems, reduce stigma, promote help-seeking behaviours and positive coping tools*
- ✓ *YouthSpeak has a 13 year history of training youth in public speaking skills related mental health, bullying and addiction. To date, we have reached over 150,000 students in grades 3-12 and post-secondary, educators, parents and other caring adult allies*
- ✓ *We have built very positive relationships with school board personnel and we work closely to abide by their Mental Health Strategy and Policy when developing program content and materials*
- ✓ *Our programs are unique in that they are developed and delivered by a team of trained youth who all bring lived experience*
- ✓ *We have a formal speaker selection process that includes personal accountability for speakers' messages while being supported in their journey of healing and self-discovery in this important role*
- ✓ *We are mindful of building a diverse team of youth speakers with a range of experiences relevant to youth*
- ✓ *YouthSpeak assemblies and workshops are an effective way to introduce/launch mental health awareness dialogue and initiatives within a school environment*
- ✓ *We work collaboratively with school boards and community partners and provide youth speakers for their events*

### **ABOUT OUR PRESENTATIONS:**

- ✓ *Youth sharing personal stories (contact-based presentations) are a very powerful and proven way to increase awareness, hope, resilience and reduce stigma*
- ✓ *Schools typically book YouthSpeak programs as part of a comprehensive plan that is aligned with school and board mental health initiatives and involve evidence-informed activities and materials based on mindfulness philosophy*
- ✓ *Program content and delivery is youth-friendly, age-appropriate and aims to be inclusive and culturally sensitive*
- ✓ *Trained youth speakers are coached to ensure their messages are accurate, informative and that risky topics such as eating disorders, suicide and self-harming behaviours are talked about in safe ways to avoid triggering audience members who are at-risk*

- ✓ *Some statistical information may be included from reputable sources such as Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Open Minds-Healthy Minds, The Canadian Institute for Health Information, Canadian Mental Health Association*
- ✓ *Additional information shared would only include announcements about youth-oriented events such as our AWAKE conference and our Big BAM Challenge fundraiser*
- ✓ *Our programs are facilitated by a team of trained youth speakers who share their stories of lived experience. They are youth supported throughout their involvement through one-on-one coaching and formal training sessions, as well SafeTALK training through the York Region District School Board*
- ✓ *During conversations with students following a presentation, youth speakers are aware that, as part of their SafeTALK training, they must connect any student who discloses harm to a person within the school before leaving the school*

#### **ABOUT BOOKING:**

- ✓ *We work with individual school schedules, however most of our programs run for approximately 45-70 minutes*
- ✓ *References from other schools and school board person are provided as requested, as well a list of testimonials and schools-visited-to-date*
- ✓ *We arrange for a phone call, as needed, to discuss specific content that individual schools choose to include/not include for their students*
- ✓ *A booking email which includes information about logistics school support is sent once the booking is confirmed*
- ✓ *YouthSpeak will provide schools with a parent/guardian letter template as needed*
- ✓ *We provides schools with a list of resources, activity sheets i.e. word searches, Tip sheets following a presentation*
- ✓ *We provide parent and teacher groups as a way to build capacity within the school community to support well-being for students and their adult allies*
- ✓ *We follow up with schools in order to provide any further resources and as an opportunity for schools to provide feedback which is used in program development and speaker training*