

BOOST Report to Community

What is BOOST?

The Building on Our Strengths Together (BOOST) Program facilitated through carya, has been a two year pilot project focused on youth victims of crime between the ages of 14 - 24. Over the last two years, the program has offered group and individual counselling for local youth who have been impacted by crime. It has also sought to better understand the impacts of youth victimization and the community's role in supporting these youth, by facilitating consultations with key community groups who encounter youth victims.

Our project is wrapping up at the end of 2018 and we would like to extend a thank you to all community members who have participated in consultations, and sending youth our way, to help us understand more about their experiences with crime.

Over the last two years we have:

- Trained 20 staff at carya to deliver the BOOST curriculum in group and individual settings
- Provided BOOST curriculum in both group and individual settings
- Organized and facilitated 12 community consultations with youth, service providers and community members to better understand their experiences of crime within their community. These consults have involved programs such as:
 - Youth at Nelson Mandela High School
 - Access Mental Health through Alberta Health Services
 - Sirius Girls program

Emerging Themes - Identified by Youth and Community

- Youth are being exposed to multiple types of crime daily including: bullying, interpersonal violence, sexual violence and assaults
- Youth do not self-identify as being victims or having experienced a crime
 - The impacts of experiencing violence can be minimized or dismissed by community members, or youth themselves
- There are commonly shared impacts of these experiences such as:
 - Unhealthy coping like anxiety, depression, self-harm and PTSD
 - Challenges in having safe and healthy relationships with others
 - Mistrust of health and justice systems
- There is a lack of resources available to youth for a number of reasons:
 - Agencies are over-capacity and do not have the staff or financial resources to work with youth who have been victimized
 - Services are not integrated with each other which leads to barriers for youth
 - There are challenges with accessibility (transportation, time, childcare etc.)



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- Minority youth are more vulnerable to being victims of crime and face more challenges in accessing services
 - There is a need for programs to understand the impact individual and systemic racism have
 - A higher capacity is needed to build grassroots level trust with minority communities in order to develop trust
 - The scope of BOOST might make it difficult for youth to be able to relate to each other. For example, a youth who has experienced war-related trauma in their home country might not feel like they can connect with youth who have experienced bullying

Solutions: Based on Youth Voices

- Trust and safety are key factors in helping youth access services. Bridge building and/or help with transition to services are needed
 - Having educational evening with parents
 - Organizations being more open to other service providers coming in to provide the group or program—we don't all have to feel that we need to do it all
- Focus on creating relationships before implementing programs, in order to increase engagement
 - This may mean programs take longer to develop and implement
- Find the appropriate language to help youth identify with a program like BOOST
 - Stay away from words like "victim"

What has carya Committed to?

- Continuing to train carya staff in the BOOST model so that counselors can better assess and provide appropriate interventions to youth victims of crime
- Sharing knowledge and the curriculum with our external partners who also work with youth who have experienced victimization. These partners include:
 - Restorative Actions for Transformation (RAFT)
 - John Howard Society
- Disseminating learnings from our evaluation with all community partners so that as a community, we are all better equipped to meet the needs of our youth

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