

Anti-Racism in Action: Supporting Systemic Change for Integrated Youth Services

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Introduction

As a provincial network of Integrated Youth Services (IYS) across the province of British Columbia, Canada, Foundry is working towards identifying and addressing systemic barriers, such as racism, colonization and oppression. Recognizing that youth and family/caregiver wellness is impacted by racism in multiple ways, including access to care services, a feelings of trust and both implicit and explicit biases of care systems, Foundry is committed to changing the culture of health care management, organizational culture and leadership development to realize better outcomes and safer experiences of care for Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC) who access Foundry services, both virtually and in physical spaces.

Objectives

To share learnings, tools and recommendations that support identifying and addressing ways racism is systemically supported in IYS and opportunities for organizational collaboration in response. To underscore the importance of both leader endorsement and appropriate resourcing to realizing an anti-racist workplace that supports knowledge sharing across the network of IYS centres and virtual spaces.

Approach/Methods

Drawing from work and activities that began in 2020, we will share our journey in identifying and addressing the ways in which racism and oppression are evident in our organizational structures and policies. Alongside this we will offer knowledge and understanding towards the importance of robust youth engagement in anti-racist practice and meaningful ways to include community partners. We will provide practical and achievable recommendations for actions that other health systems and organizations can implement to support anti-racist practice to support youth wellness.

Results/Policy Implications

Talking about race, acknowledging the prevalence of racism and the ways in which racism directly impacts wellness has created an organizational culture that is much more attuned to the nuances of young people's identities, the lived experiences of IBPOC youth and families/caregivers and the serious responsibility of our health care systems to do better. We know IBPOC people experience more harm in accessing care of any kind, and for us to disrupt and change that experience for the better we need to get real in understanding how racism, colonization and other tools of oppression are perpetuated in how we support IYS across the province.

Conclusion

Foundry is uniquely positioned as a leader in IYS in Canada to help inform the ways in which policy, practice and integration of anti-racist practice can be of direct benefit to youth and families/caregivers accessing Foundry services. Through intentional, collaborative and meaningful commitments and actions we are realizing benefit and better outcomes for youth, families/caregivers, the network, and ourselves.

