



RESEARCH2CONVERSATION

“A Community-Led Initiative Involving Educators, Parents, Students, and Leaders to Tackle the Black Adolescent Suicide Crisis in Ohio”

Unveiling the Crisis

Insights, Statistics, & Community Responses: This initiative stands as a testament to the indispensable role of community voices in addressing the urgent Black adolescent suicide crisis through culturally attuned, effective, and lasting measures. Anchored in the wisdom and involvement of those deeply impacted, our objective is to cultivate a network that bolsters the resilience and well-being of Black youth throughout Ohio.

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Bridging Gaps and Building Bonds

African American Engagement Workgroup (AAEW)

- **Pastors:** Engaging faith-based leaders to offer spiritual support and guidance.
- **Intergenerational Families:** Strengthening familial foundations through shared experiences and support systems.
- **Adolescents:** Elevating the voices of Black youth to inform and tailor community responses.

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Engagement and Empowerment

Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators Conference (OABSE)

- **Educators:** Mobilizing educational leaders to implement informed practices supporting Black adolescent mental health.
- **Parents:** Garnering parental perspectives to enrich understanding and involvement in preventative strategies.

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Policy and Practice Alignment

Euclid Collaborative w/ Moore Counseling & Mediation Services

- **Community Leaders:** Uniting civic stakeholders in the pursuit of coherent and community-driven objectives.
- **Behavioral Health Professionals:** Incorporating professional insights to refine intervention and care models.
- **Local Government Officials:** Establishing policy frameworks that prioritize and sustain mental health initiatives for Black adolescents.



Dr. Beverly Vandiver's Research on Black Youth Suicide

1. Dr. Beverly Vandiver's presentations of research on Black youth suicide to each community in our initiative were pivotal.
2. These presentations highlighted alarming statistics on homicide, suicide, and incarceration rates among Black youth, emphasizing the urgency of addressing these issues through community collaboration and targeted interventions.
3. The responses collected immediately upon hearing her research provided invaluable insights into the community's perspectives and needs, driving our efforts to develop effective solutions.

Key Research Highlights

Homicide Rates: Black youth aged 15-24 are six times more likely to be victims of homicide than their white peers.

Suicide Rates: The suicide rate for Black youth aged 10-19 has increased by 36% over the past decade.

Mental Health Access: Only 30% of Black adolescents with major depressive episodes receive treatment, compared to 50% of their white peers.

Social Media Impact: Recognition of the significant and often underestimated impact of social media on youth mental health.

Community Collaboration: Emphasis on the need for community-informed responses to Black youth suicide and mental health challenges.



Unveiling the Mental Health Crisis: Engaging Community Voices in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland

Our initiative is committed to addressing the crucial mental health needs of Black adolescents in Ohio's prominent urban hubs—Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. We aim to catalyze community involvement, enhance the accessibility of mental health services, and elevate the voices of youth through:

- Community-driven conversations.
- Dialogues that pulse with the lived experiences of our youth.
- Implemented interventions, deeply rooted in evidence, to advance holistic well-being.

Our Anticipated Outcomes:

- A surge in awareness around the intricacies of mental health within the Black adolescent community.
- Significantly bolstered mental health support structures that resonate with youth needs.
- Reinforced networks among community stakeholders, woven through trust and collaboration.

Concentrated Stakeholder Engagement:

Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators (OABSE) Conference: Educator and Community Engagement

- Uniting educators and community advocates to co-create educational environments responsive to the emotional wellness of Black adolescents.

Cincinnati Community Gathering: Youth and Family Inclusion

- Engaging directly with youth and their families, fostering an environment where their stories shape the narrative and drive change.

Euclid Initiative by Moore Counseling & Mediation Services: Professional and Policymaker Collaboration

- Highlighting the important roles of mental health professionals and local government officials to ensure that policies and practices meet the community's needs.



Common Themes

Community Integration and Solution-Building Efforts

- Our gatherings uniformly underscore the indispensability of rooting mental health initiatives in community engagement and collaborative strategies.

Youth Participation and Advocacy

- A central theme is the imperative to include youth voices as articulators of their experiences and agents of change within the discourse surrounding their mental well-being.

Recognition of Systemic Frustrations

- A palpable frustration is evident regarding systemic hindrances and the inadequate state of support for mental health, marking a call to action for all stakeholders.

Identifying and Overcoming Obstacles

- We acknowledge the multifaceted challenges posed by the criminal justice system alongside the pressing issue of insufficient mental health resources.

Optimism Amid Adversity

- Despite confronting weighty subjects, the conversations are imbued with a spirit of optimism and unwavering commitment to tackling mental health concerns.

OVERALL COMMUNITY EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

- **Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators (OABSE) Conference: Educational Empowerment**
Deliberations centered on fortifying educational support systems and expanding resources to enhance mental health within academic settings.
- **Cincinnati Community Summit: Youth Suicide and Anti-Violence Emphasis**
A pronounced focus emerged on the worrying trends of youth suicide and violence, with urgent calls for preventative measures and support.
- **Euclid Symposium: Addressing Systemic Barriers**
Discussions highlighted the need for dismantling systemic obstacles, paving the way for community-formulated solutions to come to the forefront.



Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators Annual Parent Summit

At the Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators (OABSE) Annual Parent Summit, held in Columbus, Ohio, the discourse broadened to encompass the voices of both educators and parents. This integral event provided an opportunity for these critical stakeholders to convene and exchange dialogue on the mental health landscape of Black adolescents. Emphasizing community synergy and proactive support mechanisms, the summit offered a collaborative venue for presenting insights, evidence-based data, and poignant narratives that animated a shared desire for youth empowerment.

Audience Composition & Reflective Outcomes

The convening brought together a vibrant mix of attendees, prominently featuring **educators, parents, and community proponents**, all united in their focus on amplifying the educational system's role as a frontline supporter of adolescent mental health.

- **Communal Dedication:** It was underscored that the enveloping fabric of community solidarity is pivotal in advancing the mental wellness of Black adolescents.
- **Bridging Communication Gaps:** Recognizing the discrepancy when the voices of young people go unnoticed, leading to withdrawal and skepticism toward the mental health establishment.
- **Practical, Impactful Interventions:** An emphasis was laid on the necessity for mental health foundational training for educators and the establishment of nurturing community support frameworks.

- ✓ Noteworthy Partnerships
 - ✓ Center of Hope Family Services
 - ✓ National Science Foundation
 - ✓ Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators
 - ✓ Ohio Department of Education

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The summit also bore witness to the entreaties of an educator who shared, “Our task is not to fill their minds alone but to provide a haven for hearts in turmoil. When the emotional needs of our students are met, that’s when we truly teach.”

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Echoing the sentiments shared during the summit, one parent poignantly noted, “Empowerment in education begins at the crossroads of teaching and parenting. Our collective input here at the OABSE Parent Summit is testament to our unyielding commitment to our children's futures.”

Voices United: The African American Engagement Workgroup on Black Adolescent Mental Health Resilience

In Cincinnati, Ohio, a converging of minds and hearts transpired as seven esteemed pastors initiated a crucial gathering, rallying the community to a frank and open dialogue on Black adolescent mental health. Within the sanctity of a local church, a rich tapestry of stakeholders—including parents, educators, community leaders, and adolescents themselves—shared their lived experiences and concerns in a collective reflection on the challenges and aspirations that mark the path to mental wellness.

Audience Engagement & Conversation Reflections

- The event was marked by the genuine engagement of youth and their families, accentuating their personal narratives and the pressing need for accessible community support.
- **Amplifying Youth Expression:** It was underscored that attentively listening to Black youths is critical in formulating mental health actions that genuinely resonate.
- **Countering Mental Health Stigma:** Participants vehemently agreed on the importance of eradicating the stigma around mental health prevalent within the Black community, articulating a clear call for acceptance and empathy.
- **Promoting Resource Availability:** The discussion consistently highlighted the urgency of ensuring mental health resources are known, obtainable, and supportive, characterizing them as pillars in the architecture of effective community intervention.

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Embodying the spirit of the congregation, a young participant proclaimed, “We’re more than our struggles; our stories can ignite the flames of change if only they’re acknowledged.” This powerful assertion underlines the initiative’s commitment to centering youths’ voices as a catalyst for informed and impactful reforms.

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Complementing this viewpoint, one of the pastors shared, “Our role in shepherding our flock extends beyond spiritual guidance; it entails forging a community where every young mind feels heard, supported, and valued.” These insights encapsulate the shared sentiment at the Cincinnati event—that galvanizing community action and fortifying networks of empathy is crucial to the mental well-being of Black adolescents.

Strategic Pathways: The Euclid Forum on Strengthening Black Youth Mental Health Networks

Hosted by Dr. Moore of Moore Counseling and Mediation Services, this pivotal event convened in Euclid, Ohio, set the stage for a vital dialogue among community leaders, mental health professionals, and passionate citizens. With the Mayor of Euclid championing the cause, attendees collaborated to confront and strategize around the systemic impediments to mental health services, while reinforcing the value of community-based support initiatives.

Participant Engagement & Collaborative Insights:

- The discussions engaged mental health professionals and local government officials, homing in on systemic reforms and the cultivation of community-centric mental health programs.
- **Addressing Structural Challenges:** The dialogue tabled a tight focus on identification and dismantling of systemic constraints that impinge upon the delivery of effective support for Black youth.
- **Fostering Community Support:** The shared vision centered on leveraging and enhancing community-initiated programs as vital conduits for accessible and relevant mental health services.
- **Amplifying Education and Training:** A resonant theme was the significance of intensifying efforts to educate and equip community advocates and professionals in mental health first aid, ensuring a responsive and informed support network.

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Reflecting on the collective urgency, a mental health professional from the forum shared, “Bridge-building starts with understanding the gap. Our work here focuses on eradicating the divides that isolate our youth from the help they desperately need.”

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Complementing this sentiment, one local official noted, “True collaboration means aligning policy with practice by tearing down barriers and innovating from within our community – that’s the essence of our meeting here in Euclid.”

Solutions and Strategies

1. **Increase Community Engagement:** Develop initiatives to actively involve youth and community members in decision-making processes related to mental health. Encouraging open dialogues and listening sessions can help ensure that the voices of Black adolescents are heard and acted upon.
2. **Enhance Mental Health Resources:** Advocate for more mental health professionals in schools and promote awareness of existing resources like NAMI Franklin County. Improving access to mental health services is crucial to addressing the disparity in treatment.
3. **Address Social Media Impact:** Implement educational programs on responsible social media use and consider policies to limit cell phone use during school hours. Educating adolescents about the potential negative effects of social media can help mitigate its impact.
4. **Strengthen Parental Involvement:** Provide educational programs for parents to improve their listening and supportive skills, helping them to better understand and address their children's mental health needs.

Community-Based Initiatives

1. **Mental Health First Aid Training:** Community programs that offer mental health first aid training have been successful in equipping community members with the skills needed to support individuals experiencing mental health crises. Such programs help in early identification and intervention.
2. **Barbershop Conversations:** Initiatives that utilize barbershops and salons as spaces for mental health conversations have proven effective. These informal settings provide a familiar and trusted environment where individuals feel comfortable discussing their mental health.

Cultural Competency in Mental Health

1. **Training for Providers:** Mental health professionals should receive training in cultural competency to understand and respect the cultural backgrounds and experiences of Black adolescents. This training should include awareness of cultural stigma surrounding mental health and effective communication strategies.
2. **Community Involvement:** Involving community leaders and members in the design and delivery of mental health services ensures that these services are culturally relevant and accessible.
3. **Representation:** Increasing the representation of Black professionals in the mental health field can help build trust and relatability between providers and clients. Representation matters in fostering a supportive and understanding environment for Black adolescents .

FINAL THOUGHTS

Three recent events in Ohio emphasized the urgent need for a multifaceted approach to the Black adolescent suicide crisis. In Columbus, Cincinnati, and Euclid, conversations highlighted the significance of:

- **Community-Driven Solutions:** Engaging educators, families, and community leaders to create supportive environments and culturally competent mental health resources.
- **Breaking Down Barriers:** Addressing systemic issues that hinder access to care, including cultural stigma and lack of resources.
- **Youth Engagement:** Involving young people in discussions and solutions to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.

These discussions revealed critical gaps in our understanding of culturally competent interventions and the effectiveness of community programs. They also stressed the need for further research into barriers preventing Black youth from seeking help. By filling these gaps and implementing the recommended solutions, we can foster a mental health system that truly supports Black adolescents. This ongoing dialogue is vital to ensure every young person feels valued and empowered on their mental health journey.



Uniting for Impact: Collaborative Partnerships for Black Adolescent Mental Well-being

Our mission is buoyed by the support and contributions of an alliance of partners, whose collective wisdom, resources, and dedication are the lifeblood of our efforts. Together with these organizations, we share an unwavering commitment to shape a resilient future for the mental health of Black adolescents.

- **Moore Counseling and Mediation services:** Pioneering therapeutic and mediation strategies to nurture mental health in our communities.
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Offering a wealth of knowledge and advocacy for mental health support across diverse landscapes.
- **Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services:** Providing critical governmental backing and access to resources foundational for our initiatives.
- **Local School Districts:** Educating and supporting our youth within the very institutions where they spend much of their time.
- **Faith-Based Organizations:** Harnessing the power of spiritual communities to uplift and sustain the emotional well-being of our adolescents.
- **The Mayor of Euclid, Ohio:** Lending a potent voice and platform for change within the sphere of local government.

These partnerships form the cornerstone of our coalition, propelling us towards achieving substantial and sustainable advancements in mental health outcomes for Black adolescents within Ohio and beyond.

Culturally Competent Design

- **Nothing for Us Without Us:** Actively involves Black adolescents and their communities in developing mental health solutions.
- **Ownership and Empowerment:** Fosters a sense of ownership, making interventions more effective and sustainable.
- **Community Engagement:** Ensures that solutions are relevant and culturally appropriate by engaging community members in the research process.
- **Effective Interventions:** Tailors approaches to be culturally competent, enhancing their impact and sustainability.

Contribution to Understanding

This research project provides valuable insights into the specific mental health challenges faced by Black adolescents. By collecting data and personal stories from community events in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Euclid, the project highlights the unique barriers to mental health care and the need for culturally competent solutions. The findings underscore the importance of community-based interventions and offer practical recommendations for addressing mental health disparities.

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