



YOUTH MOVE CHANGE INITIATIVE

**What Helps & What Harms
BIPOC & LGBTQIA2S+ Youth
Navigating Mental Health**

**YOUTH
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Perspectives from Youth with Lived Experience

The following were identified as most harmful for BIPOC & LGBTQIA2S+ youth in accessing Youth Peer Support (YPS) and mental health services:

1. A lack of formal peer support services (particularly in rural communities)
2. A lack of visibility of existing youth peer support services
3. A lack of financial access to services (and transportation TO services)
4. A lack of BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ youth peer providers
5. Ongoing stigma around 'mental health' and seeking support for emotional distress due to cultural interpretation (and lack of cultural responsiveness to that within mental health services)
6. A prominent history of intergenerational trauma caused by mental health providers

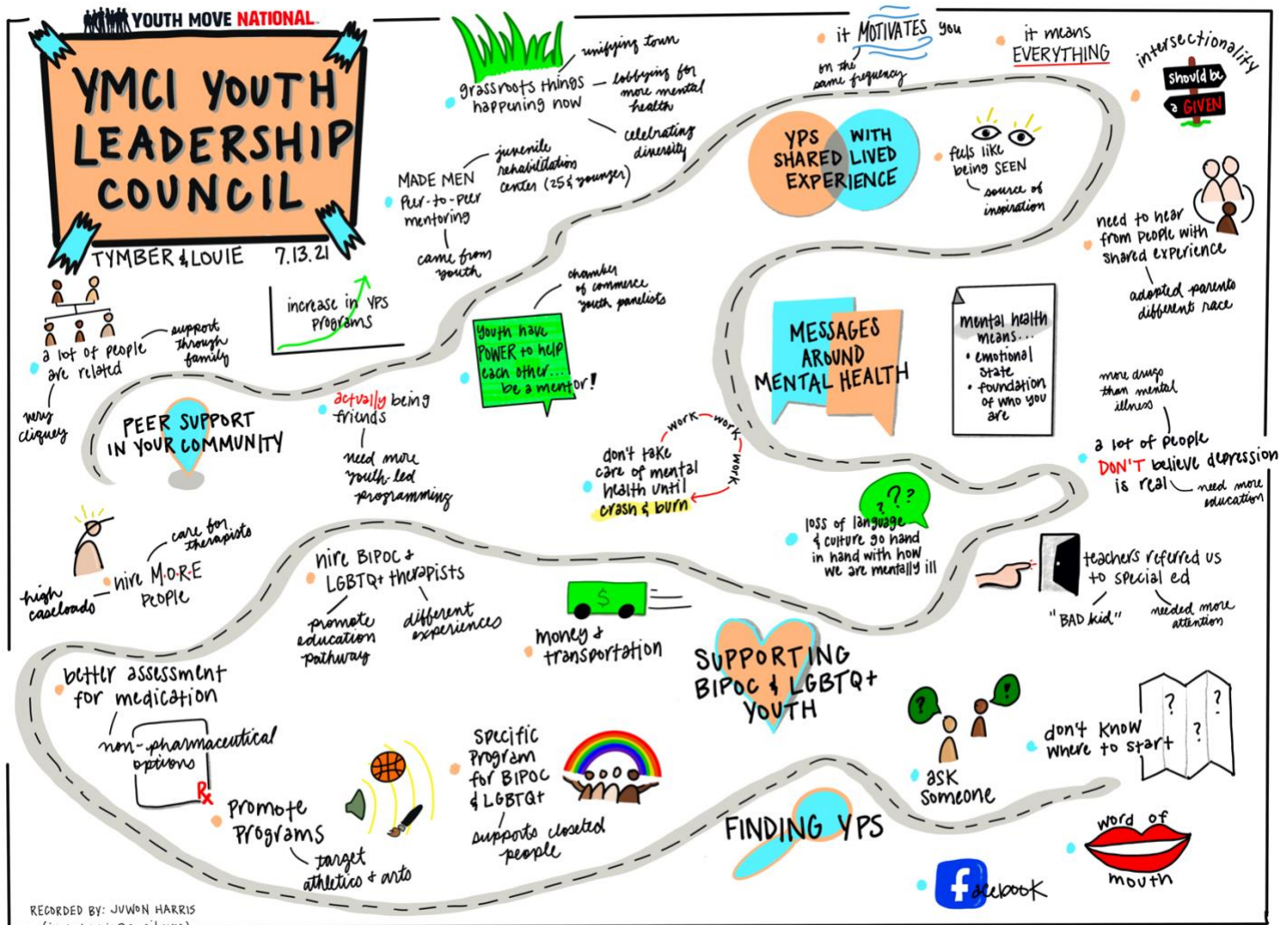
The following were identified as best practices in what is most helpful for transgender and nonbinary youth in accessing YPS and mental health services



Feeling truly seen and supported happens when receiving support from someone who shares their community's lived experiences.

“I think it means everything, you know. I feel if you're talking to someone that can't really understand what you're talking about, they're not really going to understand what you're going through.”

“When you have someone there who is supporting you with the same kind of lived experience, it's like you guys are on the same frequency, like everything is more aligned... **Lived experience is that motivation, and just that it's a different vibe. It's a different feel.**”





The concept and value of “mental health” can be interpreted in a variety of ways; and it is important to look at these narratives across communities and cultures, especially in understanding why BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ young people may not be seeking mental health services.

“...there's a lot of people who don't believe that depression is real, that anxiety is a battle, that kind of these...I don't like using the word ‘mental illness,’ but for lack of a better term, there's a lot of stigma that those things don't exist.”

“Where I'm at in my community, “mental health,” it's like, **people don't want to talk about it until they are actually suffering from some of the burnout from it.**”

[“Mental health” is] “really stigmatized, especially in my tribal community, they just don't. It's a lot of things that we've been through, like generational trauma, that we just don't talk about it...so that's kind of how it is, **for people in my tribal community to just go and talk about it, move past it, regarding your ‘mental health’... a lot of loss of our language and culture goes hand-in-hand with how we are ‘mentally ill,’ I guess.**”

YPS and mental health programs should hire more BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ young people for leadership roles within peer support and mental health services, as well as to lead the hiring process itself.

“I think it starts out with who you're hiring, to who you're getting involved to better support those systems, because it's different for people like me versus some white guy on the street, you know?”

"I think it's definitely important to have people with different experiences and lived experiences who are doing the hiring and in the higher positions, so it can trickle down into all inclusion."

YPS and mental health programs should provide ongoing education and a pathway for BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ young people to enter the mental health/peer support workforce.

"I feel like more people should promote education and how to get to those positions that people have."

"I feel like it would be beneficial for youth to understand that they have the power to help each other."

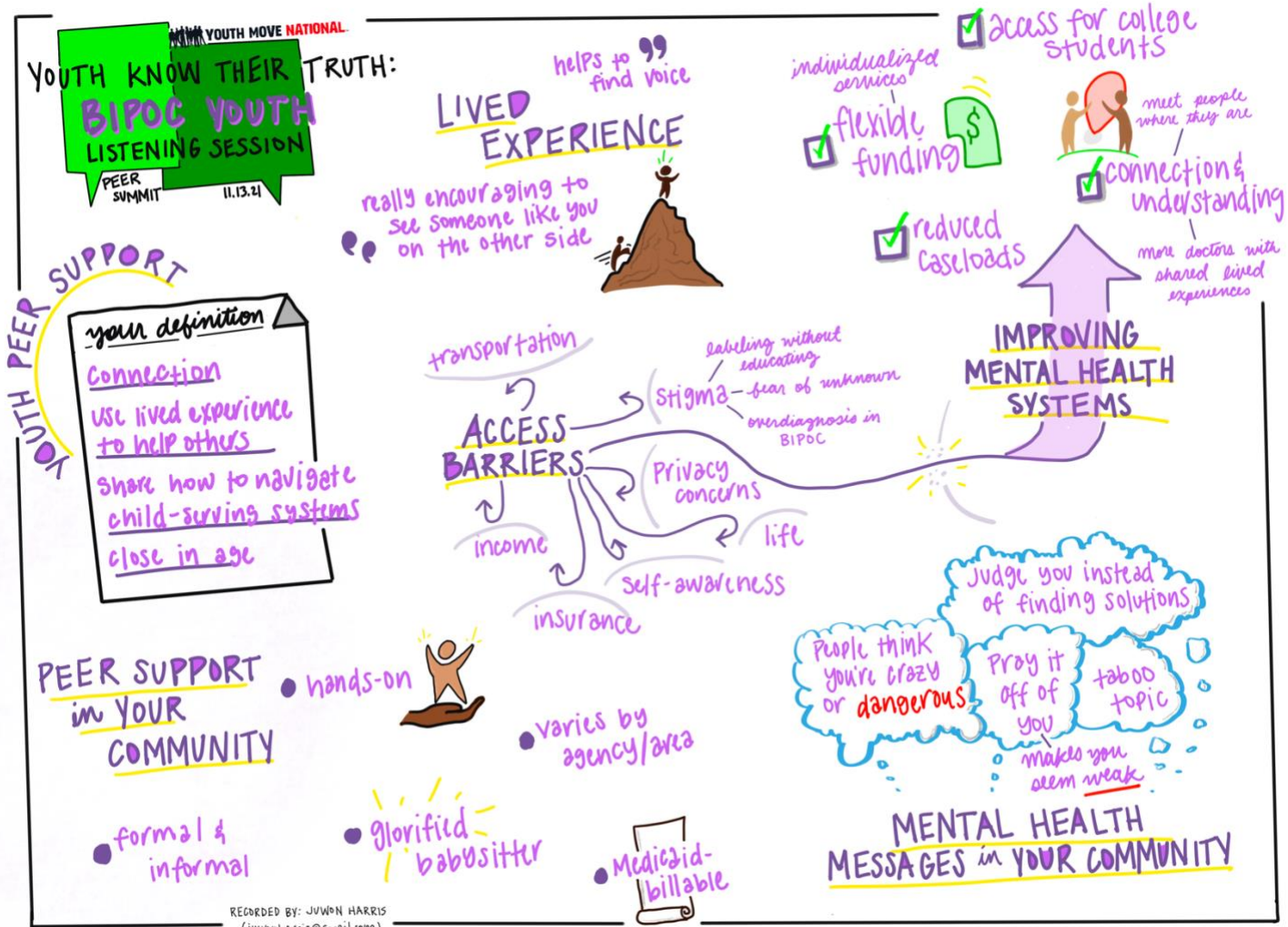




Provide support services specifically for young people who identify as both BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+.

“I feel like **they should have a program for BIPOC and LGBTQ specifically.**”

“I feel like there's a lot of BIPOC people that are still in the closet, or just haven't been open about it, because they don't have support from somebody that they know, that is the same, in my town. So there's a lot of white people, there's a lot of Latinos, a lot of Black people, **but there's not a lot of LGBTQ BIPOC people.**”



Enhance visibility of youth peer support and mental health services in more informal contexts/community spaces, as young people at large find resources through word-of-mouth.

“I don't know any prominent ones [in my area] that actually offer peer support and stuff...So I would have to actually ask... like my mom, my friend groups, and so forth.”



“I would kind of probably go off like word-of-mouth. Just checking around, seeing who knows, maybe some programs, just like off the top of their head or what to search for.”

Leadership from BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ communities in youth-serving systems, like mental health, is imperative to creating comprehensive and equitable systems change. We must elevate these voices across all youth-serving efforts.

What conversations are you having?

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