

Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Initiative State Resource Team Update - April 2024

We share these policy priorities with caution. As a partner, we ask that you **please not take this information and share it or run with it in the name of or on behalf of the Initiative in any way**. Power-sharing requires patience and permission. It is imperative that we continue to let YOUTH lead this. They must be able to use their own voice to speak their own words and see the connection between their action and the resulting change.



[Summit Recap Video](#)

Summit Recap (Process):

Our Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Summit took place in Year 1 on October 13, 2023. After a year of relationship-building and intentional community engagement, the Summit brought together over 200 Black young people in grades 8-12 across the Brooklyns. The purpose of this gathering was to celebrate Blackness, pour into Black youth, create a space where Black Joy was tangible. Then, under the leadership of Black youth in the space, identify key priorities around mental health and wellbeing and shape change that is needed. Click the link above to watch a 2-minute recap video of this powerful event. This video was created by one of our high school youth interns. Additional details can be found in the following [report](#).

Policy Themes (Results):

After the Summit, the Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Initiative's Advisory Council took the policy boards created by youth at the Summit and organized the policies into themes. The following six policy priorities themes emerged:



MAKE SURE BLACK
YOUTH ARE SAFE
AT ALL TIMES.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- safety on social media from bullying
- safety in the community from gun violence
- safety in schools from racism



GIVE BLACK PEOPLE THE
SPACE TO CREATE OUR
OWN SPACES AND HAVE
OUR VOICES HEARD.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- dedicated spaces for Black students in schools supported by Black adults
- more opportunities for Black people to come together in positive ways



PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS
OF BLACK YOUTH THAT
ARE DEFINED BY BLACK
YOUTH.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- access to more food throughout the school day
- real responses to issues that Black youth bring up



PROVIDE MORE EDUCATION
ON BLACK HISTORY AND
CULTURE MORE OFTEN,
INCLUDING LEARNING
BEYOND ACADEMICS.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- Black history and culture throughout K-12 curriculum, not just Black History Month
- more books by Black authors
- uplifting Black culture in ways that prepare us for life outside of school



MORE BLACK TEACHERS IN
SCHOOLS.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- TEACHERS in the classroom, not just Black staff
- Black principals, vice principals, supervisors, and school board members



CHANGE THE NARRATIVE AROUND
MENTAL HEALTH IN WAYS THAT
STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT FOR BLACK FAMILIES.
ADDRESS GENERATIONAL TRAUMA.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- mental health professionals for Black/African parents
- free family therapy

Youth Voice Post Summit:

In February and March 2024, we held engaging, youth-led assemblies at Anoka High School and Park Center High School to give this information back to Black young people. During these assemblies and our Black Youth Space Kickoff, we reignited the energy from the Summit in Year 1, shared data around what took place at and after the Summit, and then asked the youth to rank these six themes in order of urgency and importance. This approach was rooted in transparency with process and information for the community, and an intentional effort to meet youth where they are at. We owe it to them to show up and keep showing up. We reached 164 Black youth in grades 8-12 with this process – 70% of whom had not attended the Summit and got to make their voice heard in this work for the first time. **Excitingly, 89% of these students also stated that they are “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to actively participate in advocating for change related to the priority they selected.**

RBYMH Policy Priorities:

What matters most to you? [PICK 1] The following priorities were decided by 200 Black youth at the Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Summit on October 13th, 2023
164 responses



The top two policy priorities that youth have selected as *most urgent*, and therefore will be the focus of our demonstration projects in this next phase are as follows:

Make sure Black youth are safe at all times.

Youth at the Summit described this as safety on social media from bullying, safety in the community from gun violence, and safety in schools from racism.

Change the narrative around mental health in ways that strengthen mental health support for Black families. Address generational trauma.

Youth at the Summit described this as mental health professionals for Black/African parents and free family therapy.

Next Steps:

In coming weeks, we will agree on a path forward with the Advisory Council, State Resource Team, and youth leaders. This path will continue to be rooted in the values that the Advisory Council set and is protective of youth and community.

Our Advisory Council and State Resource Team must assess the current landscape of these two policy areas and begin the action planning process around how to make change tangible. We must ensure that Black youth understand this process and are engaged with it in ways that are mutually beneficial to us and them. This is about systems change, not placing the burden of change on Black youth. As we move in this next phase, the Initiative stands firm in the truth that Black people are *inherently* good and Black joy (as defined by Black people) is at the center of informing what is needed to reimagine policy for the sake of Black youth life, health, and wellbeing.

Questions to consider in preparation for our next SRT meeting:

- ❖ What are your initial thoughts or questions about these policy areas?
- ❖ Who are key players in these policy areas? (specific people or organizations)
 - Are there other stakeholder groups that were not named above who we should consider? Groups or people who might support or oppose change to policies related to these topics?
- ❖ What are current policies, programs, or initiatives related to these priorities?
 - What is working or effective about these efforts?
 - What has been ineffective about these efforts? Have these programs had unintended consequences or caused harm? What went wrong?
 - Have these addressed Black/African youth specifically in any way?
- ❖ What policy directions or actions can youth imagine?
- ❖ What insight do you have related to the process towards policy change that are important for the community to know at the ground-level?