

Grow Mindfulness Train-the-Trainer Program for Youth

Year 1 Progress Report
December 2019



An agency of the Government of Ontario
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This project is made possible through the generous support of Ontario Trillium Foundation's Grow Grant.

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Background

The Centre for Mindfulness Studies (CMS) received a 3-year Ontario Trillium Foundation GROW grant for an integrated mindfulness train-the-trainer program that will train 60 frontline workers from 15 youth-serving agencies across the City of Toronto.

The Program is designed to increase the capacity of frontline workers by providing them with mindfulness-based training to strengthen both their personal and professional resilience and their capacity to deliver this program to co-workers and youth participants (ages 16-29).

The training consists of two programs:

- MBW: Mindfulness-Based Wellness
- MBI: Mindfulness-Based Intervention

Goals

The goal is to equip supportive allies such as frontline trainees, with the skills to support youth to build resilience and well-being.

- Strengthen frontline trainees' sense of personal agency by increasing their resilience and emotional intelligence, and reducing stress from workplace burn-out
- Enable frontline trainees to become knowledgeable mindfulness teachers by instilling in them a clear understanding of the principles, assumptions, and key teaching points of mindfulness
- Empower frontline trainees to become effective mindfulness facilitators by helping them master core mindfulness facilitation skills

Benefits

Agencies will have another service and form of support to provide to their staff and youth participants. Each agency would be able to continue offering mindfulness-based programs to staff and youth participants at the close of the training.

- Frontline trainees will be equipped with another skill and resource for their personal and professional use
- Agency participants (both staff and youth participants) will have access to resources and support to develop a mindfulness practice for personal resilience
- Development of stronger community partnerships and enhanced services within the social service sector

Participating Agencies

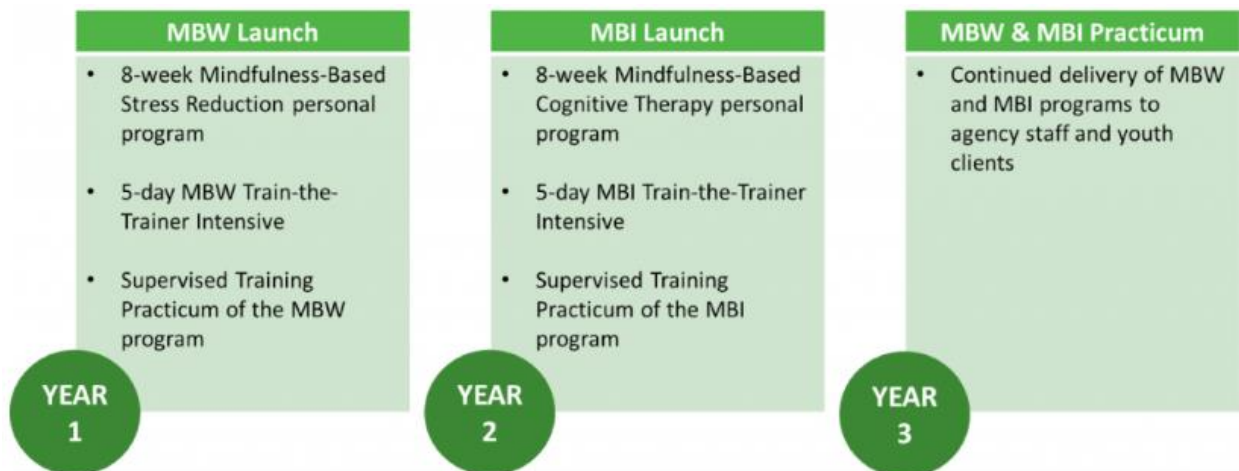
CMS partnered with 20 youth-serving agencies in Toronto. The table below shows a snapshot of the clientele and services of our partner agencies.

Agency Name	Agency Clientele	Agency Services
Arrabon House	Young Women (13-24 y/o)	Housing, Counselling
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Children & Youth in Toronto	Mentoring
CultureLink	Newcomers in Toronto	Employment and Training Programs, Mentoring, Settlement Programs, Social and Peer Support
Dixon Hall	At-risk members of East Downtown Toronto; Children and Youth (3-29 y/o)	Arts-Based Program, Employment and Training Programs, Housing, Youth Centre
East Metro Youth Services	Youth and Young Adults in East Toronto with mental health challenges	Case Management, Counselling, Housing, Social and Peer Support
Elizabeth Fry Toronto	Women in Conflict with the Law	Community Support, Counselling, Employment and Training Programs, Housing
Jessie's Place	Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents (19 and below) and their babies	Case Management, Counselling, Educational Programs, Health Services, Housing
LOFT Community Services	Youth with Mental Health Challenges	Case Management, Counselling, Community Support, Housing
Massey Centre	Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents (13-25 y/o) and their babies	Counselling, Housing, Parenting Programs
Woodgreen Community Services' Rites of Passage	Youth (12-26 y/o) of African descent in Toronto	African-centered 18-week program
Sheena's Place	Individuals with eating disorders, friends and family	Social and Peer Support

Agency Name	Agency Clientele	Agency Services
SKETCH Working Arts with Planned Parenthood	Youth (16-29 y/o): homeless, marginalized, in poverty Youth (13-29 y/o) in Toronto	Arts-Based Program Counselling, Health Services, Parenting Programs
Springboard Services	Youth in conflict with the law	Case Management, Counselling, Educational Programs, Skill Development Workshops
Stella's Place	Youth with Mental Health Challenges (16-29 y/o)	Counselling, Social and Peer Support, Arts-Based Programs
West Neighborhood House	Children and Youth	Programming for Children and Youth
AboutFace	Individuals with facial differences	Educational Programs, Social and Peer Support
StepStones for Youth	Children and Youth (6-24 y/o): from unstable, low income homes and have been in contact with child protection, and/or legal systems	Camp, Employment and Training, Mentoring, Social and Peer Support
WE Charity	Youth	Social and Peer Support
West Hill Collegiate Institute	Grade 9-12 Students	School
Youthlink	Youth (12-24 y/o) in Scarborough and Toronto with mental health and intellectual development challenges	Counselling

Program Overview

The frontline trainees are participating in a three-year training consisting of:



We are currently in Year 1 of the project and the frontline trainees went through an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) personal program, a 5-day MBW Train-the-Trainer Intensive, and a continuing Supervised Practicum.

Evaluation

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Personal Program

Attending an 8-week MBSR program (2.5 hrs each week) was the first stage in the training of frontline workers. This personal program aims to develop their mindfulness practice, to help manage stress, and to improve their well-being. 65 frontline trainees completed the program. Three MBSR groups were delivered in the following period: March 25 - May 27, April 3 - May 22, and April 11 - June 6, 2019.

MBSR Program Rating

A course evaluation was administered at the end of the 8-week program. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Results showed that on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):

PROGRAM EVALUATION	Mean
Overall, how would you rate this program? (1 - 10)	8.3
How important has the program been for you? (1 - 10)	8.0
Will you continue to practice what you have learned?	Yes (100%)

MBSR Program Benefits

The frontline trainees' perceived stress, well-being, and mindfulness skills were measured before and after the program, using standard, widely-accepted scales: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), WHO-5 Well-

Being Index, and Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ). These are all based on self-reporting questions.



Results showed that after the MBSR program, the frontline trainees have lower perceived stress, improved well-being, and higher mindfulness skills. The difference in these three aspects are statistically significant at 95% confidence level in the predicted direction.

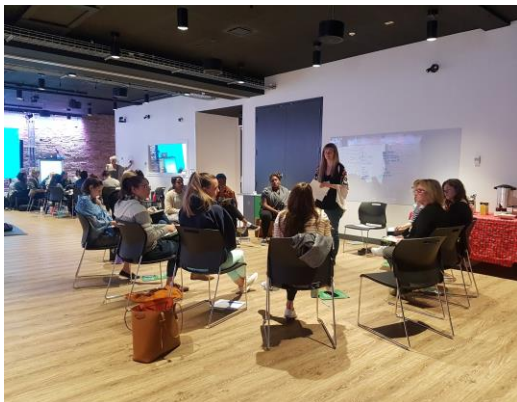
Qualitative data from the survey were also analyzed. The frontline trainees were positive about their experience in taking part in the program and highlighted a number of benefits obtained as a result of it:

Benefits	Testimonial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded and deepened knowledge and practice of mindfulness 	<p>"This was a great opportunity to take what I already knew and used from the world of mindfulness and deepen my understanding and practice. It has allowed me to expand my awareness of <i>practices</i>, such as mindful movement."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness and understanding of self and experiences 	<p>"I became more aware of my challenges in terms of body awareness/mindfulness. I have also become more aware of the interplay between perspective and perception in determining the quality of my experiences."</p> <p>"Increase self-awareness really paying attention to my limiting judgmental thoughts about me and helping me in perfectionism and striving"</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased ability to cope with stress and challenging situations 	<p>"I approach all situations with more compassion and I apply mindfulness when approaching challenging events/conversation in order to improve the outcome and reduce stress both for me and those around me."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater ability to regulate emotions 	<p>"Increased my capability with dealing with negative emotions and it's easier for me to go back to my baseline after."</p> <p>"I am a more tentative and calmer leader to my team."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied the tools and learnings in professional work 	<p>"I've also benefited as a case manager and incorporated what I've learned into client sessions."</p> <p>"I have lots of readings and mindful practices that I hope to</p>

Benefits	Testimonial
	continue to use and implement not only to support my own well being but also to suggest to my family and friends some practices they can use when feeling run down or overwhelmed.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Became more mindful, present, and in the now 	<p>“I became/am a more mindful, less reactive, more accepting, less judgemental person.”</p> <p>“The program has helped me slow down, stop, and smell the roses a little more. Helping me appreciate and be mindful of the little things in life – celebrating the small victories instead of always focusing on the big picture.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provided an opportunity for self-care and to focus on own needs 	<p>“I think it reminded me that I am important too. I feel like it was a practical way to ‘put the oxygen mask on myself before I put it on others’. I believe it reminded me that space and compassion for my emotions/thoughts is important even if/when it is inconvenient.”</p>

MBW Train-the-Trainer Intensive

CMS developed a training curriculum for the *Mindfulness-Based Wellness Program for Youth*. This was the second stage of the frontline workers’ training - a 5-day Train-the-Trainer Intensive which was held on June 17, 18, 24, 25, and September 6, 2019. The intensive involved teaching the frontline workers mindfulness core concepts, introducing the MBW program, teachbacks, and discussing program modifications to better suit the context of their clients and agencies.



In the Intensive, the frontline trainees received an MBW Program for Youth manual to guide their training and facilitation of the program. The manual details the exercises, practices, key points, script, and inquiry guidelines for each of the sessions. They also received a workbook that their clients can use to enrich their learning.

55 frontline workers completed the Train-the-Trainer Intensive. 10 frontline workers dropped out or postponed their participation in the project due to various reasons: personal problems, health issues, left the agency, conflict with work schedule, etc.

Train-the-Trainer Intensive Rating

An evaluation was administered at the end of the training intensive which collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Results showed that on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):

PROGRAM EVALUATION	Mean
How would you rate the training program overall??	8.6
How important has the training been for you?	8.7
Did the training program meet your expectations?	8.6

Helpful Aspects of the Training Intensive

In the survey, we asked the frontline trainees what aspects of the Training Intensive were particularly helpful. The responses include:

- **Teachbacks.** The frontline trainees particularly found the teachbacks helpful. During teachbacks, they were provided an opportunity to facilitate the practices and receive feedback from peers and mentors.
- **Structure of the training intensive.** The training intensive utilized experiential learning to teach the program. The trainees found it helpful to experience the practices firsthand, learn the nuts and bolts, and then practice facilitating themselves. They appreciated the alternation between large and small group work as well as the rotation of mentors in the teachbacks. This allowed for different types of engagement and perspectives.
- **Group discussions and Q&A.** The group discussions and Q&A were helpful particularly when discussing the topic of adaptations to specific clientele.
- **Program manual and resources provided.** The frontline trainees found the manual, workbook, handouts to be thorough, practical, and precise. They also appreciated that mindfulness-related readings and resources were provided beforehand.
- **Learning from other trainees.** The training intensive provided a good venue for frontline workers to network and to learn from others' experiences and ideas.
- **Lunch.** Some trainees appreciated the food provided throughout the training.

Suggestions for Improvement

In the survey, we were able to identify areas in the Training Intensive that could be used to enhance our program for the next phases of the project. Based on the feedback of the frontline trainees, suggestions for improvement include:

- Allot more time for teachbacks to practice inquiry and facilitation of the mindfulness practices.
- More discussion on adaptations to suit the trainees' clientele and troubleshooting of possible challenges in delivering the program.
- Build in trauma-informed practices in the training curriculum.
- Share success stories and learnings from previous or similar programs delivered.
- More diversity in the mentors.
- Spread out the training intensive because the schedule is intense. More than half of the trainees expressed that workload and conflicts in work schedule were barriers in fully immersing themselves in the training. Organizing the training program that accommodates their work schedule would be beneficial.

Testimonials from Frontline Trainees

<i>"I was impressed with the facilitators, their knowledge, and comfort with the practice. The fluid adaptation that was suggested and tolerated was impressive."</i>	<i>"I appreciated being able to ask derailed questions about how/why certain things were said. A lot of the analysis allowed me time to think about what would and would not work for my youth."</i>
<i>"This was made to be a very open and safe learning space. I am normally quite anxious and did feel pretty good."</i>	<i>"Not enough space to write. This will forever impact my work in a positive way."</i>
<i>"I think I have developed a more nuanced understanding of what mindfulness is and how it can be incorporated into my life and practice. The practice element has taught me how to teach this and get buy-in from youth."</i>	

Supervised Training Practicum of the MBW Program

The frontline trainees are currently in the third stage of the Year 1 training program. In this stage, the trainees deliver the MBW program to their youth clients and are closely mentored by experienced faculty members from CMS. Each group is assigned a mentor who provides at least one hour of supervision per week and guides the program delivery from set-up to closing of the group.

The table below shows the number of MBW groups that have started and finished from September to December 2019.

Year 1 (2019)	September	October	November	December	Total
# of groups started	8	10	3	0	21
# of groups completed	0	1	5	8	14

More MBW groups will be launched in the first quarter of 2020 as some partner agencies will start their first group while the others will deliver their second round of the MBW program.

We are currently in the process of collecting and analyzing the data from the first set of MBW groups delivered. However, we can share some preliminary results based on the feedback of some frontline trainees regarding the practicum and mentorship process.

Frontline trainees, who gave their responses, generally found the mentorship process to be effective and helpful in the following ways:

- The mentors provided ample support and guidance. It was helpful to have support while facilitating and to have someone experienced to answer questions and brainstorm ideas. Receiving feedback was also beneficial to help them learn and improve their skills in delivering the program.
- The mentors were receptive and helpful in creating plans and recalibrating the curriculum to meet the needs of the trainees' population.
- The mentors provided additional information and useful resources such as scripts for practices and alternative trauma-informed materials.
- Some frontline trainees expressed that their mentors established an atmosphere that made them feel well-supported and confident.
- Some mentorship formats were effective and efficient for the frontline trainees (e.g., meeting post-session or occasional online sessions to plan for the next session and discuss salient points).



We also found from the preliminary results aspects that can be improved in the mentorship process.

- The feedback mostly focused on time. Session preparations, actual group facilitation, and supervision involved much time commitment. Some frontline trainees suggested shortening the supervision sessions from 1 hour to 30 minutes or scheduling them on a need basis.
- Some frontline trainees wanted more concrete feedback and felt that the supervision was more focused on adapting the curriculum rather than their development as a facilitator.

Year 2: Next Steps

The supervised practicum for MBW will continue in 2020 with some agencies starting their first groups while others delivering their second groups in the first quarter of the new year. Phase 2 of the project will also be launched with the introduction of the Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MBI) Program. For this phase, the frontline trainees will participate in a 9-week Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program for their personal development as well as practice support sessions to support their mindfulness practice. Three MBCT groups will be delivered in the following period: March 10 - May 12, March 23 - May 25, and April 20 - June 29, 2020. Trainees will then undergo a 5-day Train-the-Trainer Intensive, which is scheduled on September 17, 18, 24, 25, and October 2, 2020, to learn the MBI program and hone their skills in facilitation. The supervised MBI practicum will begin in October 2020, while both MBW and MBI groups are planned to continue all throughout 2021.