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# Empowering Futures: A Mental Health Pre-Apprenticeship Program for Young People

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## Program Overview

This comprehensive curriculum is designed to prepare young people (ages 16-24) for careers in the mental health field through a pre-apprenticeship program. It combines foundational knowledge, skills development, hands-on experience, and wraparound support to equip participants for success in this rewarding field.

## Curriculum Goals

- Increase awareness of mental health careers and pathways. Facilitate transitions to registered apprenticeships or employment opportunities in the mental health field.
- Develop foundational knowledge in mental health concepts, terminology, and support strategies.
- Build essential skills in communication, active listening, problem-solving, and cultural competency.
- Provide hands-on experience through supervised pre-apprenticeship placements in diverse mental health settings.
- Foster personal and professional development through mentorship, peer support, and access to mental health services.

## Curricular Approach

### ***Learner-Navigator Approach***

The curriculum must follow a learner-navigator model, where:

**Learners:** Youth participants (18+), with limited prior experience in mental health fields.

**Navigators:** Facilitators (e.g., NYEC members) who guide the sessions. These individuals may not have formal mental health training but need clear guidance to facilitate.

## ***Ideal Navigator and Learner Roles***

### **Navigator**

**Role:** Facilitator guiding participants through content and skill-building exercises in a way that encourages engagement, while also providing support to the Learners and fostering a supportive environment for practice and feedback.

### **Ideal Profile:**

- NYEC member or community leader with experience in youth programming, communication training, and/or leadership.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to model effective communication strategies.
- Familiarity with the following topics is preferred, but not required:
  - mental health topics
  - conflict resolution
  - active listening techniques

### **Responsibilities:**

- Deliver content using the facilitator guide, ensuring all key topics are covered.
- Facilitate group discussions and encourage participation.
- Provide feedback on self-reflection exercises and wellness plans.
- Lead role-playing and practice activities, providing constructive feedback to Learners.
- Create a safe, inclusive space for discussions.
- Manage guest speaker sessions and coordinate logistics.
- Coordinate observation opportunities with mental health professionals for real-world context.

### **Learner**

**Role:** Participant actively engaging in skill-building exercises to enhance communication abilities and interpersonal effectiveness and gain foundational knowledge about mental health.

### **Ideal Profile:**

- Youth aged 16–24, potentially disconnected and/or interested in exploring mental health career pathways and developing professional and interpersonal communication skills.
- Limited prior exposure to mental health topics but a strong interest and willingness to learn.

- Open to engaging in interactive activities, such as discussions and role-playing scenarios; open to receiving feedback.

#### Responsibilities:

- Actively participate in discussions, activities, and group exercises.
- Complete all self-reflection exercises and wellness plans.
- Practice applying communication strategies, such as active listening and conflict resolution.
- Reflect on feedback from the navigator and peers to improve skills.
- Observe and document communication strategies used by mental health professionals during shadowing opportunities.
- Provide feedback on learning experiences for continuous improvement of the program.

#### ***Implementation Plan***

##### **Navigator Activities**

*Preparation:* Review the facilitator guide and additional resources provided for each module.

*Session Facilitation:* Conduct interactive sessions, ensuring clear communication of key topics.

*Coordination:* Arrange for guest speakers and manage Q&A sessions. Arrange for other activities, such as career fairs or shadowing of a mental health professional.

*Feedback:* Evaluate Learners' participation and provide constructive guidance on activities.

##### **Learner Activities**

*Learning Engagement:* Participate in discussions on mental health, communication, and more.

*Skill Application:* Engage in role-playing and group activities to practice foundational strategies and ensure understanding of topics.

*Personal Growth:* Develop a final portfolio to demonstrate acquired knowledge and growth throughout the program.

## Curriculum Structure

The curriculum is divided into four modules, each focusing on a key area of learning:

- Module 1: Introduction to Mental Health
- Module 2: Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- Module 3: Mental Health Support Strategies
- Module 4: Career Exploration and Pathways

## Use of Technology

When Learners have technology available in addition to Internet access, there are ways to bring the use of technology into the mix. For example, Navigators can use tools like Kahoot for Icebreakers and Warm-ups, adding a bit of fun and engagement when possible. There are also many activities in the curriculum that require Learners to do research on certain topics, so these activities naturally integrate technology, as Learners can use their phone, tablet, or computer to do so.

However, we also know that some Navigators might be working with Learners who don't have access to their own devices, like iPads or computers, or they might be teaching in spaces without Wi-Fi. As a result, we've made sure the curriculum is flexible and can work even in simple learning environments. If the Navigator recognizes that Learners might not be able to research topics easily (for whatever reason), the Navigator should print out research articles ahead of the class that the Learners can read and use for those activities.

## Session Outline

Week	Session	Module & Session Topic(s)	Time
1	1	Pre-apprenticeship Overview & Introductions 1.1 Mental Health Awareness	2.5 hours
	2	1.2 Cultural Perceptions of Mental Health 1.3 Stigma Reduction	2.5 hours
2	3	1.4 Mental Health Conditions 1.5 Recovery and Resilience	2.5 hours
	4	1.5 (continued) Recovery and Resilience 1.6 Self-Care and Well-being	2.5 hours
3	5	Module 1 review 2.1 Active Listening	2.5 hours
	6	2.2 Non-verbal Communication 2.3 Effective Communication	2.5 hours

4	7	2.3 (continued) Effective Communication 2.4 Conflict Resolution	2.5 hours
	8	2.4 (continued) Conflict Resolution Module 2 review	2.5 hours
5	9	3.1 Crisis Intervention 3.2 De-escalation Techniques	2.5 hours
	10	3.3 Peer Support Frameworks	2.5 hours
6	11	3.4 Basic Counseling Skills	2.5 hours
	12	3.5 Cultural Competency in Care Module 3 Review	2.5 hours
7	13	4.1 Mental Health Careers 4.2 Educational Pathways	2.5 hours
	14	4.2 Educational Pathways (continued) 4.3 Job Search Strategies	2.5 hours
8	15	4.4 Networking and Professional Development 4.5 Transition Support	2.5 hours
	16	4.5 Transition Support Portfolio Presentations & Course Wrap-up	2.5 hours
<b>Total time:</b>			40 hours

## Module 1: Introduction to Mental Health

**1.1 Mental Health Awareness:** Understanding Mental health, Mental Illness, and the Continuum of Care

**1.2: Cultural Perceptions of Mental Health:** Understanding Stigma in Diverse Communities

**1.3 Stigma Reduction:** Challenging Stereotypes and Promoting Help-seeking Behaviors

**1.4 Mental Health Conditions:** Exploring Common Mental Health Conditions and Their Impact on Individuals and Communities

**1.5 Recovery and Resilience:** Understanding the Recovery Process and Building Resilience

**1.6 Self-Care and Well-being:** Developing Strategies for Maintaining Mental Health and Well-being

### Purpose

Module 1 is all about laying the groundwork for understanding mental health and mental illness. It's designed to help learners get a clearer picture of the mental health continuum and the different kinds of care and support available. We'll dive into how mental health is viewed in different cultures, challenge harmful stereotypes, and talk about how stigma affects help-seeking behaviors. This module explores common mental health conditions and the importance of recovery and resilience, giving learners practical tools to reduce stigma and promote a more inclusive, person-centered approach to mental health.

### Learning Outcomes for Module 1

- Define and differentiate between mental health and mental illness, including the mental health continuum and its relevance to well-being.
- Understand and analyze different types of stigmas (public, self, and structural) and their impact on mental health and help-seeking behavior.
- Identify and describe common mental health conditions, including symptoms, causes, risk factors, and societal impacts.
- Examine the broader impact of mental health conditions on individuals, families, and communities.

- Explore evidence-based treatments, interventions, and recovery principles, emphasizing hope, self-determination, and resilience.
- Challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma through inclusive, person-centered language and community engagement.
- Discuss mental health careers and the roles of professionals in providing care and support.
- Explore strategies for building resilience and fostering mental health recovery in personal and professional contexts.
- Understand the role of self-care in mental health, including practical strategies such as stress management, relaxation techniques, and healthy lifestyle habits.
- Analyze the connection between physical and mental health and develop a personalized self-care plan to support overall well-being.



## Module 2: Communication and Interpersonal Skills

**2.1 Active Listening:** Developing Effective Listening Skills and Demonstrating Empathy

**2.2: Nonverbal Communication:** Understanding the Role of Body Language and Nonverbal Cues

**2.3 Effective Communication:** Communicating Clearly and Respectfully in Diverse Settings

**2.4 Conflict Resolution:** Developing Strategies for Managing Conflict and De-escalating Challenging Situations

### Purpose

This module aims to equip young people with essential communication and conflict resolution skills for success in diverse personal and professional settings. By focusing on active listening, respectful dialogue, and cultural sensitivity, participants will learn to build rapport, navigate challenging situations, and de-escalate conflicts effectively. Additionally, the module emphasizes understanding mental health considerations and adapting communication styles to various audiences, fostering empathy and building trust. Ultimately, this training empowers young individuals to communicate clearly, respectfully, and confidently, enabling them to build stronger relationships and navigate complex interactions.

### Learning Outcomes for Module 2

- Practice verbal and non-verbal communication strategies for diverse settings, such as active listening skills to demonstrate empathy and understanding.
- Understand the components of effective communication, including clarity, respect, and cultural sensitivity.
- Learn strategies that can help resolve conflicts and de-escalate challenging situations effectively.
- Learn about the importance of building rapport and trust with individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

- Identify common sources of conflict in personal and professional settings.
- Identify barriers to communication in diverse settings and strategies to overcome them.
- Practice using verbal and nonverbal techniques for clear and respectful communication.
- Develop the ability to adapt communication styles to fit different audiences and contexts.

## Module 3: Mental Health Support Strategies

**3.1 Crisis Intervention:** Learning How to Respond to Mental Health Crises and Provide Immediate Support

**3.2 De-escalation Techniques:** Creating a De-escalation Plan for Challenging Behaviors and Situations

**3.3 Peer Support Frameworks:** Understanding the Principles and Practices of Peer Support

**3.4 Basic Counseling Skills:** Learning Basic Counseling Techniques, such as Motivational Interviewing and Solution-focused Therapy

**3.5 Cultural Competency in Care:** Providing Culturally Responsive and Trauma-informed Care

### Purpose

This module aims to equip young people with the essential skills and knowledge to become effective peer supporters in mental health. Through training in trauma awareness, crisis intervention, counseling techniques, and cultural competency, participants will learn to provide empathetic and responsive care. They will also gain a deeper understanding of mental health conditions, reduce stigma, and foster trust and community, empowering them to support their peers and promote well-being.

### Learning Outcomes for Module 3

- Understand principles and practices of trauma awareness and peer support.
- Learn and apply crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques.
- Use basic counseling techniques, such as motivational interviewing.
- Demonstrate cultural competency in providing responsive care to diverse populations.
- Encourage self-reflection and help young people identify their core values as peer supporters.

- Demonstrate the importance of trust in peer relationships and build a sense of community within the group.
- Identify and describe common mental health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, trauma) including their symptoms, causes, and potential treatments. This includes understanding the impact of these conditions on individuals, families, and communities.
- Demonstrate a reduction in stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs towards individuals with mental health conditions. They will also exhibit increased empathy and understanding towards the experiences of those affected by mental illness

## Module 4: Career Exploration and Pathways

**4.1 Mental Health Careers:** Exploring the Diverse Range of Careers in the Mental Health Field

**4.2 Educational Pathways:** Understanding the Educational Requirements and Pathways for Different Mental Health Professions

**4.3 Job Search Strategies:** Developing Resumes, Cover Letters, and Interview Skills

**4.4 Networking and Professional Development:** Building Professional Networks and Accessing Continuing Education Opportunities

**4.5 Transition Support:** Preparing for Registered Apprenticeships or Employment in Mental Health Settings

### Purpose

The purpose of this module is to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to navigate and succeed in a diverse range of mental health careers. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of career pathways, educational requirements, and professional development strategies, empowering individuals to confidently pursue and advance in their chosen mental health field while contributing to community well-being.

### Learning Outcomes for Module 4

- Identify a wide range of mental health careers, from entry-level to advanced roles, and their associated responsibilities and settings.
- Understand the educational, credentialing, and professional requirements for various mental health career pathways.
- Explore diverse educational and training options, including degrees, certifications, and professional programs.
- Develop professional tools, including resumes, cover letters, and interview techniques tailored for mental health career opportunities.

- Master the ability to align application materials with job descriptions and organizational goals to enhance employability.
- Build confidence and effective communication skills for behavioral, situational, and competency-based interviews.
- Recognize the importance of networking and develop strategies for establishing and maintaining professional connections.
- Explore the role of mental health professionals in fostering community well-being and advancing public health.
- Develop a personalized action plan for securing employment, apprenticeships, or advanced training opportunities in mental health.
- Create a professional development plan that includes networking, continuing education, and long-term career goals.