

Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition QUARTERLY NEWS



BMHW fireside chat with Sabrina Konate (OPH) Yodit Girmay (Mehari Centre) Yuhi Karenga (Humura Association) and Camille Kamanzi (Burundi We Want)

Coalition Coordination Update Upcoming and Ongoing



Sankofa Leadership Summit – May 13th

In 2026, the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition proudly celebrates five years of excellence in advancing and supporting Black mental health and wellbeing in our community—made possible through the dedication and commitment of our members. To mark this important milestone, we will be hosting a half-day leadership summit bringing together Voting Members and community leaders for a focused space to reflect, reconnect, and collectively shape the next chapter of the Coalition's work. The summit will provide an opportunity to reflect on our shared journey, reaffirm priorities, and identify pathways for meaningful impact over the next five years.

Together, voting members and Coalition leadership will:

- Reflect on five years of growth, collaboration, and collective impact
- Revisit the strategic priorities identified by members in 2021 and 2024
- Review key insights and recommendations from the Executive Board
- Identify priority advocacy areas and opportunities for impact over the next five years
- Engage in required discussions and voting items

Please note: This session is for **Voting Members only**. Calendar invitations will be sent to the designated voting representative from each member organization. Updates will be shared with all members in the August newsletter.

Our regular All-Member gathering will resume in the fall.

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OBMHC Capacity Building Support

Last year, OBMHC piloted capacity-building supports benefiting nine member organizations. In 2026, we secured additional one-time funding to expand this work and support up to 15 organizations.

Funding will enhance member access to:

- Grant writing support
- Strategic communications and social media assistance
- Community of Practice training coordination
- Printed promotional materials for outreach
- New in 2026: Website updates and maintenance for eligible members

Next Steps

1. Members will receive an email outlining available capacity-building supports
2. Complete the request form indicating desired supports
3. Schedule a meeting with OBMHC staff
4. Connect with contractors for time-limited support through December 31, 2026

Training Opportunities in 2026

In 2025, OBMHC partnered with organizations such as the African Canadian Association of Ottawa and The Royal to provide Mental Health First Aid training to 70 community members. Building on this success, we are finalizing Community of Practice trainings and workshops, SMART Recovery and Mental Health First Aid training, to be delivered in 2026.

To better support francophone residents, **SMART Recovery** and **Mental Health First Aid** trainings will be offered in French.

Community Engagement

For the last 5 years, OBMHC volunteers have been attending community events to promote member organizations and distribute mental health information. This summer, OBMHC volunteers will be joined by Peer Support workers at events across the city. To better coordinate and be present at community festivals and events, Peers and volunteers will work together to share information about the programs and services of all our OBMHC partners.



Michelle James
Coalition Coordinator



Basant Mohamed
Community of Practice
Coordinator



Catherine Yorgoro
Grants and Writing
Support



Ro Nwosu
Administrative Support



Mahmoud Ibrahim
Website Management



Fatima Baasher
Social Media Engagement

You can connect with the team via email at ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com or by contacting OBMHC Coordinator, Michelle James at mjames@swchc.on.ca.

Coalition Coordination Update

Upcoming and Ongoing

5th Annual Black Mental Health Week

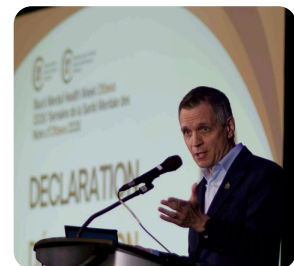
Thank you to everyone who participated in Black Mental Health Week 2026. All of the speakers, volunteers, peers, staff, dignitaries and community members who made this 5th anniversary of BMHW such a success. We ARE stronger together and growing stronger every year!

What we heard:

- “Learning about community organization/resources available for Ottawa's Black Community far exceeded my expectations. I feel much better prepared to support individuals and families wishing to connect to such services. Thank you so much.”
- “I appreciated the honest conversation about difficult subjects in a safe space with emotional supports available if I needed them. Excellent variety of speakers and voices. The movement and music segments were great, such an important part of healing in community, the shared dance!”

BMHW 2026 by the numbers:

- More than 300 participants
- 35 volunteers
- 24 guest speakers
- 7 cultural performances
- 4 in person activities
- 4 events by partners
- 1 Podcast



Visit the new **Black Mental Health Week website**, for photo gallery and to watch the podcast hosted by *Thoughtful Therapist* Myriam Georges-Estigienne featuring Papa Ladjike Diouf and featured artist N'nerjie in conversation.



Watch on Youtube video:
<https://youtu.be/euDGwRehUbQ>
Short/Reel :
<https://youtube.com/shorts/TOONDvEugr8?feature=share>



Advocacy and Systems Change Working Group Update

The Advocacy and Systems Change (ASC) working group operates to advance the work of member organizations and the initiatives of the Coalition. Members of the working group include individuals from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds working together to champion and impact change for systems change in mental health, health and social services that address inequities and improve outcomes for Black residents.

Updates

Alternative Crisis Response – Ottawa Guiding Council

Over the past five years, OBMHC has been proud to contribute to the Ottawa Guiding Council on Mental Health and Addictions, supporting a “no wrong door” approach to mental health and substance-use crisis response. This work brings together police, paramedics, and peer-led supports to better meet community needs.

In December 2025, City Council approved **\$700,000** to support the expansion of ANCHOR (Alternate Neighbourhood Crisis Response). The expanded service area will roll out later this year, extending east to include the ByWard Market, Lowertown, Sandy Hill, Lees Towers, Vanier, and Overbrook.

Thank you to the partners—Ottawa Public Health, Somali Centre for Family Services, CESOC, Canadian Women of Colour Leadership Network, and Somerset West CHC—for their continued collaboration on this important work. Learn more about the ANCHOR expansion online.

Inquest Recommendation - OPS Crisis Intervention Training

As part of the Ottawa Police Service’s annual week-long Crisis Intervention Training, OBMHC delivered a 90-minute session focused on mental health and supports available to Black residents. Officers received practical resource packages, including Ottawa Public Health listings and phone support information from Somerset West CHC and Britannia Woods Community Services, to use when responding in the community. Training also included interactive, scenario-based exercises, with valuable feedback from mental health professionals and peers with lived experience—helping officers build skills for better outcomes to calls with a mental health component.

Opportunities for Advocacy in 2026

These priority areas were identified by partners as sectors where increased advocacy would support their work:

1. Substance use and suicide
2. Housing
3. Justice Work
4. Health Care Equity and Research

[Click to download the presentation from the most recent Advocacy and Systems Change working group meeting](#)



The next ASC working group meeting will be May 25th from 3:30 - 4:30 PM

Mental Health Awareness Working Group Update

The Mental Health Awareness (MHA) working group members promote mental health and wellbeing information and perform outreach and engagement activities with community members, the public and partners and stakeholders. Members of the working group include individuals from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds working together to promote Black mental health programs and services, and to reduce stigma and foster open dialogue about mental health with Black residents.

OBMHC Delegation to Attend Conference in May

OBMHC Community of Practice Consultants will be presenting at the upcoming [University of Ottawa's Black Mental Health Conference in May](#), hosted by Dr. Jude Cénat and the team at V-TRaC Lab. This year a delegation of 10 members will join Shannon Black and Papa Ladjiké Diouf as they share the lessons learned through the Community of Practice. Comprised of counsellors, staff, peer workers and community members, our delegation looks forward to bringing information back to our organizations and communities. Learn more about the [Community of Practice](#) on our website.

Community Engagement

We've already been promoting your programs and services at seven community events this year! This summer, OBMHC community engagement volunteers and staff will be joined by Black Peer Support workers at events around the city. Stop by the booth, and see how your programs and services are being promoted at these upcoming events:

- Prepared and Positive Youth Mental Health - April 18, 9:00 - 1:30 PM
- Knowledge Sharing Event: hosted by OPH and U of Ottawa - May 7, 10:00 - 12:00
- OLIP's Welcoming Ottawa Week events - various dates in June 2026

Information about Substance-use and Self-harm

In recent meetings, members have expressed interest in having more specific data and information about substance-use and rates of suicide in Ottawa's Black community. We will be working with partners to compile and provide insights as they become available. In the meantime, you can learn more online.

- The [have THAT talk](#) series was developed by Ottawa Public Health to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and includes videos on [Substance Use Health](#).
- You can also download [Experiences-with-Suicide-African-Caribbean-and-Black-Communities-in-Canada](#).



Click to download the presentation from the most recent [Mental Health Awareness working group meeting](#)

The next MHA working group meeting will be on September 21st from 3:30 - 4:30 PM

Mental Health Supports Working Group Update

The Mental Health Supports working group operates to advance the work of member organizations and the initiatives of the Coalition. Members of the working group include individuals from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds working together to champion and impact change by delivering 1-1 or group mental health supports and programs to residents or clinical supervision to mental health practitioners.

Newly Updated Resource List

The Ottawa Black Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health Resource List is a list of Black-focused services in the region. This resource list was compiled by Somerset West CHC and Ottawa Public Health in consultation with agencies and organizations providing free mental health and social services to Black communities in Ottawa.

•**English:** [African, Caribbean, Black \(ACB\) Mental Health and Substance Use Health Resource List](#)

•**French:** [Liste de ressources en santé mentale, en dépendances et en santé liée à l'usage de substances pour les communautés noires d'Ottawa](#)

Did you know? There are two phone support lines available to both professionals and clients that can assist with system navigation/advocacy, housing referrals, meal supports/food bank, immigration/settlement, and accessing health and social services.

[Black Community Phone Support Line](#) is provided by Somerset West CHC and is available in Swahili and English as well as other languages on request.

Phone Support Line: (343) 571-0097

[Black Racialized Individuals Support Channel](#) is provided by Britannia Woods Community House and provides support in English, French, Somali, Arabic, Swahili and Lingala. For crisis support call **BRISC at: 613-596-3299**

Learning Opportunities in 2026

OBMHC is proud to confirm that, in collaboration with training partners, we will be announcing two training opportunities for the public in 2026. More details will be provided to members via email as it becomes available.

- [SMART Recovery](#) Training will be offered in French and facilitated by Olivier Engoute in June 2026. This training will be online. Watch your email for more details and to register.
- [Mental Health First Aid](#) Training will be offered for the public in French and facilitated by Jacklyn St. Laurent. This training will be in-person, and dates and details will be announced soon.

Click to download the presentation from the most recent [Mental Health Supports working group meeting](#)



The next MHS working group meeting will be October 19th from 3:30 - 4:30 PM

OBMHC Capacity Building Resources: Grant scanning

To further reduce barriers, the Coalition will be providing members with a curated list of grant openings for consideration. This is to facilitate access to a vast array of funding opportunities, ensuring members are well positioned to apply to grants tailored around the important work being carried out in the ACB communities.

Current funding opportunities to consider:

City of Ottawa

Multiple streams

The City of Ottawa has several grant streams open for applications:

Capacity Building

Supports all cultural communities in Ottawa build organizational capacity. More information can be found [here](#).

- **Deadline:** June 3, 2026,
- **Amount:** up to \$150,000

Cultural Facilities Fund - Minor

Supports improvements to local cultural facilities and venues through funding for small renovations, equipment purchases, and capital feasibility studies. Click [here](#) fore details.

- **Deadline:** June 17, 2026
- **Amount:** up to \$15,000

Ontario Trillium Foundation - Seed

Seed grants help organizations improve the delivery of programs and services that directly benefit community members. Funding can support projects focusing on organizational planning, piloting a new program, and or building capacity to plan for future programs or services. Click [here](#) fore details.

- **Deadline:** August 19, 2026
- **Amount:** up to \$100,000

TELUS Friendly Future Foundation (third round)

Provides funding for programs tailored for youths (up to age 29) that are experiencing obstacles in reaching their full potential.

Programs should focus on health or education, and be delivered in one of the approved regions - which includes Ottawa. Click [here](#) for more information

- **Deadline:** October 2, 2026
- **Amount:** Unspecified

Ontario Trillium Foundation - Grow

Grow grants support established programs and services that have a proven track record of success. Funding can be used to expand, improve or adapt an existing program or service. Click [here](#) fore details.

- **Deadline:** November 4, 2026
- **Amount:** up to \$600,00 over 2/3 years

Peter Gilgan Foundation

The Peter Gilgan Foundation invests in outcomes-oriented initiatives that improve the well-being of children, families, and communities. The Children, Youth, and Families stream provide funding for programs that are tailored around education & economic opportunities; Children & Youth Mental Health; and Food Security & Systems.

Click [here](#) for more information.

- **Deadline:** Ongoing intake
 - **Amount:** up to \$100,000
-

Community Engagement



Somali Centre’s Black Youth Court Navigator Program for Youth

The Somali Centre for Family Services has officially launched the **Black Youth Court Navigator Program**, which provides culturally responsive support to Black youth ages 12–18 navigating the justice system.

The Project Coordinator is currently accepting referrals and can be reached at 613-526-2075 ext. 238 or by email at ag.saleban@scfsottawa.org.

Impact Action - May 6th at the Ottawa Art Gallery

Co-hosted by the Honourable René Cormier, the AIDS Committee of Ottawa, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, this event will bring together researchers and community leaders transforming Canada’s response to sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. Click [here](#) to register.



Suzanne Obiorah’s Walrus Talk

Suanne Obiorah delivered powerful remarks on the drug toxicity crisis at The Walrus Talk, hosted in partnership with Addictions and Mental Health Ontario. You can access the YouTube Video [here](#).

Community Engagement



Jaku Konbit Black Justice Navigator Program

Jaku Konbit's Black Justice Navigator Program is a new initiative that supports Black individuals and families in navigating the justice system. The program offers culturally responsive guidance, advocacy, and connections to legal and community resources, helping participants understand their rights, overcome systemic barriers, and access fair and equitable justice outcomes. For more information, click [here](#).

uOttawa PARTICIPANTS WANTED

BLACK PARENTS: IT'S YOUR TURN TO SPEAK UP.

Participate in a university study on Black parenting.

Participation criteria:

- ✓ Parents of Black children aged 2 to 12.
- ✓ Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- ✓ 18 years of age or older

How can I participate?
Online questionnaire ~ 25 minutes

Why participate?

- Change perceptions about Black families
- Help us better understand the interaction between Black parenting realities and the child welfare system.

Study approved by the university of Ottawa's office of research ethics and integrity | gnyio096@uottawa.ca

Black Parent Call out

This study is looking for Black parents of children aged 2-12 for a brief 25-minute online questionnaire as part of a study. To participate, click [here](#).

Walk for Recovery - June 20th

You are invited to walk/wheel/roll/stroll for women and gender-diverse people living with addiction. Sign up to walk or donate [here](#).



AMETHYST CENTRE
CENTRE AMETHYST
OTTAWA D'OTTAWA

FR ONLY: Examen des préférences des communautés noires en matière de soins primaires

Le Wesley Institute recrute jusqu'à 20 personnes francophones issues des communautés noires pour participer à des groupes de discussion. Le groupe se réunira virtuellement pour une durée pouvant aller jusqu'à 90 minutes. L'enregistrement audio de la discussion sera fait sur Zoom et transcrit à des fins d'analyse. Si vous souhaitez participer à l'étude ou si vous avez des questions à son sujet, contactez fatmata.kamara@camh.ca.



Examen des préférences des communautés noires en matière de soins primaires

Community Engagement

Traitements forcés au Canada
Enjeux actuels et débats

Demi-journée de réflexion et d'échanges
14 mai de 13 h à 19 h

Forced Treatments in Canada
Current issues and debates

Half-day of reflexion and exchanges
May 14 from 1 pm - 7 pm







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ET ÉTHIQUE DE LA SANTÉ
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POLICY AND ETHICS
University of Ottawa

Forced Treatments in Canada - May 14, 2026 at the University of Ottawa

A half-day of reflection and discussion on psychiatric and addiction forced treatments in Canada will hold on Thursday, May 14, from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM at 55 Laurier Avenue East (Desmarais Pavillion), Room 12102, at the University of Ottawa. The event will include a presentation of the preliminary findings of the report *Beyond Tomorrow: Psychiatric and Addiction Forced Treatments in Canada*; a panel and group discussion, among others. For more information, click [here](#).

Callout for Black Participants

Have you ever felt like your consent was not respected in psychiatric care? if so, the research team team at uOttawa would like to interview you. For details, email Emmanuelle Bernheim at Emmanuelle.bernheim@uottawa.ca



CALL FOR BLACK RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Have you ever felt that your consent was not respected while receiving mental health care?

WE WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO YOU

IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED (OR ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING) UNWANTED HOSPITALIZATION OR DETENTION, THE USE OF RESTRAINTS, MEDICATION, THERAPY, AND/OR OTHER INTERVENTIONS IN A MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY, PLEASE CONTACT US AT: 613-562-5800, EXT. 3000 OR EMAIL: bernheim@uottawa.ca

WE WOULD LIKE TO MEET WITH YOU FOR AN INTERVIEW.

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MAY 4TH TO JUNE 15TH, 2026

Resources

If you know of a resource and don't see it here, please let us know!
Contact us at ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com



ACB Community Counselling Portal

Available in French and English, this portal is staffed by OBMHC partner organizations and supported by clinical supervisors with extensive experience supporting Black community members. Book an appointment online or by calling 2-1-1.

[BOOK NOW](#)

Sawubona Resources Caregivers Tool Kits

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support is a non-profit organization that aims to EMPOWER Black caregivers of individuals with disabilities and their families. They have toolkits specifically for Black caregivers. Download their toolkits and tip sheets in English and French

[LEARN MORE](#)



ACB Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List

Ottawa Public Health and Somerset West CHC have updated the ACB Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List.

[Download the PDF online:](#)

[Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health Services and Resources](#)

[Services et ressources de santé mentale, dépendances et de santé liée à l'utilisation de substances](#)



Crisis Support

- **Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre** offers a 24/7 crisis line for those seeking immediate emotional support. Reach out at 613-562-2333. Additionally, Chat & Text Support service is accessible every day from 12 pm to 12 am. Text 613-544-6424. Visit www.orcc.net for more information.
- **Nisa Helpine** – 1-866-315-NISA (1-866-315-6472) assisting Muslim Women by providing peer-to-peer counselling 12 hours per day, 7 days per week. nisahelpine.com
- **Naseeha Youth Helpline** – 1 (866) NASEEHA (627-3342) provides a confidential helpline for young Muslims to receive immediate, anonymous, and confidential support over the phone from 3 – 9 pm, 7 days a week.

Resources

If you know of a resource and don't see it here, please let us know!
Contact us at ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com



Mental Health Supports and Resources

- **Britannia Woods Support Line: Support Channel for Black Racialized Individuals (CSIRN)** - Phone: +1 613-596-3299 - CSIRN services are available Mondays and Thursdays (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) - Language services are available in the following languages: English, French, Somali, Arabic, and Linagalu
- **Muslim Family Services Ottawa** offers culturally-appropriate and trauma-informed counseling and psychotherapy services for individuals, couples, children, youth, and families in English, French, Arabic, and other languages. Phone: (613) 562-2273

IWSO AFTER-HOURS INTAKE

CALL 343-961-6807 FOR CRISIS SUPPORT

Starting January 22 2025, clients and service providers can call the number listed above outside of standard office hours to get connected with an intake worker. The hours are as follows:

Wednesday-Friday: 5:00PM-8:00PM
Saturday: 9:00AM-2:00PM

Language interpreters will also be available for after-hours intake.

For more information please contact:
marieann@iwsoc.ca

After Hours Intake

In an effort to address the gap in services after hours and increase the accessibility of services, Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa (IWSO) will be offering after hours intake and crisis intervention. Service providers and clients will now be able to call **343-961-6807** after hours, Wednesday through Saturday, to speak with me and complete their intake. You are also welcome to refer clients directly over email and staff will contact them to complete the intake. Additionally, IWSO's language interpretation services are available after hours to support clients.

For more Info contact Marieann Thottungal at:
marieann@iwsoc.ca

Impact Report

The release of CWCLN's Black Maternal Health and Reproductive Justice Impact Report—held on International Day of Action for Women's Health—sparked engagement across Ottawa and beyond. Community members, partner organizations, and sector allies voiced support, highlighted systemic gaps, and affirmed the importance of Black-led leadership in maternal health advocacy.

[READ THE REPORT](#)

Parents for Diversity Workshop Catalogue

Parents for Diversity is offering workshops that are customizable and currently available in English, Spanish, with select workshops in French. Formats include online, in-person, and hybrid delivery. Workshops are designed for groups of 15–50 participants. More information available [here](#).





Proud Members of the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition

