



COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR AND PEER WORKER TRAINING REPORT

Community Ambassador and Peer Worker Mental Health Training

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (AAMHCS) is a Community Health Centre dedicated to improving health outcomes for vulnerable immigrants, refugees, and their communities by addressing systemic inequities. To achieve this, capacity building and training that supports teams is crucial in caring for our communities.

Mental Health Training using art based practice was offered to three Access Alliance Teams: Community Health Ambassadors, Family Wellbeing Ambassadors, and peer community outreach workers, direct practice activities seen below. This report showcases feedback from 11 attendees in the 2- day training implemented on August 6 and 13, 2025 at Access Point on Danforth. Facilitators included: Health Promoter, Community Health worker, and Student placement.

Family Wellbeing Program

- Offer individualized support to families facing barriers, connecting them to housing, food security, employment, legal aid, and recreational resources.
- Engage in community events and outreach to strengthen relationships and access to services.
- Work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to provide education, resources, and referrals.
- Coordinate wellness events, information sessions, and workshops to promote wellbeing.

East Effort Program

- Promote health resources and information through diverse and culturally-relevant outreach strategies
- Collaborate with health partners (MGH, EHP, TPH) to deliver education, resources, and referrals
- Organize community health and wellness fairs, workshops, and information sessions

Peer Community Outreach Worker Program

- Medical & Social Service Accompaniment
- Information & Referral
- System Navigation
- Outreach Support
- Workshop Co-Facilitation
- Language Access



Objectives

1. Effectively respond to disclosures of violence
2. Understand and apply the principles of brief counselling
3. Know when and how to ask for help and build a network of professional support
4. Support clients experiencing grief and loss
5. Provide support to caregivers experiencing burnout or stress
6. Foster trust and healing within peer relationships and the wider community
7. Engaging in self/ co-regulation to lessen stress

“Community members come with “packages” of stories. What’s important is making sure we are listening to the core of their experiences and let it help us understand how to support them better.”

2 - Days Training Overview (in-person)

Day 1: Gaining Knowledge and Understanding	Day 2: Implementation of Knowledge and Theories
<p>Mind & Body Connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mind & Body Connection○ Window of Tolerance○ Stress Responses: hyper and hypoarousal○ Self & Co Regulation○ Emotions & Identification <p>A Nurturing Supporter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Brief Counselling Concepts based on solutions focused brief therapy and narrative therapy○ Intentional Listening & responding to clients○ Guiding conversation & Identifying need	<p>Skills in Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Responding to violence disclosures○ Responding to grief○ Supporting caregivers○ Peers and ambassadors share their experiences <p>Supporting Self</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Boundaries○ Vicarious Trauma○ Compassion fatigue○ Peer support circles○ Self compassion <p>Training Evaluation Follow-Up Materials</p>



Head: Thinking – Knowledge & Understanding **What is a new learning gained from the training?**

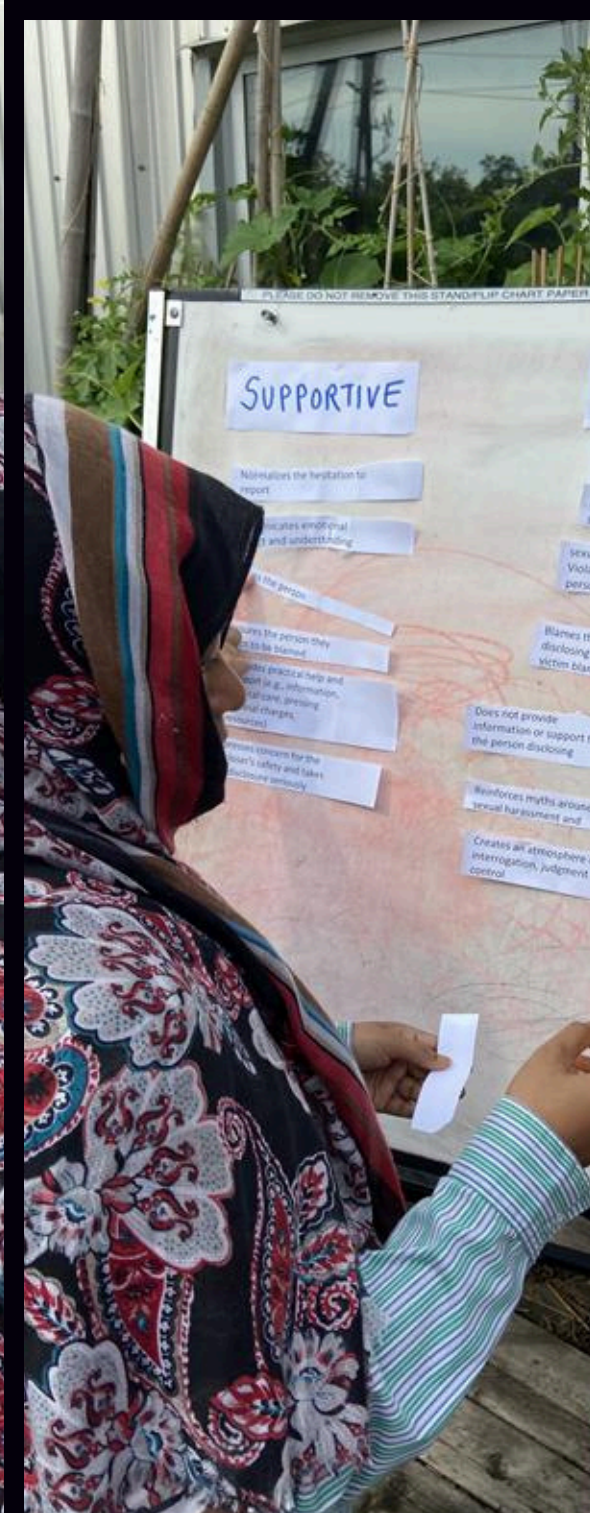
Community Ambassador and Peer Workers frequently reflect the cultural and linguistic communities they work with. **Self-care** was a of the major topics as part of the training. More than half of the participants shared a key takeaway was learning about self-care, kindness, and compassion for both clients and themselves.

The training helped participants to have greater confidence in their skills to form and uphold **healthy boundaries and say "no"**. Participants applied their learning to support professional and interpersonal boundary making.

One participant shared the session on **confidentiality** (what it is, how to protect client information and in what circumstances can information be shared) was particularly helpful.

Confidentiality is an important part of direct client facing work and should be reviewed regularly to ensure client information and wellbeing is protected, especially when working with clients who experience gender-based or family violence.

“I found the session on setting better boundaries really valuable. It reminded me how important it is to protect my time and energy, especially when I feel overwhelmed... It’s really about self-respect and clear communication. This topic gave me more confidence to be honest about my limits while still being respectful to others.”



♥ Heart: Feeling – Emotional Impact

What part of the experience felt most meaningful to you? Why?

73% of training participants shared that the session on **emotional regulation** was most meaningful. Some respondents reported on the importance of self- and co-regulation to support clients dealing with loss and grief or any emotional challenges.

Some participants cited the value of supporting and learning from each other for guidance. Many felt having more empathy and awareness in their personal and professional lives would be beneficial. Creating space for **peer support** can be an impactful way for service providers to connect, share knowledge, and support each other.

“Learning about dealing with loss is especially meaningful to me... strategies such as accepting the reality, adjusting to the changes, and maintaining a connection to the loss... will really assist me to interact effectively with loss for myself and with others.”

“The group discussions were most meaningful, as they allowed me to share openly and learn from others’ experiences.”

One third of participants shared the the information on **grief and loss** was meaningful. Specifically the stages of grief, the difference between "normal" and complex grief, and the concept of resilience. Some participants reported the knowledge encourage reflection on their capacity to support others and and when to seek external more professionalized help from subject matter experts.



👏 **Hands: Doing – Skills & Actions**

How will you apply the knowledge and activities learned in your daily life or work?

To put the skills into practice, participants remembered the **mind-body connection** part of the training. Many described integrating movement, physical activity, and grounding practices into their daily routines. Understanding the deep connection between the mind and body is important to developing strategies for emotional regulation and promoting well-being.

More than half of the participants identified how they connected with the **“window of tolerance”** topic and shared how they will practice and teach emotional regulation to clients they support in the community.

Three participants described the integration of **enforcing boundaries** in their professional and personal lives.

Boundaries are a key component of the work service providers do to protect their mental well-being, create healthy and respectful relationships, prevent burnout, and reduce stress. Setting and respecting others' boundaries are necessary skills that need to be developed for caring and equitable relationships.

“The session on the mind-body connection helped me understand how physical and mental health are closely linked. I plan to apply this by using mindfulness, breathing techniques, and body awareness in my daily routine and work to manage stress and stay more balanced. Now I can better understand my clients feelings and myself, and can apply the techniques that I learned to bring my clients within the ‘window of tolerance.’”



👣 Feet: Moving – Direction & Future Intentions How will you use what you've learned to support others?

When responding to **disclosures of violence** and using **brief counselling skills**, participants reported a stronger practice change in believing people's stories, validate feelings, show empathy, actively listen, speak kindly, be non-judgmental, and respect confidentiality. Knowledge of brief counselling skills and supportive responses to disclosures of violence are important for service providers to establish trusting relationships, create a safe environment, and challenge stereotypes.

A participant shared how the training helped them develop a **holistic perspective of service users** through understanding the impacts of past experiences and how that might show up in the present. Participants highlighted the importance of resilience, creating healthy boundaries, practicing self-care, and supporting a personal growth mindset.

Some participants spoke about the use of **emotional regulation** skills for themselves. One participant shared how they felt confident in sharing what they learned with other colleagues on the team.

“The session on reclaiming self and building resilience reminded me how important it is to reconnect with our strengths and values. I will use these learnings to encourage others to build their resilience by setting healthy boundaries, practicing self-care, and supporting their personal growth.”

“This mental health training was informative and eye-opening. It gave me valuable tools to better understand, manage, and support mental well-being, both myself and others.”



Participants also reported the following...

- All participants found the information on boundaries and balancing personal and professional life most useful.
- Majority of participants expressed the self-care activities, intentional listening, principle of self-compassion, story mapping, supportive and unsupportive responses, loss and grief, the nature scavenger hunt grounding activity, and lessons on disclosures to violence were most helpful.
- During the training, many participants expressed excitement and engagement with the expressive arts.
- Participants shared they would like to learn more about the mind-body connection, skills for listening to clients, boundaries, and how to navigate personal and professional life simultaneously.
- Participants identified more real-life examples of skills would be helpful (i.e., problem solving and decision making). They also expressed an interest in learning more about strategies for supporting clients who experience severe and chronic pain. Techniques for stress reduction for children and to encourage others to manage their stress.
- All participants felt the training equipped them with more skills and knowledge to support them in their roles. 10/11 survey respondents recommend this training to other staff internally and externally.



Richa Bhati, Community Health Ambassador

“The session gave us such meaningful insights into how to handle information responsibly — learning the difference between supportive vs. unsupportive information, and understanding when it's appropriate to share . This is so crucial in the work we do, and I feel better equipped now to handle sensitive information with the care and integrity it deserves.

Another part of the session I truly loved was our discussion about "Exploring Nature" through the five senses. It was such a refreshing and grounding experience that reminded us to be present, connected, and mindful in our everyday surroundings.

We also had an important conversation around grief — how to recognize it, how to manage it, and most importantly, understanding when we need help. These are real, human experiences, and having open discussions like these helps break the stigma around emotional and mental health.

But the most impactful part for me was learning the power of saying “NO”. Often we say yes out of habit — at work, at home, in our communities — but we were reminded that saying no is healthy, necessary, and a form of self-care. It's a skill I'm going to carry forward with confidence.

And how can I forget — we got to work with clay during the session, shaping it with our hands to create something meaningful. This wasn't just fun, it was deeply symbolic — showing us how creativity can energize our beliefs, release emotions, and help us express ourselves in new ways.”





Access Alliance
Multicultural Health and Community Services