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FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# WE ALL HAVE MENTAL HEALTH

## MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGIES FOR Y PROGRAMS

### YMCA OF THE USA

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#### AUDIENCE

- Branch Executives, Senior Program Directors
- Program Directors
- Program Staff and Volunteers

#### QUICK SUMMARY

This resource includes mental health promotion strategies to support program participants and staff. The strategies align with the Mental Health Community Care Model, a prevention model of care that focuses on mental health promotion in order to reduce the risk and impact of mental illness.

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## HOW TO USE

- Gather a few people (e.g., staff, volunteers, members)
- Review the strategies
- Discuss the reflection questions
- Explore the supporting resources
- Generate ideas how to best implement the strategies

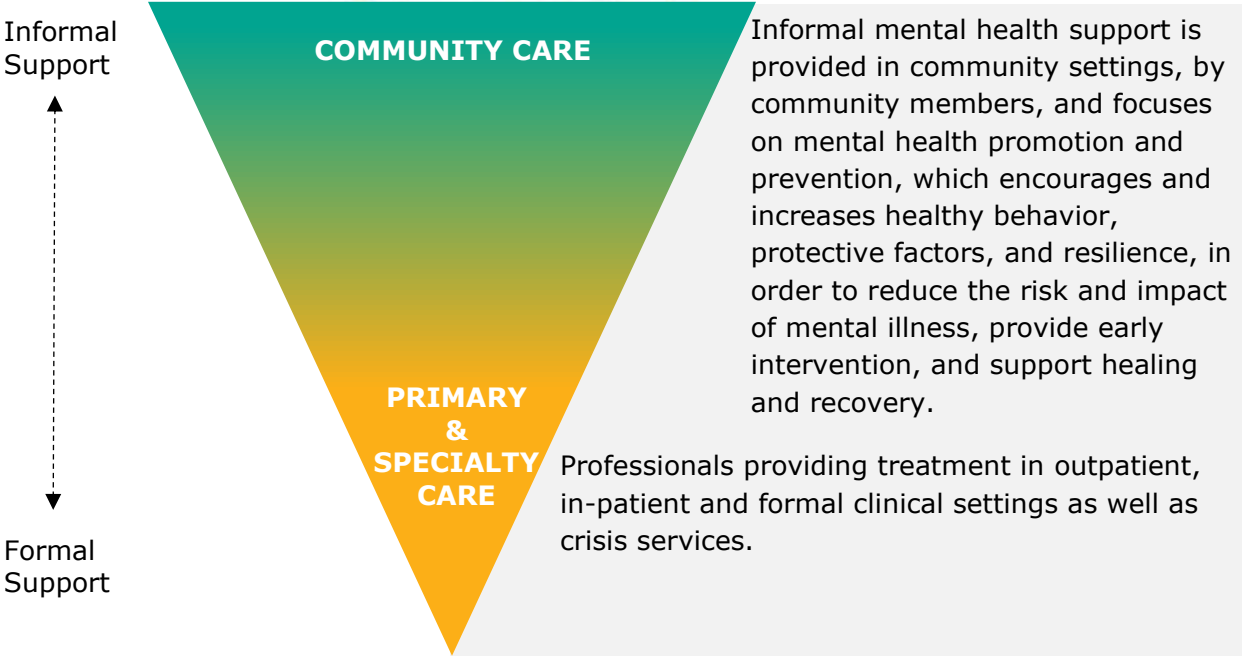
This guide outlines six mental health promotion strategies and poses questions for Y leaders to critically think about and reflect on how they might implement each. The resources provided are designed to support implementation and ongoing delivery of each strategy. Program leaders are encouraged to gather a small team to work through the document and develop an implementation plan.

# MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY CARE MODEL

Mental health is how we think, feel, act; we all have mental health. Mental health community care is a preventive model of care that empowers and equips individuals, organizations, and institutions to apply and provide informal mental health support so that they can care for themselves and others.

Informal support focuses on mental health promotion, which encourages and increases healthy behaviors, protective factors, and resilience, in order to reduce the risk and impact of mental illness, provide early intervention, and support healing and recovery. Critical to the community care model are collaborations and partnerships with formal mental health supports. Both informal and formal supports are needed by communities to ensure that all can thrive.

**Mental health is how we think, feel and act. We all have mental health.**



Model adapted from the World Health Organization:  
[https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/policy/services/2\\_Optimal%20Mix%20of%20Services\\_Infosheet.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/services/2_Optimal%20Mix%20of%20Services_Infosheet.pdf)

## MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY CARE AT THE Y

Mental health community care is enacted through:

- Defining mental health as how we think, feel, act; we all have mental health
- Engaging in conversations about mental health in a genuine way
- Proactively and routinely applying positive self-care practices
- Understanding trauma and how to apply trauma-informed practices
- Understanding the impact of social determinants of health and the effects of systemic racism on mental health
- Recognizing signs someone may be suffering
- Proactively connecting individuals to formal supports as needed
- Providing initial response in emergency situations

Ys can deliver mental health community care by developing and advancing strategies focused on mental health promotion, risk reduction and early intervention in the following key operational areas:



Included in this resource are **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF** in the areas of Program Innovation and Leadership Development.

# MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGIES

## Program Innovation

Integrating informal mental health promotion and prevention supports into existing, and new, programs and services, allows Ys the opportunity to enhance their offerings in ways that advances mental health community care.

Strategies	Questions To Consider	Supporting Resources
<p><b>Implement routine emotion check-ins to promote identifying and labeling emotions and provide staff a sense of an individual’s and group’s mood</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What benefits would routine emotion check-ins have for participants? For staff?</li> <li>• How can we use the Supporting Resources as training materials so that all staff feel comfortable and confident in conducting an emotion check-ins?</li> <li>• How could our staff team hold each other accountable for doing emotion check-ins?</li> <li>• What are some ways our staff team could communicate with each other about what we are learning during these check-ins?</li> <li>• What specific times or points throughout the program might we implement emotion check-ins as a routine practice? (e.g., at the start, after activity transition) <i>*Note, emotion check-ins can be done at designated times, as well as in-the-moment when necessary.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Emotion Check-ins Info Sheet</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotion Check-In: Intro Video</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotion Identification intro</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotion Identification Skills sheet</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotional Well-Being in OST: Embedding Trauma-Informed Practices</a> (minutes 17:24-22:57)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Integrate mental health promotion activities into programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What benefits would integrating mental health promotion activities have for our participants? For our staff?</li> <li>• How can we use the Supporting Resources as training materials so that staff feel comfortable and confident facilitating mental health promotion activities?</li> <li>• What on-going support might be needed for the staff facilitating these activities?</li> <li>• At what point during our program could we integrate quick mental health promotion activities?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Mental Health Promotion Activity Deck</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Dinner Table Resilience Series</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Dinner Table Resilience Series App</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the implications of doing so? Do other activities need to be adapted or changed?</li> <li>• What might we call this designated time so that participants know it's time dedicated to strengthening their minds? (e.g., Well Minded, Brain Fitness, Brain Health)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Offer effective coping skills as an intervention technique during times of stress or challenge</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we use the Supporting Resources to build staff comfort and confidence applying mental health promotion activities as interventions during times of participant stress?</li> <li>• What are some ways our staff team could reflect and process learnings after using coping skills as an intervention?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Effective Coping Skills Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotion Regulation Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">My Coping Skills Kit</a></li> </ul>

## Leadership Development

Through a commitment to employing staffing practices that exemplify the community care model, and continuous training and development to build staff competence, Ys strengthen their ability to deliver mental health community care.

Strategies	Questions to Consider	Supporting Resources
<p><b>Train and develop staff how to talk about mental health in everyday conversation as well as crisis situations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will our staff benefit from efforts to build their mental health awareness and literacy?</li> <li>• How can we use the Supporting Resources as training materials so that all staff feel comfortable talking about mental health in ways that align with informal community care (i.e., listening, offering hope, and connecting to formal supports when needed)?</li> <li>• How will we encourage and foster on-going skill development in a safe environment? <i>(Note, talking about mental health, trauma and suicide can be difficult for many reasons. Creating a safe, empathetic and judgement-free environment for staff to practice these conversations is recommended.)</i></li> <li>• How could we incorporate opportunities for staff to reflect and process how they are applying the key concepts and behaviors highlighted in the resources?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Mental Health Conversations Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Suicide Prevention Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">National Resource List</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Community Resource List</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we help our staff understand the boundaries between informal and formal support so that they understand when to refer someone to a professional?</li> <li>• How can our leadership team model and demonstrate the concepts and behaviors we are asking staff to apply?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Train and development staff in trauma-informed practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we use the Supporting Resources as training materials to further develop staff members' understanding of trauma and trauma-informed practices?</li> <li>• How will we encourage and foster on-going skill development in a safe environment?</li> <li>• How could we incorporate opportunities for staff to reflect and process how they are applying the concepts and behaviors?</li> <li>• How can our leadership team model and demonstrate the concepts and behaviors we are asking staff to apply?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Being Trauma-Informed Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Trauma-Informed Responses Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Trauma-Informed Guiding Principles</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide training, encouragement and role modeling to staff on routine self-care practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What policies, processes or practices do we have in place that support staff self-care? (e.g., EAP, mental health breaks, dedicated space for staff self-care)</li> <li>• What could we do to enhance our existing policies, processes or practices and/or what more could we do to support staff self-care? (e.g., EAP, mental health breaks, dedicated space for staff self-care)</li> <li>• How is our leadership team modeling self-care?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Self-Care Go Kit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Self-Care Skills sheet</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotion Well-being in OST Learning Series: Staff Support</a> (minutes 16:53-21:44)</li> </ul>

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