Program: Think First Group

Target Population:

☐ 0 to 6 years  ☐ 7 to 12 years  ☑ 12+  ☐ Parents/Caregivers

Purpose and Goals:
Think First is a nine week school-based group which focuses on building skills that aim to support the management of intense emotions and aggressive behaviours in male youth through a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based (CBT) skill-building curriculum. Utilizing a variety of modalities, students are supported and challenged in the development of pro-social alternatives to dealing with stresses in their life.

Eligibility Criteria:
Program is available to middle and high schools in the high risk neighbourhoods and high need schools in the former City of York, including Weston Mount Dennis, Lawrence and Weston Road, Jane and Weston. Participants are identified by school personnel and are limited to students of the hosting school when program is school-based.

Program is offered in English.

Location:
- Yorktown Child and Family Centre – 2010 Eglinton Avenue West
- Middle Schools and High Schools in the former City of York

Expected Outcomes:
1. Increased youth understanding of connections between feelings, thoughts and actions.
2. Improved skills in the area of managing moods and emotions.
3. Increased knowledge and understanding of relevant issues such as bullying, gang violence and racism.
4. Increased communication, problem-solving and coping skills.
5. Increased self-esteem.
6. Increased pro social skills and behavior.
7. Increased peer/social supports.

Theoretical Framework:
- Evidence-informed
- Universal prevention program
- CBT group model
- Psycho-educational group approach
- Students referred by teaching and guidance staff
- Gender-specific intervention
- Collaborative mentorship
Mode of Evaluation:
- Self Report
- Partner Evaluations
- Focus Groups
- Review Meetings
- Formal Evaluation
- Observations by facilitators
- CAFAS (Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale) – modified version

- Informal participatory learning methods designed to match the developmental needs of youth include discussion, role-play and creative exercises (including journaling, youth-oriented hand-outs). A CBT-based content is combined within interpersonal, process-oriented group work to form the theoretical foundation of the program. Process-oriented group work fosters social affiliation among young people by helping them make positive healthy connections with each other and with supportive adults. Group facilitators seek to create a positive and supportive environment out of which learning and change can take place and aspects of client under-socialization can be addressed. Students are assisted to understand the connection between their emotions, thoughts and behaviours leading to the learning of effective strategies that allow them to behave in more successful ways.