



SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF BLACK GIRLS & TEENS THROUGH ADVOCACY

A GUIDE BY



ABOUT US

California Black Women's Health Project (CABWHP) is California's only statewide, non-profit organization that is solely committed to improving the health and wellness of Black women and girls through advocacy, education, outreach and policy. To learn more about our work visit cabwhp.org.

THE IMPACT & IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY

Advocating for mental health equity and advances is crucial. It helps ensure that Black girls and teens receive the care necessary to navigate challenges and thrive. By advocating for mental health equity, we promote inclusivity, break down stigmas and empower Black girls and teens to prioritize their well-being, promoting positive outcomes in their lives.

"TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE, YOU MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP. WE WILL FAIL WHEN WE FAIL TO TRY."

- ROSA PARKS



TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF BLACK GIRLS AND TEENS IN CALIFORNIA, WE FIRST MUST UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE ^{1, 2, 3}

- In California, 61% of Black teen girls say they need help for emotional and mental health.
- Across the state, 88% of Black teens did not receive counseling in 2020, including at least 42,000 Black teen girls.
- Black teens, nationwide, aged 18–19 consistently report the highest rates of teen dating violence.
- Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) Black children and youth across the state have experienced being treated or judged unfairly because of their race – the highest of any racial or ethnic group. Anti-Black racism leads to racial stress, which may cause additional adverse psychological effects.

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- In California, the suicide rate among Black youth doubled between 2014 and 2020 and is now twice the statewide average, exceeding all other groups. In 2020, Black youth made up 12% of suicide deaths – the highest of any racial and ethnic group.
- The health consequences of historical racism and discrimination can be passed down psychologically, socially and emotionally from one generation to the next, resulting in intergenerational harm.
- 1 in 3 (34%) Black children in California have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences compared to 15% of all children.
- Children of Black parents who have been affected by trauma may exhibit symptoms of PTSD, or “historical trauma response.”
- Black youth in California are 4x more likely to be removed from their homes and placed in foster care and 2x more likely to experience or witness neighborhood and family violence when compared to white children.

WAYS TO ADVOCATE

- **Utilize social media:** Leverage the power of social media to amplify mental health disparities. Share mental health focused content published by CABWHP, our partners and other informative posts, articles, videos and infographics to educate your online communities about the mental health of Black girls, teens and communities.
- **Advocate for legislation:** Initiate conversations about mental health within your social circles, workplace and community. Encourage open and respectful discussions to raise awareness and foster understanding. Be prepared to provide resources and well-researched information.
- **Attend community events:** Plan or attend events like, listening sessions, community circles and awareness walks to mobilize community members. These events can help increase public awareness about the urgent need for mental health equity.

- **Engage with elected officials:** Write letters, make phone calls or meet with your local, state and federal representatives to express the need for mental health equity and improved resources for Black girls and teens. Urge them to support health equity legislation and to participate in relevant discussions.

Find your representatives: findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov

- **Fundraise and donate:** Contribute to mental health equity initiatives, organizations and community projects through fundraising and donations. Financial support helps increase the impact of advocacy efforts. To support CABWHP visit cabwhp.org/forward.

- **Celebrate victories:** Acknowledge and celebrate the progress you make in your advocacy journey, no matter how small. Your advocacy makes a difference and deserves to be celebrated!



YOUR WELL-BEING IS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY. TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF CAN HELP YOU BETTER SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OTHERS.

WELLNESS TIPS FOR ADVOCATES

- **Practice Self-Care Regularly:** Mental health advocacy can be emotionally taxing. Make self-care a priority by engaging in activities that promote your relaxation and rejuvenation.
- **Set Boundaries:** It's important to set boundaries to prevent burnout. Learn to say "no" to additional responsibilities when you feel overwhelmed and prioritize tasks that are essential for your well-being.
- **Seek Support:** Connect with fellow and supportive advocates and peers who understand the challenges of mental health advocacy and racial inequities. Having a supportive circle of individuals to connect with can provide encouragement, validation and an affirming space to share experiences and emotions.
- **Reflect and Reassess:** Reflect on your advocacy journey regularly, celebrating achievements and acknowledging challenges. Reassess your goals and strategies, adapting them as needed to ensure long-term sustainability.

REFERENCES

1. Debnam, K. J., Milam, A. J., & Finigan-Carr, N. (2022). Superwoman, Racial Identity, and Teen Dating Violence Victimization among Young Black Women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(17-18), NP15970-NP15991. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211021984>
2. A Child is a Child - Black Children's Health. (2023). https://www.cabwhp.org/uploads/5/6/6/4/56647115/cabwhp-cpehn_mental_health_toolkit_-_12.2020.pdf
3. "The California Reparations Report" - Office of the Attorney General. (2023). <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/exec-summary-ca-reparations.pdf>



LET BLACK GIRLS THRIVE

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