

# TORONTO TEEN SURVEY

## A Tool for Addressing Youth Sexual Health in a Diverse Urban Centre

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### Introduction

The Toronto Teen Survey (TTS) is a community-based research (CBR) project designed to support a comprehensive youth sexual health strategy for one of the world's most ethno-racially diverse cities. Phase One, discussed here, focused on developing a research partnership between youth, academics, service providers, and policy-makers, and engaging a diverse group of youth in the development of the TTS research tool. The survey captures services currently used by youth as well as access barriers and facilitators.

### Objectives

- To share experiences, challenges and learnings from the engagement of youth and the community in the survey tool development phase of this CBR project.
- To demonstrate how the social determinants of health and health inequities were recognized and acknowledged in this process, how socio-cultural and political contexts were considered, and how the development of the survey tool itself presented opportunities to address inequities.



### Methods

A CBR model was used to engage teens in finding solutions to barriers they experience in accessing non-judgmental and relevant sexual and reproductive health services.

A diverse group of youth (n = 12, aged 13-17) were recruited from across Toronto. They were called the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC).

The YAC met seven times over four months to develop the survey tool and worked collaboratively to develop a research design, instruments and protocol. The tool was subsequently sent out to a broad spectrum of community service providers for a "diversity audit" and pilot tested with additional groups of youth.

### Results

Youth identified significant shortcomings in conventional survey design. In particular, several challenges emerged with respect to the complexity of youths' lived experience of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability and definitions of sex. Tensions arose between creating a tool which was sensitive to the issues and language of specific youth communities and also accessible to all youth who completed it. Demonstrating the strength of partnership-oriented research, creative solutions emerged – including adding explanation 'bubbles' to the survey, peer-administration, and the addition of qualitative components.

#### SHOT TOPICS

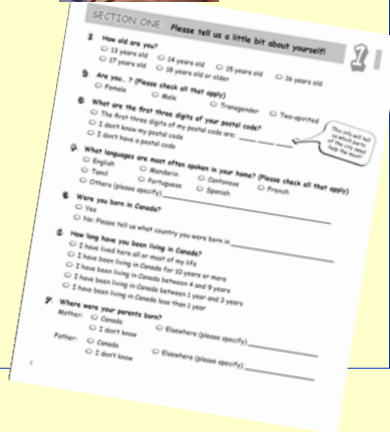
- Gender
- Ethno-racial background
- Immigration and newcomer status
- Disability
- Sexual Experiences
- Family
- Youth Perceptions of Confidentiality
- Ethical Considerations

#### YAC IMPACT ON DATA COLLECTION

- Survey to be distributed by YAC members rather than adults.
- Data collection sessions to be accompanied by a peer sexual health Q & A session.
- Questions are clearer and more 'youth-friendly'.

#### ESSENTIAL FACTORS FOR A SUCCESSFUL YAC

- Comprehensive Recruitment Strategy
- Thorough Interview and Selection Process
- Essential and Relevant Training
  - Sexual Health Information
  - Anti-Oppression
  - Facilitation Skills
  - Research Knowledge
- Youth Appropriate Facilitation
- Accessible Location, Child Care ,Language and/or ASL Interpretation
- Honoraria



### Conclusions

The findings have the potential to increase access to sexual and reproductive health services for diverse youth communities. The fact that sexual health is intricately linked to larger socio-cultural and political contexts which must be considered in research has posed some challenging dilemmas for the partnership in the process of working with youth to develop the tool. A progressive survey tool such as TTS has the potential to provide more trustworthy and meaningful data if the limitations are worked through with all members of the partnership, including youth participants. Using a community-based approach has enriched the process, and hopefully the outcomes.



### Next Steps

- YAC Facilitate Survey Sessions and 1,500 Toronto youth surveyed.
- Focus Group with Service Providers to Share Findings.
- Development of a city-wide Sexual Health Strategy.
- Qualitative follow up study with communities of youth reporting extensive access barriers.
- Ethnographic Study with YAC Youth

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### For further information

Contact [sflynn@ppt.on.ca](mailto:sflynn@ppt.on.ca). More information on this and related projects can be obtained at [www.ppt.on.ca](http://www.ppt.on.ca). A link to an online, PDF-version of this poster is also available at [www.ppt.on.ca](http://www.ppt.on.ca).