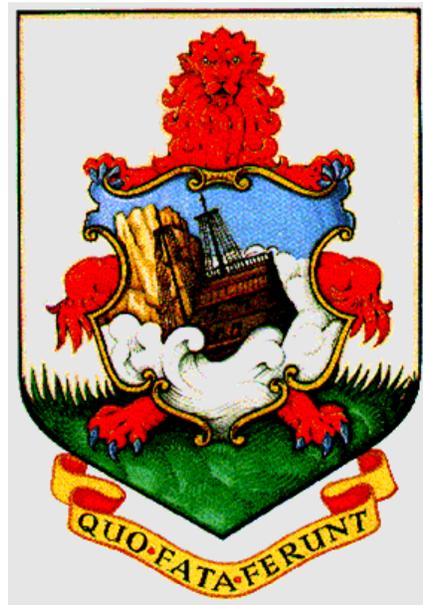


## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

# **BUILDING CAPACITY IN OUR COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**



Prepared for

The Honourable Kim N. Wilson, JP, MP  
Minister of Health

*March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026*

**Mr. Speaker,**

This morning, I am pleased to announce the launch of the Youth Mental Health Training Programme led by the Department of Health. This important initiative is designed to empower local professionals who serve the youth of Bermuda with the essential skills to recognize, respond to, and refer young people experiencing mental-health concerns.

The programme is particularly valuable for those who want to increase their confidence and competence in supporting young people during critical moments. This initiative is part of the Ministry of Health's ongoing commitment to build community mental health capacity, create sustainable support systems, and strengthen the safety nets around our youth.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Adolescence is a highly impressionable period characterized by emotional, social, and neurological changes that can be challenging for a young person to navigate. When we recognize challenges early and come together to support our young people, we give them the tools to cope in healthy ways and help guide them toward a positive future. By equipping teachers, school staff, youth workers, coaches, mentors, social-service

providers, healthcare professionals, community volunteers, and others who regularly interact with adolescents, we reduce stigma, improve early intervention, and build compassionate, more resilient communities.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Youth Mental Health Programme is a three-day course delivered via two days of interactive workshops offered virtually or in-person for skills-based learning, and one half-day in-person session that takes a deep dive into adolescent brain development, anti-stigma strategies, and local referral processes and pathways. Additionally, monthly training sessions are scheduled throughout the year, and lunch will be provided for in-person participants.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Youth Mental Health Training Programme blends foundational knowledge with practical skills for mental health support. Participants can expect to build core skills in:

- Identifying early warning signs of mental-health concerns in adolescents and understanding how to observe changes in behavior, mood, and functioning.
- Providing safe, immediate support that is youth-friendly, nonjudgemental, and appropriate to the situation.
- Understanding referral pathways and knowing when and how to connect a young person with professional services.
- Using anti-stigma strategies and youth-centered communication to create environments where young people feel safe to seek help; and
- Maintaining personal well-being while supporting others, including practical approaches to avoid burnout and secondary trauma.

This training also covers knowledge content on adolescent brain development, available resources on island, and collaborative brainstorming for stigma-reduction within organizations. Participants who successfully complete the evaluation of the training will receive a certificate, demonstrating their competency and mastery of these skills and concepts.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Youth Mental Health Training Programme recognizes that young people are best supported by the people they trust most, such as their family members, teachers, coaches, mentors, and community volunteers.

Strengthening the skills of these trusted adults builds a community safety net that provides wrap-around support. As we build capacity, we also build linkages between community support and professional services. This means supporting adolescent mental health is not just the role of clinicians, but a shared communal responsibility. Creating overlapping layers of support not only reduces delays in mental support but also ensures that no young person falls through the cracks.

**Mr. Speaker,**

As more people in our community develop competencies in adolescent mental health support, we will continue to break down stigmas, thus making it easier for young people to ask for help. In the short term, we are building a Bermuda where youth receive the timely, compassionate and appropriate support they need, at the appropriate level.

In the long term, such training initiatives not only contribute to a more resilient youth population but also drive cultural changes in how we think about and respond to adolescent mental health concerns and influence positive outcomes for young people across families, schools, sports clubs, and community programmes.

**Mr. Speaker,**

In closing, the Youth Mental Health Training Programme reflects the Government's commitment to strengthening Bermuda's mental-health landscape and ensuring that young people receive informed, compassionate support when they need it most.

By investing in the adults who surround our youth, we invest in stronger families, safer schools, and healthier communities. I encourage anyone who works with adolescents to register and join us in building a more resilient future for Bermuda's- young people.

Registration is open, and further details on the schedule of sessions are available at [www.gov.bm/youthmentalhealthtraining](http://www.gov.bm/youthmentalhealthtraining)

**Thank you, Mr. Speaker.**