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Media Release

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Halton Youth Impact Survey results

Our Kids Network bulletin highlights the importance of access to recreation

Halton Region, Ontario – The [latest bulletin](#) from Our Kids Network (OKN) indicates that 60% of young people who participated in the [Halton Youth Impact Survey](#) reported having high availability of recreation opportunities, as well as high quality of recreation facilities. The 40% of youth who said they didn't have access to recreation opportunities were more likely to report lower levels of wellbeing than those who do have access.

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of agencies and organizations who work together to ensure that all children and youth thrive. In the spring of 2021, during the pandemic, 2,599 young people completed the Halton Youth Impact Survey (HYIS). To report on the findings and to champion youth wellbeing, OKN is releasing a series of “data action bulletins.”

Each bulletin focuses on specific areas of young people's lives and includes a series of recommended actions; for example, service providers are encouraged to consider how the findings might highlight gaps and opportunities to work together in our communities to support children, youth, and families.

OKN's Executive Director Elisabeth Wells said children and youth have the right to enjoy the benefits of physical activity, spending time outside in nature, cultural experiences, and other forms of recreation.

“Participation in recreational activities is associated with higher levels of social connectedness and wellbeing. Physical activity in particular has been found to decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression. We also know that group activities support healthy social development, and unstructured outdoor play promotes cognitive development. Young people who don't participate in leisure activities are more likely to report feeling isolated and less satisfied with their lives.”

Reducing barriers to participation

The idea for this fifth bulletin was born in a meeting with professionals advocating for more inclusion supports in Milton's recreational activities. To support their advocacy, they needed data. That's why the bulletin combines data from the 2021 HYIS with other sources to support planning for more inclusive recreation across Halton, including addressing the needs of young people living with disabilities.

Wells noted that opportunities may be nearby, but that doesn't mean everyone can take advantage of them.

“We explored how living in a lower income household affects participation, or how those who have a long-term physical or mental condition face barriers. Some youth need extra support.”

These are some of the survey results related to barriers to participation:

- A little more than half of survey respondents reported at least one barrier to participating in recreation. Of those, 45% faced systemic barriers, such as not having enough money for recreation, not having access to public transportation, or not having access to recreation centres or parks.
- 24% of respondents who are living with a disability reported experiencing systemic barriers to participation.
- 51% of respondents who are living in a household with inadequate income reported experiencing systemic barriers to participation.

Moving data into action

Each OKN bulletin asks readers to consider how their organization, on its own and in partnership with others, can ensure that all children and youth in Halton can benefit from recreational activities.

“The HYIS findings represent the voice of Halton youth,” Wells said. “The people and organizations who serve them will mobilize to effect change. And we’re here to help. If you need data that is not covered in one of our bulletins or you want us to focus on a particular age group or neighbourhood, just reach out. The clearer the picture, the better the real-life outcomes in the community.”

For more information about OKN, visit ourkidsnetwork.ca.

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