



**Big Brothers Big Sisters**  
of South-West Durham

# SWITCH GEARS

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF SOUTH-WEST DURHAM'S  
NEW PILOT PROGRAM

## WHO WE ARE

Big Brothers Big Sisters of South-West Durham (BBSSWD) has been providing life-changing mentorship programming in the Durham Region since 1973. We service children and youth ages 6-16 from Ajax, Pickering, Oshawa and Whitby who are considered marginalized and at risk, facing obstacles such as mental health, developmental, and behavioural issues. Our programs lead to increases in confidence in school and the belief that school is fun and important, as well as reductions in bullying/fighting/lying behaviours and peer pressure-related anxiety.

Our vision is that every child in Durham who needs a mentor, has a mentor.

**1,200**



Youth serviced in  
2017

**173**



Volunteer mentors in  
2017

## THE PROGRAM

Switch Gears is a new group mentorship program introduced in September of 2017. Our program supports the positive and healthy development of male youth ages 12-14 through activities that focus on understanding what it means to be a man in today's world. The goal of this program is to decrease the likelihood of bullying, violence and self-harm while working to be resilient young men in a world full of potential stressors. To date, 48 male youth have participated in this program and we will continue to deliver it in Fall 2018.

# PROGRAM

# OBJECTIVES



## **GENDER SOCIALIZATION**

Build awareness of gender stereotypes and constructed male norms and increase understanding of the impact they have on male health and well-being, to redefine masculinity in today's world.



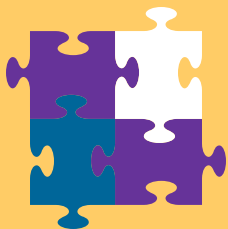
## **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

Understand components of healthy relationships (empathy, boundaries, power, kindness, trust and respect) and to encourage health decision-making in relationships.



## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Gain knowledge of mental health issues facing young men and build confidence to seek support, to promote willingness to connect with mental health services and cope with stressors.



## **PROBLEM SOLVING**

Develop problem solving skills, to promote critical thinking, leadership skills, effective communication and healthy relationships.



## **BYSTANDER MODEL**

Gain an understanding of the bystander model, to encourage participants to become active, safe bystanders in the community with peers.



## **SELF-AWARENESS**

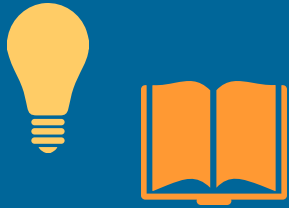
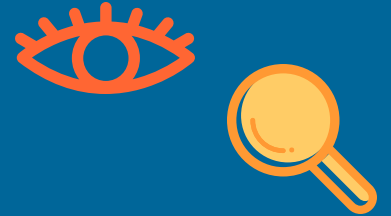
Learn about the self in relation to weekly topics, to allow participants to reflect on their role as young men in today's society.

# PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

## Need Identification

We identified a gap in male-focussed youth services in South-West Durham.

SPRING  
2016



## Program Development

We developed a 10- week, evidence-informed curriculum in consultation with partners.

## Initial Program Rollout

We introduced Switch Gears at two high-risk schools in South-West Durham.

SEPT.  
2017



## Subsequent Program Rollout

We introduced Switch Gears at three more high-risk schools in South-West Durham.

JAN.  
2018

## Pilot Program Evaluation

We analyzed program data to determine program effectiveness.

JULY  
2018



# INITIAL FINDINGS

## After completing Switch Gears:



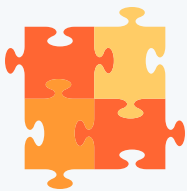
81% of participants reported being able to tell when something is bothering them



76% of participants reported that they would try to stop a fight, even if others thought they were weird



76% of participants reported that it is not weak for guys to show emotions



95% of participants reported that it is not okay to use violence to solve problems



81% of participants reported that it is not okay to use violence to express feelings

70% of participants reported feeling hopeful about the future

### OVERALL INCREASE IN:

- ⬆️ Participants' self-awareness of the impact of violence on themselves
- ⬆️ Participants' respect for themselves to set limits and to end an unhealthy relationship

### OVERALL DECREASE IN:

- ⬇️ Participants' bullying behaviours
- ⬇️ Participants' acceptance of yelling or hurting others when bothered

# WHAT OUR PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING

"I LEARNED HAPPINESS!!!!!"

"I WILL STOP USING VIOLENCE"

"I LEARNED THAT EMOTIONAL THINGS STAY WITH YOU"

"I LEARNED STUFF THAT HELPS ME AS A PERSON AND THE SOCIETY"



**"I LEARNED TO BE MYSELF NO MATTER WHERE OR WHEN"**

"I LEARNED HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGER"

"I WILL SHOW OTHERS I WILL STAND UP FOR THEM MORE"

"I LEARNED HOW TO HAVE FUN WITH PEOPLE"

"I LEARNED THAT I CAN SHOW MY FEELINGS"



**"I LEARNED THAT MEN AND WOMEN HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AND THAT EVERYONE IS EQUAL"**



# THANK YOU TO OUR PROJECT PARTNERS

