

**BREAKING THE SILENCE:
BUILDING ACCESSIBLE
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
FOR DEAF, HARD OF HEARING,
AND DEAFBLIND
COMMUNITIES**

Presented by: Deaf-Hearing
Communication Centre, Inc.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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Executive Director

DHCC: Who we are

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Understand systemic barriers in mental health services
- Examine language, culture, and service delivery gaps
- Learn accessible communication strategies
- Explore trauma-informed and culturally responsive care
- Identify sustainable and measurable solutions

WHY THIS MATTERS



- Mental health disparities persist
- Communication barriers impact care quality
- Limited culturally competent providers
- Reduces access to services and support
- Equity requires accessibility

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITIES

- Deaf (ASL users, cultural identity)
- Hard of Hearing (varied communication preferences)
- DeafBlind (tactile communication, multi-sensory access)

- Diverse communication methods
 - ASL
 - Tactile Sign
 - ProTactile approaches
 - Visual Supports
 - Assistive technology



Deaf



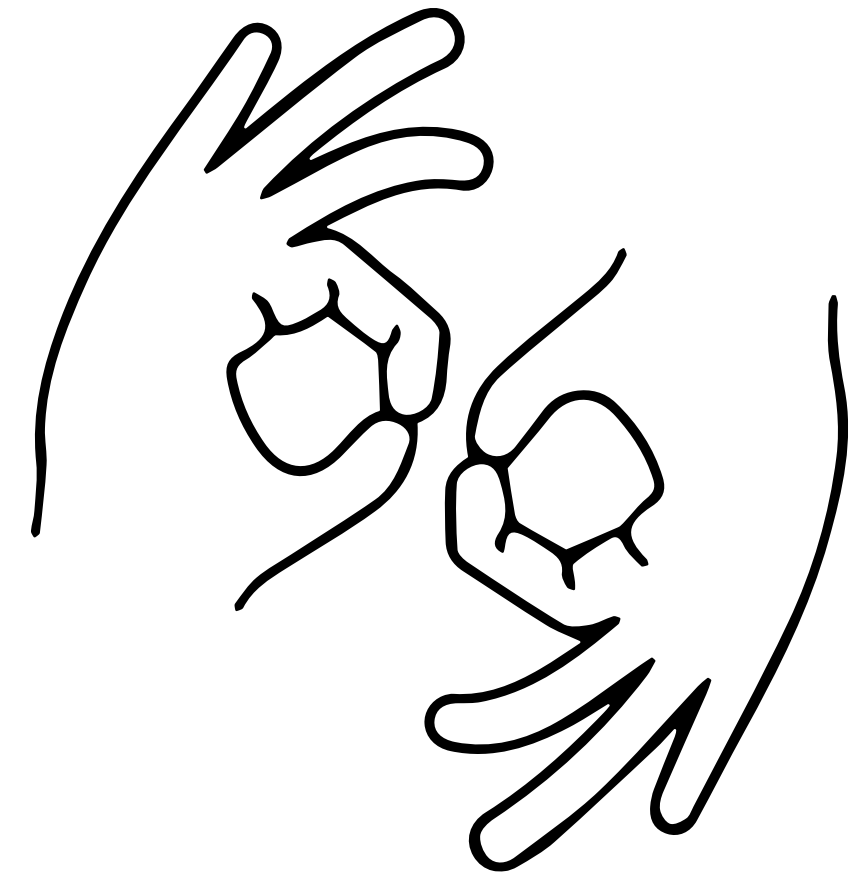
deaf



Hard of hearing

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS IN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Communication mismatches
- Lack of trained providers
- Limited interpreter access
- Inaccessible intake processes
- Misunderstanding of Deaf Culture
- Policy and funding gaps

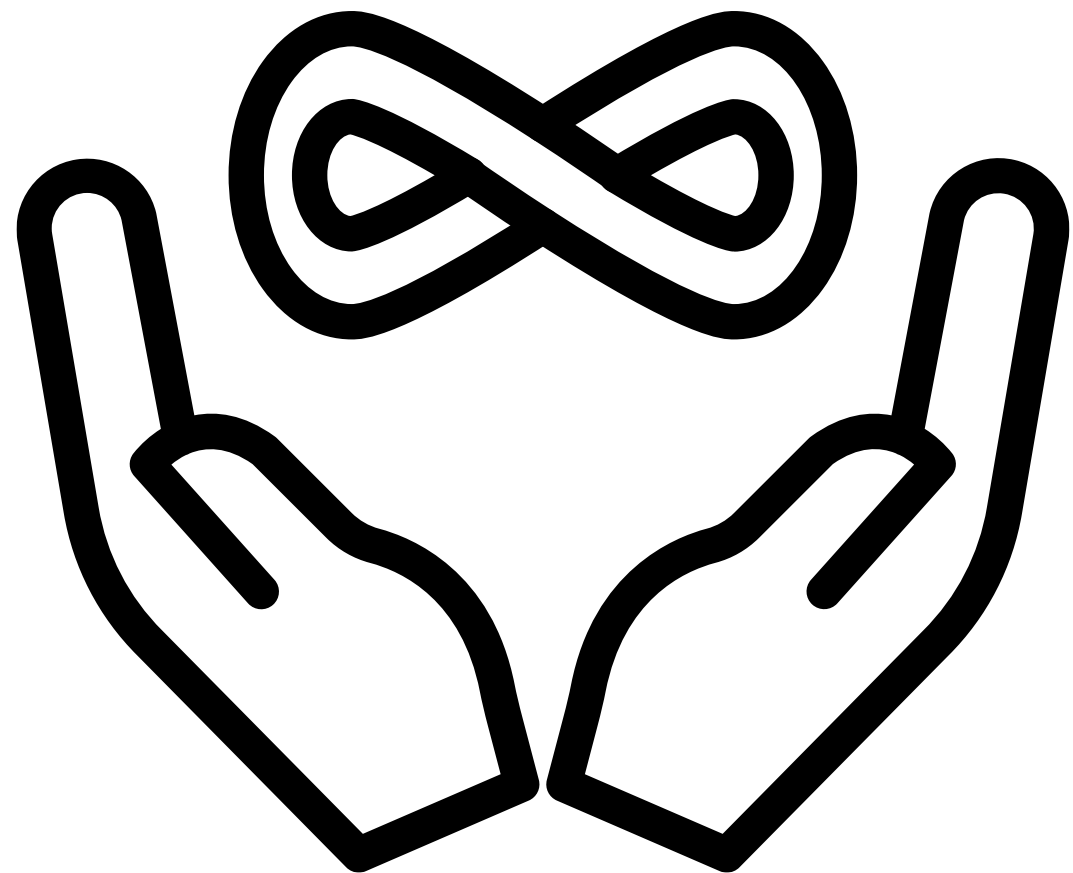


INTERSECTION OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Language shapes emotional expression
- Cultural norms influence care
- Misinterpretation of behaviors
- Trust and rapport challenges
- Importance of linguistic equity



TRADITIONAL SERVICE MODELS: WHERE THEY FALL SHORT



- One-size-fits-all approaches
- Reliance on spoken language
- Limited accessibility planning
- Reactive vs proactive accommodations
- Lack of community partnerships

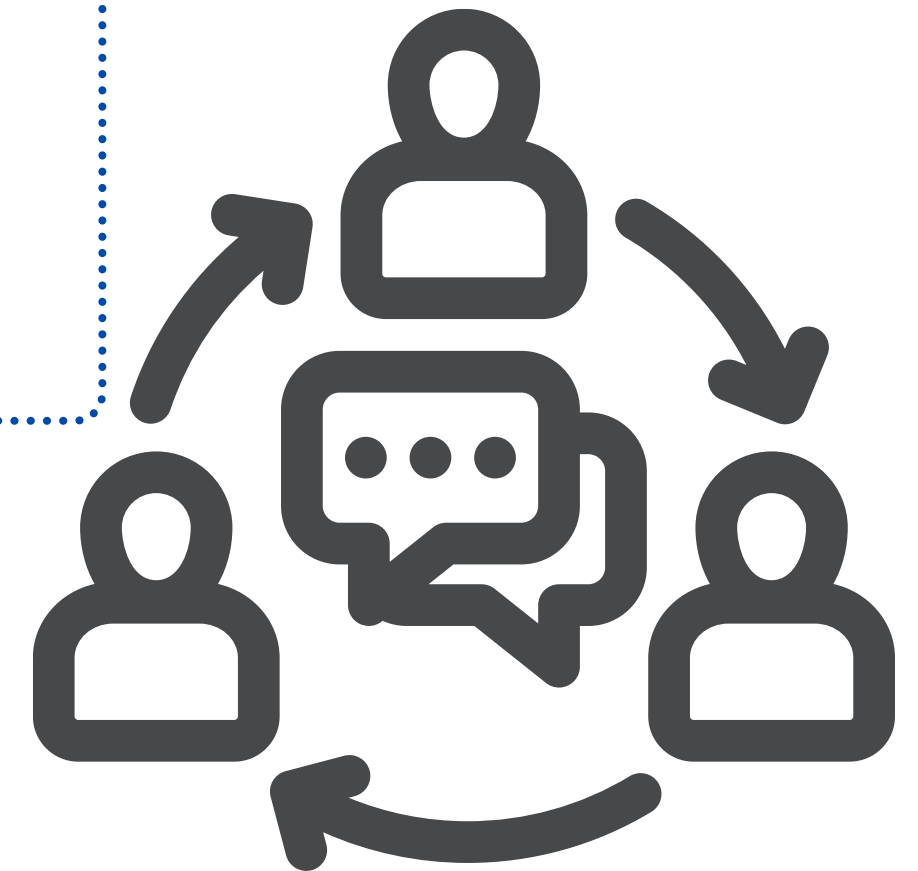
MOVING BEYOND BARRIERS TO SOLUTIONS

- Universal design in services
- Community-centered care
- Collaborative service delivery
- Accessible communication systems
- Sustainable implementation



Accessible Communication Strategies

- Direct communication in preferred language
- Qualified interpreters and CDIs
- Tactile communication methods
- Visual and tactile materials
- Clear visual environments
- Extended processing time



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND ACCESS TOOLS

- Video remote interpreting (VRI)
- Video relay services
- Visual alert systems
- Communication apps
- Captioning
- Tactile communication supports

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE CONSIDERATIONS

- Communication access reduces trauma
- Power and control dynamics
- Cultural humility
- Safe and predictable environments
- Choice and autonomy

INCLUSION WITHIN THE DEAF COMMUNITY



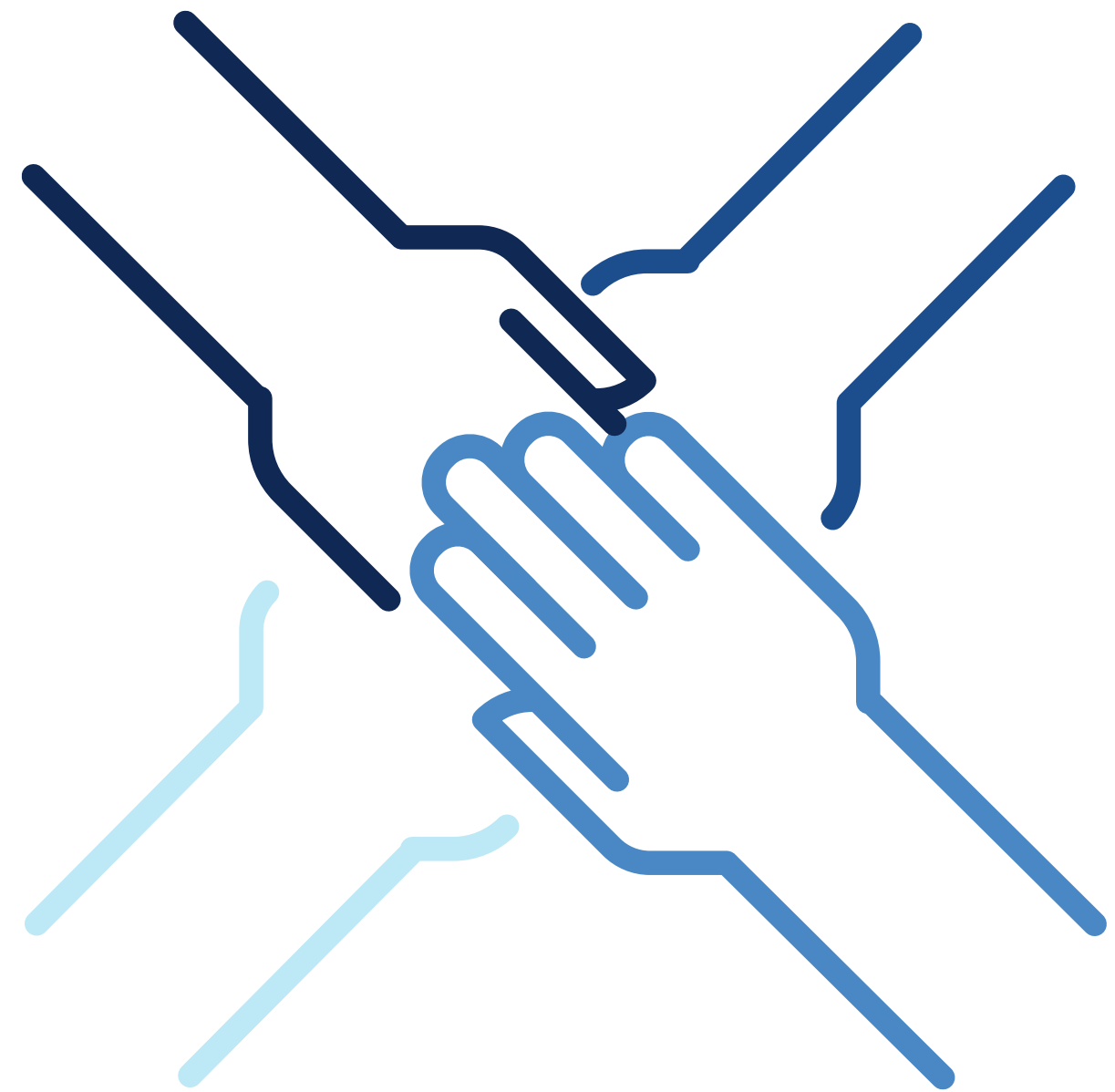
PROVIDER TRAINING NEEDS

- Deaf culture awareness
- Communication strategies
- Working with interpreters
- Deafblind accessibility practices
- Bias and assumptions
- Ongoing professional development



COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

- Cross-sector partnerships
- Community organizations
- Interpreting agencies
- Peer support networks
- Family engagement

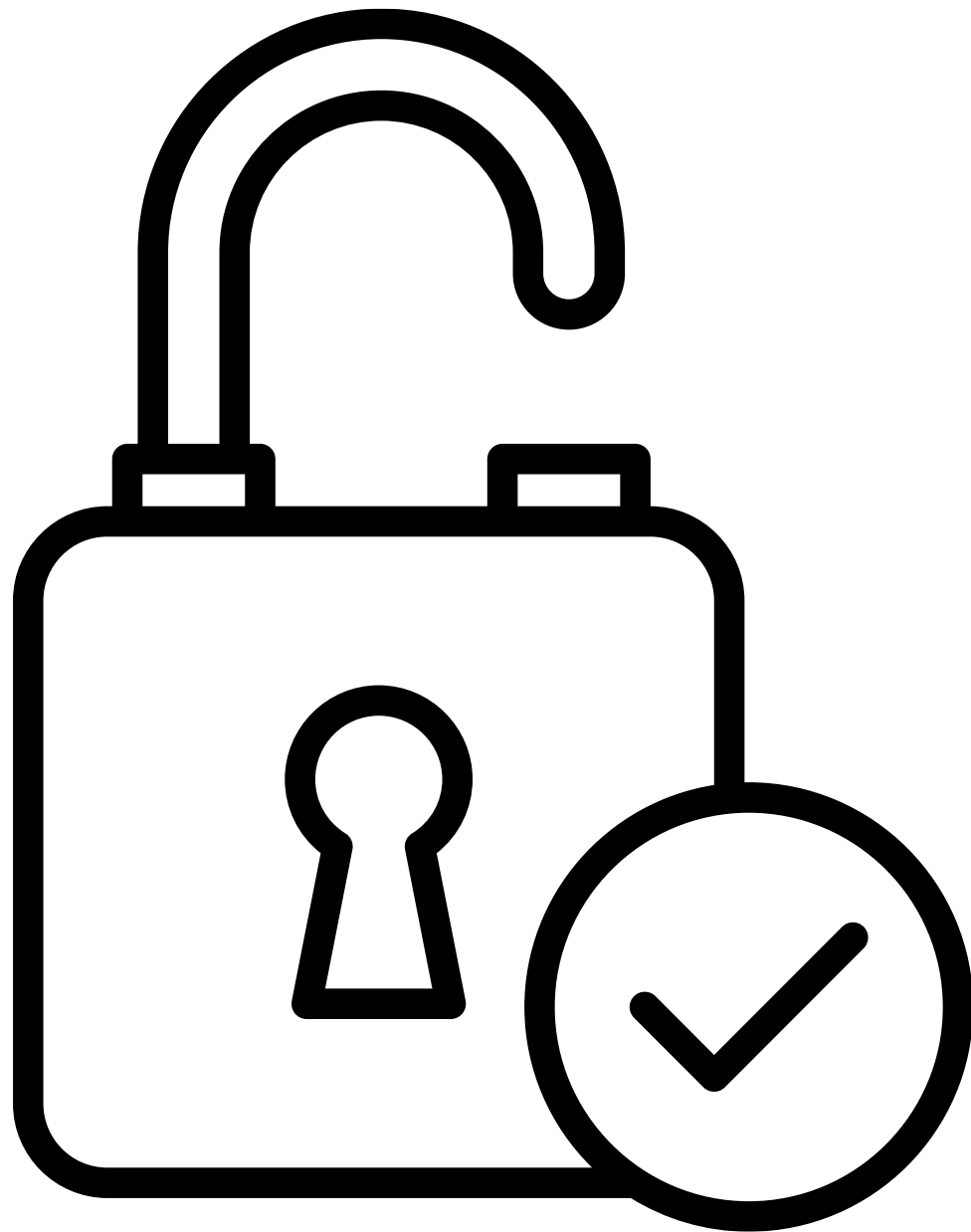


COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS



- Partner with Deaf leaders
- Include lived experiences
- Co-design services
- Build trust
- Measure impact

SUSTAINABLE AND REPLICABLE PRACTICES



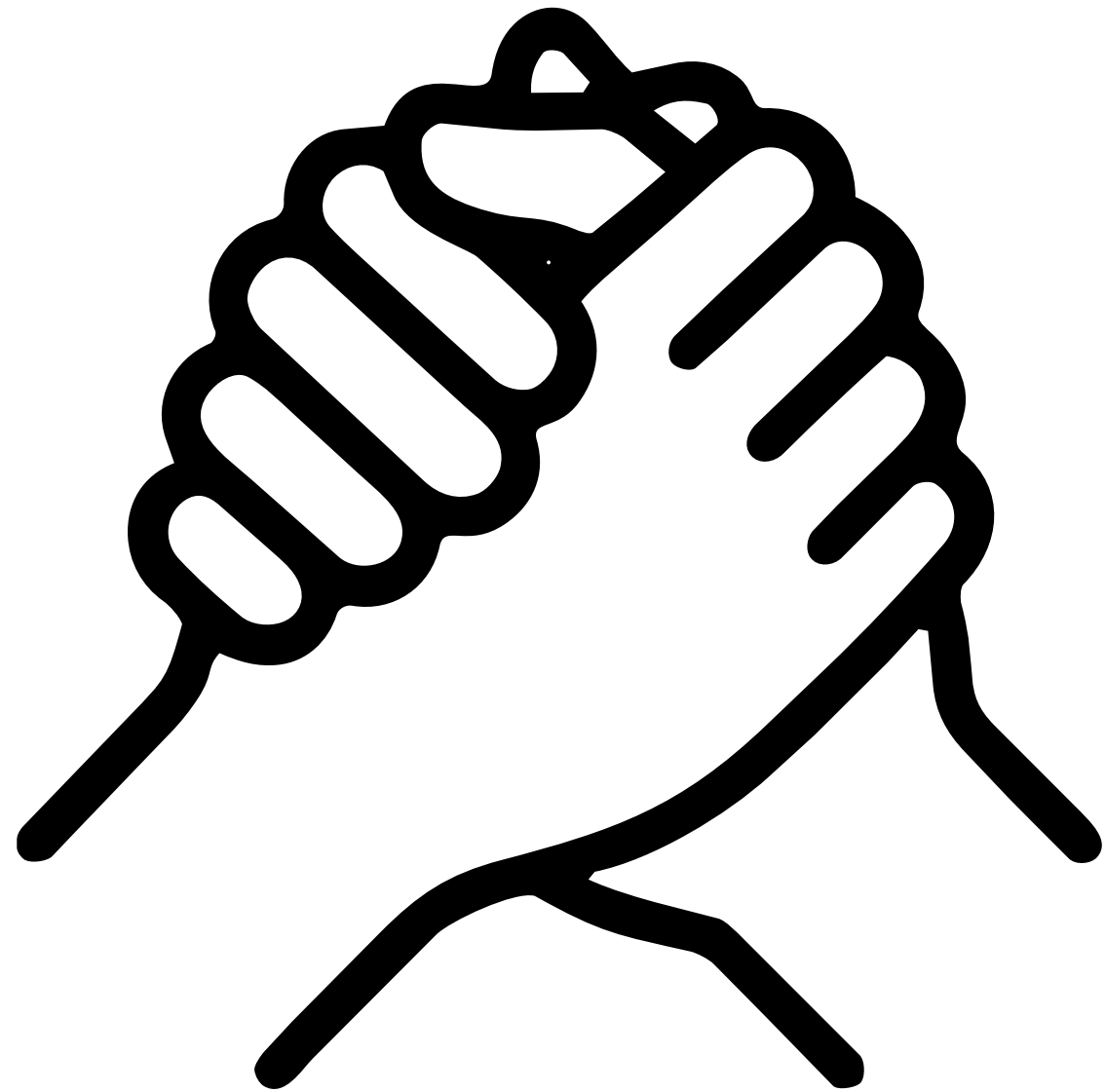
- Policy integration
- Accessibility standards
- Funding alignment
- Data collection
- Continuous improvement

MEASURING IMPACT

- Client satisfaction
- Access indicators
- Service utilization
- Communication outcomes
- Equity metrics



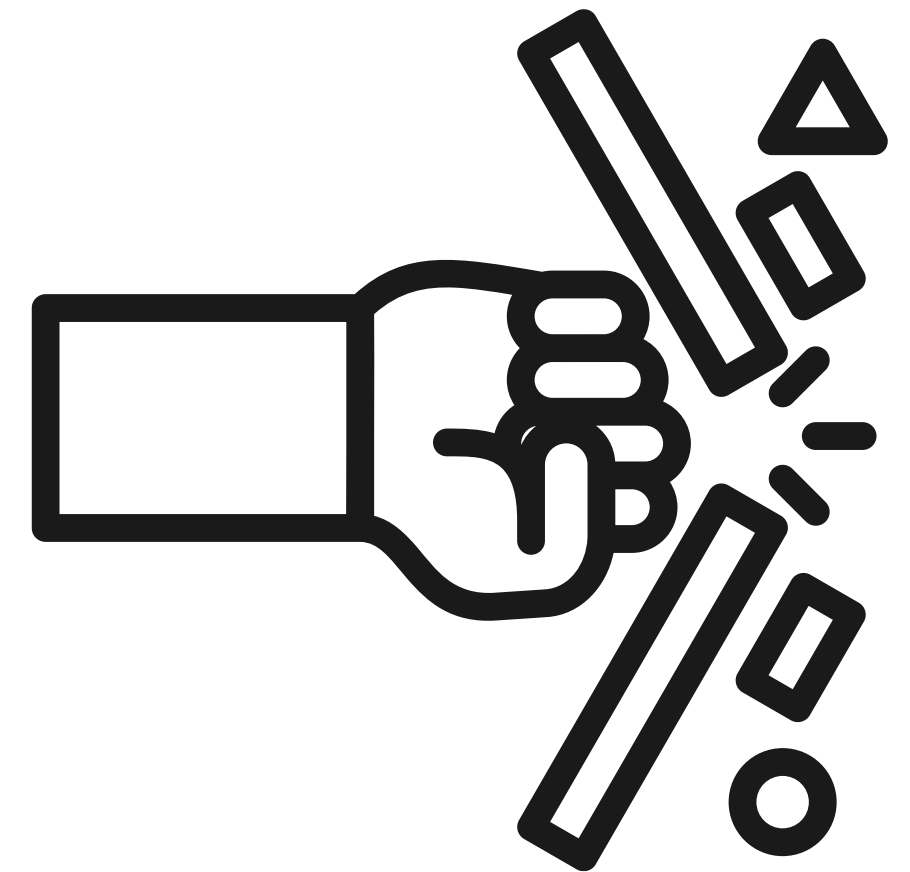
POLICY AND ADVOCACY



- Accessibility as a right
- System-level reform
- Funding priorities
- Workforce development
- Community Advocacy

FROM BARRIERS TO EQUITY

- Honor linguistic diversity
- Ensure meaningful access
- Center community voice
- Transform systems

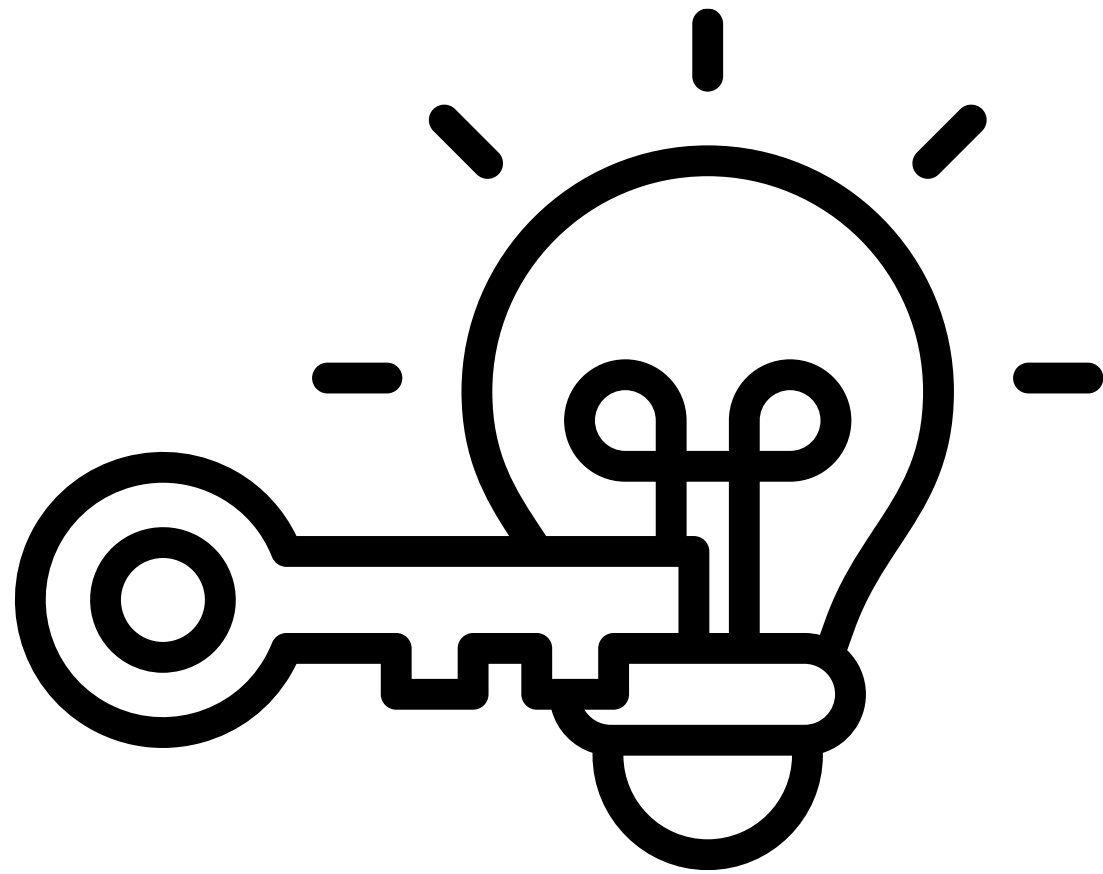


REFLECTION ACTIVITY

- What barriers exist in your system?
- What is one change you can implement?
- Who must be involved?



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Access is essential to mental health equity
- Communication is foundational
- Community partnership drives success
- Sustainable systems create lasting change

QUESTIONS?



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THANK YOU