



# Bounce Back League

**BGC Canada**



**April 2016  
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*Supporting the Health of Survivors of Family Violence*



# BOUNCE BACK LEAGUE

Final Narrative Report

Bounce Back League Project 2016 – 2021

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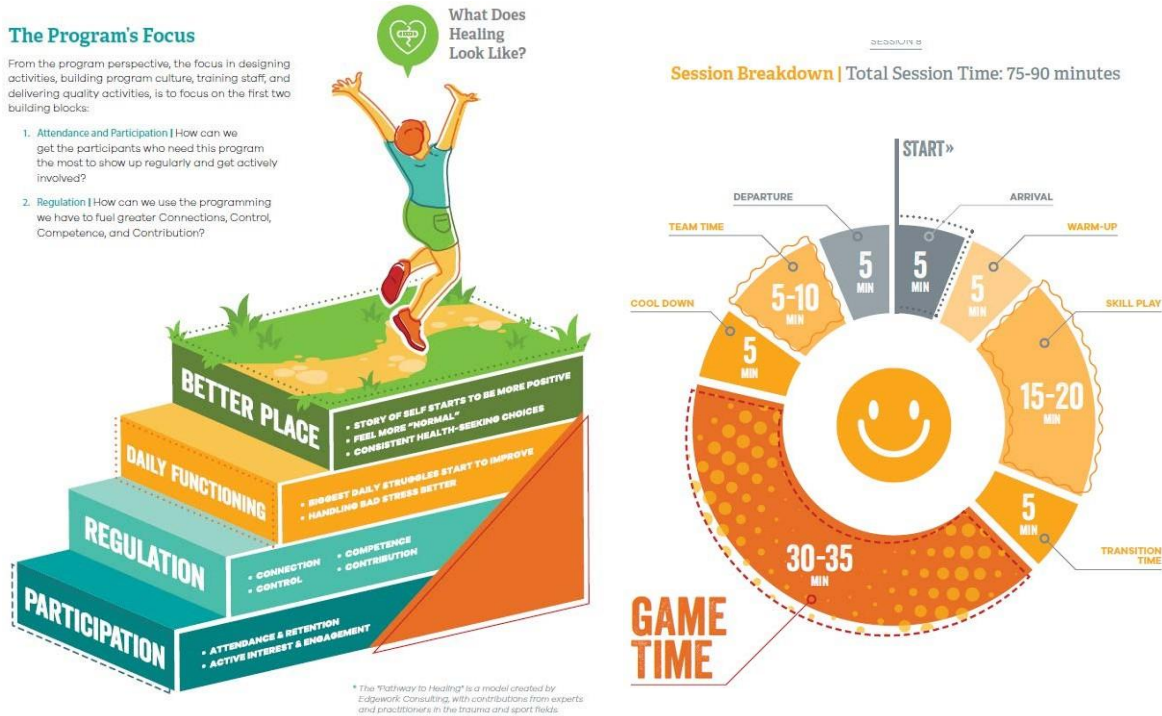
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## Who is the Lead Organization?

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada (BGCC) is a national, non-profit organization that reaches over 200,000 children and youth (ages 6 to 18) each year by supporting local clubs in the implementation and evaluation of physical activity, healthy living, learning, job training, and leadership programming. BGCC primarily serve at-risk children and youth (e.g., from families living in under-resourced neighbourhoods); this population is disproportionately exposed to and affected by traumatic experiences. In recent years, evidence has been brought forth related to the long-term impact of trauma in childhood leading to the development of trauma-informed practices. BGCC strives to be a national leader in adopting trauma-informed practices to mitigate the negative consequences of these experiences of youth in which they serve.

## What is the Bounce Back League Project?

The Bounce Back League (BBL) is a 5-year funded project by Public Health Agency of Canada that focuses on trauma-informed sports. Key concepts that BBL encompasses Pathway to Healing (page 13 of Coach Guidebook and the BBL workout breakdown (pg. 39)



These two items highlight the most important parts of Bounce Back League, which is the League invites players to bring their entire self – even aspects of trauma – and creates a safe and welcoming

environment to support their growth and development. The 3 main BBL skills (seen below) encourage coaches and players to look at resiliency that can be built in sports and thus translated into life.

### The three Bounce-Back Skills are:



*\*The Bounce Back Skills are part of a broader set of trauma-informed sport skills shared by numerous organizations around the world working in sports-based youth development.*

When Clubs were asked at the final knowledge dissemination session, this is what they shared:



## Introduction

BBL's goals and objectives were to:

- To design and deliver a trauma-sensitive sport and recreation program that addresses both the physical and mental health needs of at-risk Boys and Girls Club children and youth who may have been affected by family violence.
- To train Boys and Girls Club staff on trauma-informed practise and build capacity to embed this approach throughout the organization.
- To increase Boys and Girls Clubs connections to community organizations (mental health, child and family advocacy) to support needs of children and youth members.
- To determine the effectiveness of trauma-informed sport program in a Boys and Girls Club through intervention research.

- To engage in knowledge translation activities to share the results of our intervention research and best practices within our own BGC network, as well as with community partners.

We would also like to acknowledge the financial and in-kind contributions that supported project activities. These included (1) supervisory support from 13 Clubs across Canada, (2) evaluation and subject-matter expert support in planning meetings and within advisory committee with Clubs, (3) Usage of Club and community spaces to plan, implement and evaluate the BBL's seasons. *The Public Health Agency of Canada provided \$2,159,625 from April 2016 to March 2021 through the Supporting the Health of Survivors of Family violence investment.*

## Background

### Why was the project was undertaken?

Family violence and child abuse crosses all socio-demographic groups. However, Statistics Canada reports that rates of children exposed to violence is highest when parents are unemployed, living in single parent families, if the family structure had undergone change over the previous two-year period, and in households that fell below the low-income cut-off level. Although the project will not explicitly target children and youth who are victims of domestic violence and/or child abuse, we know that – given this data – Boys and Girls Clubs are uniquely positioned to run a universal program that will impact children and youth who have experienced abuse and trauma.

Furthermore, a recent study indicates that trauma may be more common than previously thought. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess associations between childhood maltreatment and later-life health and well-being, looked at the life histories of over 17,000 people to determine the connections between adverse childhood experiences and health in adulthood. They looked at eight categories relating to abuse and to growing up in dysfunctional households (including witnessing violence against their mother). The study found that adverse childhood experiences were vastly more common than recognized, often coexisting and directly linked to later life substance use and mental health problems, as well as a range of chronic diseases such as diabetes.

### Provide the evidence that supported your approach and/or the need for the project.

Boys and Girls Clubs are located in vulnerable communities where the need for accessible and affordable services for children and youth are high. Of the 200,000 children and youth that we serve, over half live in single-parent families, 18% are Aboriginal, 14% are newcomers, 18% have special needs, 4% live in foster care, and 3% are young offenders. Since Boys and Girls Club staff are already working directly with children and youth who have experienced trauma due to domestic violence in their lives, this project aims to build a network of Club staff and train them in trauma-sensitive principles that will serve as a foundation upon which Clubs deliver programs and services, principles which can be embedded throughout the fabric of Boys and Girls Club organizations. This approach will also benefit for all the young people in our Clubs as these principles, techniques and skills inform the basis of the safe, supportive and healing environment that all young people can benefit from.

It is important to note that while Clubs may look different because of their location and community, all Clubs have three key features that, based in current research on youth development, lead to positive outcomes for children and youth:

1. Boys and Girls Clubs create respectful, inclusive and engaging environments that are known to promote safety, fun, inclusion and respect.
2. Boys and Girls Clubs place a strong emphasis on relationship-building and mentoring. Caring adults provide young people with a sense of belonging, acceptance, empowerment and connection. They balance encouragement with clear and consistent rules, structures and expectations that reinforce positive and responsible behaviours.
3. Boys and Girls Clubs are active and connected to the communities they serve. Clubs are leaders and role models in the community and are critical catalysts that enable schools, local business, and volunteers to work collaboratively in the best interest of young people and their families.

## Key Activities and Outputs

### What did you do?

Over the five years running BBL, 13 Clubs were engaged, 45 staff trained, and 506 players reached. The locations spanned from West (BC, AB, MB), to Central (ON), to Eastern Canada (PEI, NB).

The project audience included players aged 8-12 years old from diverse backgrounds across Canada. Evaluators gathered information from Clubs and found that seasons were between 6-19 weeks long, that players returned in future years to continue building their BBL Skills (Come to Play, Build My Team and Play On). Please refer to Bounce Back League Report for demographic information of players and more related to program impact.

Key partners in this project include Edgeworks Consulting as subject-matter experts, as well as University of Ottawa and University of British Columbia to provide evaluation and knowledge dissemination. ThinkLink had provided graphic recordings of the knowledge dissemination (see results attached).

The knowledge dissemination and exchange activities included (1) Three day wrap up session with various stakeholders – Club staff, BGCC leadership, Public Health Agency of Canada representatives. The graphic recording and a summary of this is attached as well, (2) Video scripts and the production of videos that will live on the BGCC e-learning platform for over 774 Club sites to have access to, (3) disseminating coaches' guidebook and operations manual to support 200,000 Club members across Canada.

## Project Outcomes

The research and evaluation results can be found in the evaluation report (attached).

The BBL program shows initial effectiveness in promoting youth development. Club members' experienced enhanced well-being, satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and improved life skill development. Many coaches in BBL already have existing abilities to foster safe environments and



build caring and supportive relationships with club members. The BBL, when facilitated by trained coaches, offers a high-quality learning experience - maximizing engagement through dynamic and competitive activities, offering opportunities for physical and sport skill-building, and supporting club members in times of dysregulation.

**There have been a lot of learnings that would help others to improve health outcomes for survivors of violence. These include:**

- Working with clubs to enhance their connections with trauma-specific partners, again to build a network of trauma-sensitive support and to refer potentially trauma-exposed children and families to.
- Extend training for staff in how to enable connections with caregivers and parents of players.
- Integrate support systems for staff to reduce burden in implementing BBL.
- Integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion within the trauma-sensitive framework.

**In terms of increasing the capacity of health professionals:**

- In-person training on how trauma affects the brain and body, on healing and resilience.
- Staff capacity building: once staff have been trained, they try on trauma-informed skills and develop and hone those skills.
- Continued support and guidance: it's critical that there is a support system in place for staff to turn to for help and resources.
- Virtual training can be effective, despite being less in depth, and it has the ability to reach far more staff than in-person training.
- Developing internal trainers is a long road. The trainers we trained gained another level of confidence in the material and assertiveness in advocating for trauma-informed practices in their respective Clubs.
- The importance of having a shared online space in which all resources AND communications regarding the program are readily available.

Some key points we learned about the project, its impact and change at an individual and organizational level include:

- Creating having a safe space for the children to express themselves and share how they feel about things in their lives like home, family, school and the Clubs.
- Showing the children that they have caring adults in their lives and that their peers are also supportive and caring.
- Providing choice within a predictable program design allows children to feel in control and supports healing.
- The positive actions from staff/ coaches such as patience, empathy and providing a safe space can support the healing process in children.
- The BBL program shows initial effectiveness in promoting youth development.
- The BBL, when facilitated by trained coaches, offers a high-quality learning experience.

**Lessons learnt about using integrated, trauma- and violence-informed health promotion approaches to support survivors of family violence include:**

- Using trauma-informed language can be built into sports programming, to help players on their pathway to healing,
- BBL training can support staff in working with players who would be deemed “difficult” but after receiving BBL training would identify them as “dysregulated”. This allows for patience in interacting with players and even within their staff team as well.
- The training and awareness of the trauma-informed approach received through the BBL program has created a deeper awareness to the need for health promotion and the support to survivors of violence.

The Bounce Back League program taught coaches and supervisors the educational tools to support and teach resiliency for participants to cope with everyday life. In the fall 2020 season for the Moose hide Campaign, the coaches and participants had conversations to talk about violence in the home.

**Some process learnings that would help inform the design and delivery of future projects include:**

- Have all coaches familiar with BBL resources to maximize their alignment with BBL philosophies, the intention of each Workout component, and BBL coaching strategies.
- Self-regulation structures are important to integrate within BBL structures. Consider formalizing “The Zone” or a similar space to help enable club members to have a space to go to and practice self-regulation (i.e., to re-direct, re-stabilize, rest, recover, and return).
- Use BBL language explicitly throughout programming, through praise and encouragement, discussion, teachable moments, and in Team Time, to optimize club members' familiarity, use, and internalization of BBL philosophies and skills.
- Integrate 5-10 minutes before and after BBL sessions for coaches to coordinate activities, reflect on successes and challenges, and set goals for next session.
- Continue and increase opportunities for youth empowerment and leadership - through offering choice and variety of activities, leading warmups, mentoring, and offering junior coach opportunities to BBL alumni.

## Next Steps

The lasting impact of the project is that Club staff have been trained and that resources will be available for all 774 Club sites to access, also trauma-informed sport information is embedded within the BGCC e-learning platform that all Club staff have access to.

The Community of Practice that had been meeting frequently throughout the funding period will continue to meet and share promising practices, as well as supporting staff that are exploring trauma-informed sports approaches.