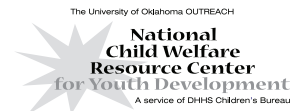


2008 Positive Youth Development Toolkit

Engaging Youth in Program Development, Design, Implementation, and Service Delivery



National Resource Center for Youth Services, The University of Oklahoma OUTREACH Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers, National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development / *A service of the Family and Youth Services Bureau and the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*



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2008 Positive Youth Development Toolkit

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Preface



Adapted from the CFSR Toolkit, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NCWRCOI), The University of Oklahoma's Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers (RHYTTAC), and National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development (NCWRCYD), the 2008 Positive Youth Development Toolkit offers practical strategies for collaborating with youth. The Toolkit is available in two formats: a printed document and a web document that will be updated over time with best practice information from the field.

The Toolkit currently contains:

- information to keep in mind when partnering with youth
- condensed descriptions of Positive Youth Development (PYD) purpose, process, and components
- a glossary of PYD language
- strategies for implementing PYD in your organization
- sample focus group questions to solicit youth input

Introduction

What is Youth Development and PYD?

Field definitions of Positive Youth Development (PYD) abound, but a few common themes predominate. The major elements of a PYD process, approach, methodology, philosophy or perspective are:

- opportunities
- competencies
- connections
- supports
- contributions

The best definitions describe not only the approach but also what is needed to ensure its implementation. Youth Development Strategies, Inc. offers just such a definition: “***A process of human growth through which adolescents move from being taken care of to taking care of themselves and others (opportunities and contributions); an approach where policy, funding, and programming are directed at providing supports to young people as they build their capacities and strengths to meet their personal and social needs (competencies); and a set of practices that adults use to provide youth with the types of relationships and experiences needed to fuel healthy development***” (connections and supports). (Youth Development Strategies, Inc. (2000). *What is Youth Development?*)

Key to PYD is promoting the healthy development of *all* young people, not just those considered high risk or at risk. PYD approaches help young people maintain safe and healthy behaviors, and redirect others to engage in healthier and more positive actions. The focus is on promoting the social, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being of young people.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau and PYD

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) has worked to promote a PYD framework for all of its funded grant programs and activities. The PYD approach is predicated on the understanding that all young people need support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. With this support, they can develop self-assurance and create a healthy, successful life. The FYSB framework states that key elements of PYD are: healthy messages to adolescents about their bodies, their behaviors and their interactions; safe and structured places for teens to study, recreate and socialize; strengthened relationships with adult role models, such as parents, mentors, coaches, or community leaders; skill development in literacy, competence, work readiness and social skills; and opportunities to serve others and build self-esteem. If these factors are being addressed, young people can become not just “problem-free,” but “fully prepared” and engaged constructively in their communities and society. These key elements result in the following PYD outcomes:

- increased opportunities and avenues for positive use of time
- increased opportunities for positive self-expression
- increased opportunities for youth participation and civic engagement.

(Putting Positive Youth Development Into Practice: A Resource Guide, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, 2007.)

A Youth Development Framework



Youth Development is a philosophical framework that can be difficult to operationalize. Programs find themselves at a loss when trying to implement positive youth development practices with youth who have not been given opportunities to be involved in their own lives. This makes it difficult to imagine helping youth move from a place of disenfranchisement to civic engagement. Karen Pittman and Merita Irby assembled six underlying principles of Youth Development frameworks (Pittman 1998).

The six principles are:

- Youth Development is more than prevention
- It is enduring, comprehensive, and engages youth
- It goes beyond the basics
- It happens everywhere
- It is not just coordination - vision is required
- All youth are developing; all youth have strengths; all youth have needs; all youth can contribute to their communities; and all youth are valued

Youth Development is not a destination as much as a journey that is promoted not only through youth serving programs, but also schools, parents, extended family, neighborhoods, peers, etc.

Perhaps one of the most significant characteristics of youth development is that it is not something done TO youth but it results from activities, services, and programming WITH youth. Translating the philosophical framework and moving from disenfranchisement to civic engagement is not something that can be accomplished easily. It takes dedication and commitment to the process and to youth. It is the day-to-day activities in programs that result in positive youth development. This tool is designed to provide youth workers with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to effectively implement Youth Development practices with all youth.



What Have We Learned About Youth Involvement?



The first step in involving youth in a process like PYD is to understand how it benefits everyone involved - the agency administrators, direct care staff, and the youth themselves.

Engaging youth in civic activities, including policy development and action research, has recently garnered attention regarding the benefits to community development initiatives and to the development of youth. Youth offer perspectives and ideas not often discussed by their adult counterparts in the community, on boards of directors, and as policy-makers. As key stakeholders in their communities, youth are being formally recognized in many communities as important members of society, worthy of a voice in decision-making opportunities.

Formal and informal research indicates that involvement in their communities and schools results in positive outcomes for youth. Stoneman (2002), from YouthBuild USA in Somerville, Massachusetts, describes experiences she has had with youth in civic leadership roles by stating, “Young people who have successful policymaking experience often become permanently involved in community leadership”. She explains that youth, particularly those with low incomes, move from being disenfranchised and cynical, to being optimistic and motivated when involved in community development.

Some adults harbor misconceptions and assumptions that youth need protection and control by adults, have little to offer their communities, and do not desire to become contributing members of society. According to Zeldin (2004), current research fails to support these beliefs. Zeldin provides insightful data about the level of involvement of youth in their communities, showing that a significant percentage of youth volunteer and participate in community events and programs, and are increasingly involved in community governance and decision-making. Zeldin also explores avenues for engaging youth in community-related decision-making, reducing the mutual isolation that youth and adults often experience, and providing positive outcomes for youth. Zeldin suggests reaching out to disconnected youth and engaging them in community initiatives, broadening adult perspectives of youth by involving both age groups in collaborative efforts, and creating policies to engage youth in civic activities and youth development.

Although youth have the ambition and skills to engage in and lead successful projects and programs and promote changes in policy, a review of the literature demonstrates that they often require guidance from experienced adults. Stoneman (2002) indicates that an adult guide should act as a support person to assist with logistics, facilitation, and document editing, and to mentor youth by talking with them and helping them think through their ideas and concerns.

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Best practices suggest that adults who become involved in youth initiatives should respect the opinions and skills of youth and be willing to collaborate with and foster youth leaders. They also must acknowledge that young people should be involved in key decisions, programs, and systems that affect youth and their communities (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006). Libby, Rosen, and Sedonaen (2005) indicate that:

The most effective way to work with young people was to see them as expert in their own experiences, as members of the community with an important perspective and a right to share it, and as energetic and innovative resources to each other and to adults in their communities (p. 112).

Confident, connected, civic-minded youth are not at all rare. However, the process of engaging youth in their communities in a manner that is positive and worthwhile is still an emergent concept in many communities. Supporting and encouraging youth to take ownership of their neighborhood interests helps youth build character and leadership skills as well as a community network. Pittman (2002) summarizes this concept effectively by stating:

Long term community development...requires not only an investment in building the human and social capital of young people, but a commitment to use that capital as it is being built and to see participation in community problem-solving as the best way to build skills and connections (p. 40).

Getting involved in the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of services will allow youth to make a meaningful contribution to their community, the service delivery system, and other youth in care. They will also meet new people, learn new skills, and have the opportunity to speak on behalf of other children and youth in the community and/or receiving services.

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What We Have Learned About Youth Involvement: An Overview.

Youth benefit by:

- Gaining skills they will need to become successful adults.
- Creating new relationships with adults and peers, further connecting them to their community and enlarging their support network.
- Gaining a better understanding of the community and its diversity.
- Acquiring a more positive stature in the community.
- Gaining a better appreciation for adults and the multiple roles they can play.
- Beginning to see their own potential as limitless.
- Beginning to view the world, and their ability to affect it, in a positive way.
- Feeling needed and useful.
- Feeling enhanced power, autonomy, and self-esteem.

Adults benefit by:

- Feeling a stronger connection with the youth their program serves.
- Gaining a better understanding of the needs of youth.
- Feeling a renewed energy for their work.
- Experiencing improvement in morale stemming from youths' spirit of flexibility and playfulness.
- Gaining an expanded resource base so that they no longer feel "responsible for everything."

Organizations benefit by:

- Becoming more focused on the needs of the youth they serve.
- Having programs that are more relevant for youth.
- Widening their impact, as reflected by increased program attendance.
- Absorbing the unconventional thinking of youth, which can lead to new solutions.
- Stimulating greater ownership of the program by the youth (and ownership by the community).
- Growing potential new leaders and workers who come from the communities they serve.
- Using their youth as positive role models for other youth.
- Gaining new resources and support as youth reach out to their parents and other adults.

(Participants in Partnership: Adults and Youth Working Together, New York State Youth Council from the National 4H Council Youth Adult Partnerships Training Curriculum, n.d.)

Why Involve Youth in Program Development, Design, Implementation, and Service Delivery?



Positive Youth Development provides opportunities to engage youth in the process of evaluating services, actively engage in all aspects of service delivery, strengthen service delivery systems, and to learn more about youth-adult partnerships.

As consumers of services, youth can help identify what works and what does not. Young people bring a unique and important perspective to the service delivery process and can offer insight into how services for youth can best be provided.

Youth can offer an important perspective on services and practice in programs delivering services to them. As recipients of services, youth understand better than anyone the impact of those services on their growth and development. Program administrators and others in the service delivery system can learn much from youth when evaluating agency policies and practice. Youth may or may not know the policy and practice guidelines, but they know their experiences within the system of services.

Many programs have developed leadership opportunities for youth. Youth leadership groups are involved in a number of successful initiatives including: planning, training, workshops, advocacy, and policy development. Although the structure of the groups may differ from program to program, most appear to be engaged in similar work: increasing awareness and educating both youth and adults through active participation throughout organizations and communities.

Engaging youth in PYD

Youth are deeply concerned about the service delivery system in which they, their siblings, and friends, are involved.

Given this level of concern and enthusiasm, engaging youth in the process from the beginning makes sense. As programs evaluate policies and practice, ensuring youth input and involvement will be essential.



Critical Elements of Youth Development: What Do Youth Need?

Belonging

Youth need to have a sense of belonging which is a result of having a positive relationship with a trustworthy adult, being in an inclusive program, and having a safe environment. How do programs provide opportunities for youth to develop a positive relationship with a trustworthy/caring adult? It can be as simple as:

- having consistency in responses to youth
- showing respect for youth's input
- setting clear boundaries and expectations
- allowing youth to set boundaries and expectations of adults
- providing the opportunity for youth to interact with adults that serve as mentors and guides as well as advocates and supporters
- providing youth with the knowledge that not succeeding at something is not going to result in loss of interaction with their caring/trustworthy adult.

Programs can help youth develop a sense of belonging, which is critical to Youth Development, by providing inclusive programming.

Inclusive Programs:

- Embrace the entire youth, not just parts of the youth that “fit well” with the program.
- Go beyond tolerating differences by demonstrating that diversity is valued.
- Invite diversity to the table and actively engages everyone at the table in the conversation.
- Create a sense of belonging by celebrating the contribution of all members, both as individuals and the collective successes of the group as a whole.
- Earn trust by being trustworthy, not just once, but consistently and maybe for months and years.

What Does Your Program Say About Inclusion/Diversity: Definitions of Terms:

- 1) Tolerance: sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own
- 2) Accept (acceptance): to endure without protest or reaction
- 3) Valuing (value): to rate or scale in usefulness, importance, or general worth

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Providing a Physically and Emotionally Safe Environment

Safety differs for everyone and it is based on personal experiences; it is not just about rules, cameras, locks, and alarms. Safety may be demonstrated by youth in the program by:

- Having a window partially opened a room not just to “make life difficult for staff” but to feel a sense of control over the environment.
- Needing to lock the bedroom door, not to keep staff out, but to keep out other people that have harmed the young person in the past.
- Taking food (sandwiches, fruit, snacks, etc.) into their room at night, not because they want to break a rule, but because they are not sure when they will eat again. Not because the program does not have meals planned, but because they have not developed that trust in the program’s schedule and commitment yet.
- Knowing that he/she can voice an opinion and be heard without fear of repercussion.
- Knowing that it is safe to be angry; to feel afraid; to form an attachment.
- Knowing they can be who they are, where they are, without having to explain or process every emotion at the instant a staff member says “well, how does that make you feel” or “you seem upset let’s process this incident”.

It will take time for youth to develop a sense of physical and emotional safety. Programs must meet youth where they are, rather than where the program thinks they should be, in order to help youth develop a sense of safety.

Mastery

Mastery is developing knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes then being given the opportunity to demonstrate them in a proficient manner. Mastery is also developed over time and is individual rather than communal. Mastery will not look the same for every youth as it is based on the developmental abilities of each youth rather than a set standard for ‘mastery’. Each youth’s accomplishments should be recognized and valued equally whether the youth moves from disenfranchisement to board member or inability to connect with anyone to developing a trusting relationship with a teacher that helps them pass a math test or anywhere in between. Engaged youth have a greater opportunity to self-motivate, self-correct, learn from experiences and develop creativity than those youth left outside the process. The opportunity for mastery includes social, emotional, and intellectual attributes/skills which involve engaging youth in a subject or skill area while building relationships.

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Independence

When we talk about independence, some adults associate the term with youth in “charge of the entire program” or the belief that “total chaos will result when youth are given independence”. This is why the term instills an immediate sense of fear in some adults, including program managers and direct care staff. Independence is not synonymous with anarchy, it is about self-reliance, self-determination, and capturing one’s own hope and optimism and believing that one has some impact or control over life’s events. Independence is recognizing that life’s events, both positive and negative, are not random occurrences that one cannot impact; rather, they are opportunities to make choices that can alter the outcome of events and circumstances.

Generosity

Generosity is about providing youth with the opportunity to participate in something larger than themselves and/or your program. It is encouraging them to find their place in the program, in the community, and in the world at-large and to recognize their unique gifts, talents, and interests.

Programs should provide youth with opportunities to give of themselves in service to others which will in turn provide the community with the opportunity to embrace youth as assets. Youth often find themselves placed in “volunteer” positions that they have had no input or voice in selecting. Then, when youth don’t succeed in the placement; programs want to know why the opportunity did not work out as planned.

Youth want to be active in their communities, in your program, and in their schools, however, youth do not fit into boxes. Some youth may want to volunteer at an animal shelter, nursing home, food kitchen, day care, or library. Others may prefer to volunteer by helping another youth in your program, or by cooking a meal, or putting information on your website. Some youth may come into your program ready to actively participate in community activities, others may need some time to address their own needs before they can look at the needs of the community. Generosity and volunteering allows youth to build skills through practical application in their community.

Is it Volunteering or Job Placement?

Things to consider:

Do you meet youth where they are OR where YOU want them to be?

Is the goal of providing youth the opportunity to volunteer and actively participate in their community publicity for the program/agency, OR is it about youth having the opportunity to engage and recognize their value as a whole person and to understand the impact they can have on society?

Is volunteering and community participation about where the YOUTH wants to be, how he/she feels they can contribute, where he/she believes they can make a positive impact, OR is it about convenience for staff?

Does the youth identify the opportunity OR is it a staff decision?

Is it an individual decision based on interests OR a decision based on 'majority rule'?

Are youth required to participate, is participation tied to 'privileges,' OR can they decline participation without fear of repercussion?



What Does Youth Development Look Like?

According to Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (1990) youth needs are either met in positive ways, negative ways, or simply not met. In *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* the authors provide clear descriptions of the characteristics manifested by youth in each circumstance. The tables that follow provide a list of characteristics of youth which can be reasonably anticipated based on how or if needs are met.

If youth needs are met in positive ways, youth will manifest the following characteristics in each of the four essential elements of youth development:

Belonging	Mastery	Independence	Generosity
Attached	Achieving	Autonomous	Altruistic
Loving	Successful	Confident	Caring
Friendly	Creative	Assertive	Sharing
Intimate	Problem-solver	Responsible	Loyal
Social	Motivated	Inner Control	Empathic
Cooperative	Persistent	Self-Disciplined	Pro-Social
Trusting	Competent	Leadership	Supportive

If youth needs are met in negative ways they often exhibit the following characteristics:

Belonging	Mastery	Independence	Generosity
Gang Loyalty	Overachiever	Dictatorial	Over-involved
Craves Affection & Attention	Arrogant	Reckless	Plays Martyr
Promiscuous	Risk-seeker	Bully	Co-dependent
Clinging	Cheater	Sexual Prowess	
Overly-dependent	Workaholic	Manipulative	
	Perseveres	Rebellious	
	Delinquent Skills	Defies Authority	

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When youth needs are not met, youth tend to withdraw or ‘throw in the towel’. Youth with unmet needs may exhibit the following characteristics:

Belonging	Mastery	Independence	Generosity
Unattached	Non-achiever	Submissive	Selfish
Guarded	Avoids Risk	Lacks Confidence	Narcissistic
Rejecting	Fears Challenges	Irresponsible	Hardened
Lonely	Unmotivated	Helplessness	Anti-social
Aloof	Gives Up Easily	Undisciplined	Exploitative
Isolated		Easily Influenced	
Distrustful			

Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. National Education Service. Bloomington, IN.



STRATEGIES TO MEET YOUTHS' NEEDS IN POSITIVE WAYS:

Belonging:

- Ensure youth have the opportunity to bond with peers through use of structured and unstructured activities;
- Youth-Adult mentoring opportunities;
- Encourage permanent connections with family, friends, and significant adults/youth in their lives through email, texting, phone calls, visits, or writing a letter;
- Demonstrate valuing diversity beyond outward appearances (including culture, generational differences, political views/affiliations, religious views/affiliations, opinions/views about policies, procedures, and program rules, educational goals, etc.)

Mastery:

- Provide opportunities for hands-on, activities and experiential learning;
- Incorporate competitive and cooperative games/sports;
- Life Long Learning - MODEL that we all have opportunities to learn and, at times, failures are part of learning and growing;
- Provide practical opportunities to develop life skills instead of limiting it to classroom or group meetings.



STRATEGIES TO MEET YOUTHS' NEEDS IN POSITIVE WAYS:

Independence:

- Give youth the opportunity to make decisions rather than staff providing the answer;
- Ensure youth are actively involved in planning not only their “case plan,” but also program design, evaluation, and implementation;
- Give youth ‘real work’ with real responsibilities and opportunity for growth, tie responsibilities to life skills they will need outside your program (cleaning the house is not a chore, it is household maintenance, a life skill which will benefit them in their own home)
- ASK instead of telling;
- Ensure youth know it is OK to seek guidance and advice - Independence does not translate isolated or abandoned;
- It is not about obedience – it is about providing youth the tools and skills they need to make decisions.

Generosity

- Provide Service Learning and volunteer opportunities based on individual youth’s interests and goals rather than having all participants “Volunteer” at a pre-arranged facility/opportunity;
- Discuss the impact of youth’s actions and in-actions on themselves, their peers, their community and the world;
- Recognize youth when they select and complete a service learning project;
- Provide youth with the tools they need to be successful at the service learning opportunity (do they need tools, books, a class on a specific topic, a supportive adult at the project to talk with, transportation arrangements, etc.)



The Fundamentals of Youth-Adult Partnerships



A true partnership exists when each person has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions, and when everyone's contribution is recognized and valued. A youth adult partnership exists when adults see young people as full partners on issues facing youth and the programs and policies that affect them.

Unfortunately, we live in a society that does not give young people many opportunities to make their own decisions. The idea that children should be seen and not heard is still common for many adults. Add to this the media's representation of young people as criminals, slackers, selfish, and disinterested; with this much bad press, it's no wonder that young people are underutilized!

You will discover (if you haven't already) that when given a proper forum, today's young people are full of ideas and energy to make positive change in their communities, schools, and families. As the accepted "leaders" in society, it is often up to adults to create these opportunities for young people to show their talents and concern for their society.

If these opportunities are merely for show, young people will know it because they are looking for genuine ways to contribute. Tokenism is a level of youth involvement that is merely about being present, but it holds very little purpose or meaning for those involved.

To be effective partners, adults must respect and have confidence in youth. If they are truly sharing the power to make decisions with young people, it means adults are letting go of their traditional roles, listening rather than telling, and working with, rather than for youth. Giving young people the authority to make decisions and a platform to share their opinions is a way to show respect.

Making It Work: A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships, Texas Network of Youth Services, 2002.

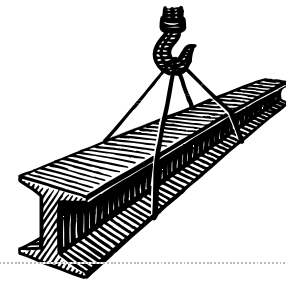
Creating Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships

To create a successful youth-adult partnership, attitudes are important factors to address. Many adults, even within the social services arena, believe that young people's opinions do not matter. Youth receiving services are often viewed as problems and not capable of contributing to the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of services and programs. Attitudes like these often lead to token youth involvement.

William Lofquist, a noted practitioner in the field of Youth Development, points out that youth are generally viewed in one of three ways:

- Youth as Objects - Adults with this view believe they know what is best for youth. Adults make the decisions and generally believe that youth have little to contribute.
- Youth as Recipients - Adults with this view believe they must help youth prepare for the adult world. Youth are permitted to take part in decision-making because it would be "good for them." Youth are not really expected to make contributions. Adults generally retain the power and control.
- Youth as Resources - Adults with this view believe that youth can make real contributions. Youth have an equal voice in decisions. It is recognized that both youth and adults have abilities, strengths, and experiences to contribute.

A Positive Youth Development philosophy that endorses the "youth as resources" perspective is critical to the success of a youth-adult partnership. Concepts such as these may be new to the adults working in programs. Staff and volunteers may need an opportunity to explore Positive Youth Development. Training sessions like those provided by The University of Oklahoma's Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers and National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development can prepare staff to work successfully with youth team members.



Preparing Adults for Youth Participation

Youth participation can take place at many levels. Youth may be involved as stakeholders and, as such, complete stakeholder surveys or participate in stakeholder meetings and focus group sessions. (see appendix for sample focus group questions and tips from California Youth Connection) They may be involved as team members and work in partnership with adult staff on some or all service delivery tasks. Regardless of the youth's level of involvement, both youth and adults need to be prepared to enter into a youth-adult partnership.

Many times youth in the greatest need of a PYD opportunity are overlooked or quite honestly avoided. This phenomenon is related as much to staff perception that the youth does not want to be engaged as it is to staff recognizing that that particular youth may require more staff involvement, time, commitment, energy, and caring than they are prepared to provide. If youth development is working in your program it is working for all youth not just the youth that 'fall into line' and follow all the rules.

PYD is about engaging the youth that continually challenges expectations/rules, that questions authority, that withdraws, and seems to be un-invested in their own life. This is often where the disconnect between intentions of programs and implementation of procedures collide and leave disenfranchised youth outside the loop.

Youth that challenge each rule/expectation of your program and push limits can be valuable assets in program evaluation. Often they provide opportunity to review those expectations and determine if they are in place for a reason or if they continue to exist because "we have always done it this way".

Youth that come to your program disenfranchised to the point that they are no longer invested in the day-to-day activities of their own lives need to be given the opportunity to make what might seem to be basic or

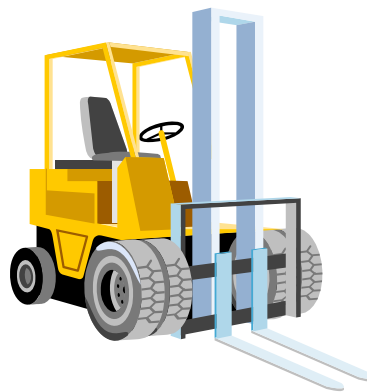
How PYD is your organization?

How would adult members of an organization respond to these questions:

- How are you able to give youth encouragement?
- How are you able to provide resources for activities?
- How are you able to listen carefully to youth?
- How are you able to promote active youth participation?
- How are you able to help youth get organized?
- How are you able to encourage critical thinking?

inconsequential decisions. Giving a youth the opportunity to decide where their bedroom furniture will be placed, how their clothes will be stored, or what they eat for dinner may seem trivial. However, to a youth that has not been provided freedom in the past, these may be monumental first steps toward building a trusting relationship with a caring/trustworthy adult.

Youth need to be provided the basics of PYD (an opportunity to connect with a caring adult, a safe environment both emotionally and physically, and a sense of belonging) in order to progress toward increased participation and involvement in your program and the community. It is essential that programs recognize that all youth are capable of success, that success is different for each youth, and that it is the day-to-day living of PYD that provides youth opportunities to grow. It is not necessary that all youth become board members, workshop presenters, or community ambassadors to demonstrate youth development in action. What is necessary is the commitment of everyone involved to provide youth with ample support, guidance, and opportunity to develop skills that will help them grow into a contributing member of society at the level the youth deems as successful.

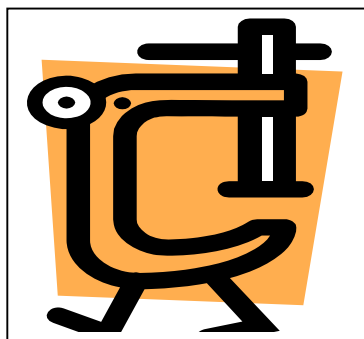


Do we know what we sound like to youth?

WE SAY: “We’re in the **Trenches**.” DO YOUTH HEAR: We are in this together, on the same side, and we will work with you to help you move successfully through the program. **OR** We are in a “place, position, or level at which an activity is carried on in a manner likened to trench warfare.” (Webster’s Definition of Trench)

WE SAY: “We’re the **Front Line** staff.” DO YOUTH HEAR: We are here to make sure all your needs are met in a positive manner to the best of our abilities. **OR** We are in a “line of confrontation in an armed conflict, most often a war.” (Webster’s Definition of Front Line)

WE SAY: “John just went **AWOL**, make a report.” DO YOUTH HEAR: We are concerned about John’s safety and well-being and want to make sure he is as safe as possible, whether in our program or in another location, and we are going to solicit help in locating him. **OR** John is “away without leave”; he has “quit his post, allegiance, or service without leave or justification.” (Webster’s Definition “Deserter” which states it is synonymous with AWOL)



What Preparation Do Youth Need?

Whether they are recruited to complete surveys, participate in focus groups, or partner on tasks and activities, all youth will need some degree of preparation to fully participate in the program and organization's efforts.

Ensuring real youth involvement is a significant challenge. Real involvement requires good planning and preparation in relation to notification, education, emotions, awareness, buy-in, tokenism, acronyms, jargon, and intimidation. They need to be informed that there is such a thing as PYD. Youth need to be educated about the "who-what-when-where-why" of the various aspects of service delivery and how they can participate in each of these.

Getting their buy-in is important. Many youth do not feel that their voices are heard or that their input makes a difference in the system. Comments like these have been heard during youth discussions:

"We are lied to and not listened to."

"Why should we be involved?"

"Our opinions really don't matter."

These are common thoughts that youth in care might have when asked to participate in decisions related to service delivery, design, and implementation.

Participation of youth needs to go beyond token involvement. Youth have been clear that to be a part of the process, "we all need to speak the same language." Acronyms and jargon need to be explained. (see appendix for a list of commonly used acronyms) Intimidation and fear of intimidation need to be addressed. Youth need to be provided with the guidelines/parameters of their participation. If we say "you can do anything you want with this meeting"; then, we cannot later come back and say "you cannot have the meeting at this location" or "that topic cannot be on the agenda." For meeting participation, youth need information on what to wear, who is going to be there, what is going to take place, what their role is going to be, and what is expected of them.

Logistics



Even with a “youth as resources” perspective, the organization has to pay attention to logistics. The youth participants at the 2006 Destination Future Conference identified logistics as a fundamental concern when planning to engage youth as team members. They defined logistics to include time, compensation, transportation, and scheduling. Meetings need to be scheduled at youth friendly times, taking into account school and work schedules.

Transportation needs to be arranged and a backup plan in place. The plan should include the use of buses, taxis, and carpools. Youth need to be consulted about the transportation plan. Many youth reported that often, if a transportation plan is developed, their schedule is not considered. Many times conflicts occur and a new plan is hardly ever arranged in time.

The group felt that youth need to be compensated for their time and participation. They pointed out that compensation does not have to be in a monetary form. It could be school credit or community service credit. However, youth who take time off from work need to be financially compensated for their missed hours. If compensation comes in the form of payment by check, will the youth have the ability (checking account) to cash a check? If youth are expected to stay at a hotel and pay for transportation and meals, develop a plan for how these expenses will be covered. Youth often do not have credit cards or cash on hand to cover expenses such as these up front.

In addition to the concerns noted by the youth at the 2006 Destination Future Conference, programs with youth in residential settings: shelters, transitional housing, group homes, etc. have other logistical concerns. In these settings, the youth will be with staff and transportation and scheduling are seen as a non-issue as staff will plan transportation around the schedule.

However, youth may have other plans that do not involve staff. They may feel strongly that they want to participate in an activity previously scheduled at the facility or they want to relax with no structured activity planned during that time. Staff should always consult with youth when making plans for transportation and/or commitment of time on behalf of the youth.

Another issue that adults need to take into consideration regarding youth’s ability to participate is the impact it will have on their educational progress. Adults must convey to youth the value of the youth’s educational progress and continued support is not tied to the youth being on your board, at your event, etc. Modeling how to address scheduling conflicts and time

management will provide youth with the knowledge and skills they will need to make some of the same choices surrounding opportunities. In an effort to assure youth involvement, adults present opportunities for youth which, when examined later, were actually obstacles to the youth being successful in their educational pursuits, career, and/or personal life.

Is it an Opportunity or a Barrier?

Listen to this story on NPR's This American Life at:
http://www.thislife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=1201

Click on "Act Two: Mr. Successful"

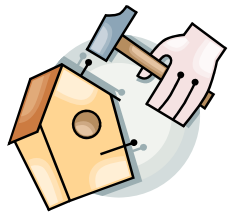
Did the adults in this young man's life provide opportunities that turned into barriers?

YOU DECIDE:

- Is the opportunity for youth involvement detrimental to the youth's progress in school, work, personally?
- Can the youth meet the obligations of the opportunity while maintaining positive progress academically?
- Will participation delay or prevent graduation from high school or college?
- Is the motive behind the invitation about providing youth with an opportunity to impact decision making or is it about presenting a success story to the public?

Opportunities to Include Youth In Programs

Conducting Surveys



A survey allows information to be gathered from a sample of a given population. When developing a survey, questions must focus on the facts and data to be learned and the group from which this information will be obtained.

In this instance, the focus is on engaging youth in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services they receive. In addition to gathering data on the number of youth served or the type of service provided, administrators must realize that youth can offer much more than what data alone can provide. Youth can tell the story behind the data. In essence, youth can describe experiences of service delivery, such as the impact of a group activity or a therapy session. Understanding this aspect of engaging youth in services is beneficial when developing the survey.

In selecting a survey sample focused on youth, consider what is known about the group of youth and create a sample that fits that pattern. Organizations and programs should ensure that the youth participating in the survey have a variety of experiences and represent diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Organizations should involve youth with varying goals, at different points in service (entry, mid-point, graduating, aftercare) to receive wide-ranging responses to survey questions. Youth who are being reunified with families/friends, as well as those moving to independence, should all participate in the survey. Youth who reside in different placements, such as group homes, scattered-site, clustered-site, and supervised apartments, independent apartments, college dorms, host homes and even those youth that return to the street will also provide valuable insight. In addition, characteristics such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity should be considered when sampling the population.

Writing Effective Survey Questions



1. **What's the purpose of your survey?**

You have a reason for writing the survey...remember it, and refer back to this question if you find yourself feeling lost in the writing process!

2. **When in doubt, throw it out.**

Questions need to pull out answers that are useful to you in some way. If your question isn't providing you with useful information, don't use it.

3. **If you have to take a breath, it's too long.**

KEEP IT SIMPLE!! Use clear, concise questions that keep the respondent focused on the information you really want. Short questions that are easy to understand and do not force the reader to keep information in their head are best.

4. **Ask for what you want.**

If you want to know when someone last went to a movie theatre, then ask them that! Otherwise readers may tell you the last time they rented a video, when you asked, "When did you last see a movie?"

Another consideration is not to be too vague. For example: Please rate your satisfaction with the Youth Summit. The reader is forced to lump his/her satisfaction with the various components of the summit into one category. What you really want to know is if they were satisfied with the (1) training, (2) food, (3) hotel, and (4) activities. Break it out into all its parts!

5. **Avoid misinterpretation.**

Beware of language/terminology. Words that mean one thing to you may not mean the same to others. For example: "Dinner" may be the evening meal for you; however, to some it is the mid-day meal. Use clear and understandable language.

6. **Beware of "and."**

Specific recommended actions require specific questions. If your question has options, the reader can choose which to answer. For example: a question about street-based services and shelter care is a "double-barreled" question and will be difficult for you to determine if the answer is in regards to the street-based services or the shelter care.

7. **Don't lead the respondent.**

The idea is to draw out the respondent's view/opinion. Writing a question that appears to have a right answer is easy to do; however, it will not get accurate results. For example, in the question "Your youth advisory board is your voice in the program. Do you agree?" You are essentially asking the respondent to agree with the statement. To draw out the respondent's view/opinion ask: "Does your youth advisory board have a voice in the program?" The respondent will have an opportunity to provide their view and clarify the response if they desire.

8. **Avoid alienation.**

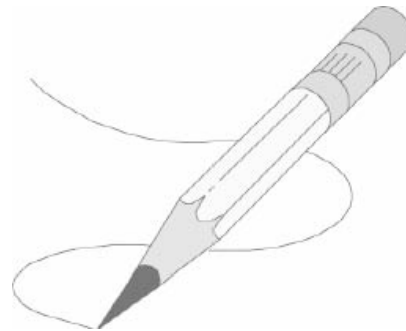
Avoid alienating respondents or making them feel like they are telling on someone. When writing questions about sensitive topics, people are likely to protect their privacy and others from judgment. For example: "Advisory Board Members are supposed to be your voice in program decisions, do you feel that they represent your voice?" If respondents are asked: "Have you talked with an advisory board member about a suggestion/concern related to the program?" Then asked: "Was your suggestion/concern addressed to your satisfaction?" The respondent has the opportunity to answer without placing blame/fault on anyone rather they can own their opinion as to the outcome.

9. **Check for complete understanding.**

Asking respondents "How effective is your Youth Advisory Board?" may not be as effective as "Does the program you are involved with have a Youth Advisory Board?" followed by "Have you participated in the Youth Advisory Board meetings?" followed by "How often do you participate in the advisory board meetings?" Breaking down the questions will give you more accurate information.

Remember:

Well-written survey questions will keep your respondents interested. Questions that are difficult to answer because they feel emotionally threatening may cause response rates to go down and increase potential for response bias to go up.



Tips for Answers



1. **Limit response options.**

This is most important. Giving the respondent more than one legitimate place for their answer is confusing and will defeat your desire for accurate information. Response choices like, “1 to 2,” “2 to 3,” and “More than 3” is a problem for someone whose answer is “2.” Also, be sure to provide response options that cover every possibility. If the list of options is too long, provide an “Other” choice or allow a write-in response.
2. **Minimize open-ended questions.**

While sometimes valuable, overuse can cause “respondent fatigue” and can be difficult to categorize for analysis.
3. **Pay attention to time.**

People judge time differently. “Always,” “Sometimes,” and “Never” mean different things to different people. A frame of reference or specific time units are best (minutes, days, months, etc.).
4. **Its okay to say you “Don’t Know.”**

Giving respondents a “Don’t Know” option can be useful. There are times when you want to know if someone doesn’t know! However, be careful not to make this the “fatigue” response for your readers! Use it carefully.
5. **Scaling**

The most common scale is the Likert Scale system. Using this scaling method requires you to develop appropriate labeling. Most commonly used labels are “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree,” and correspond with a number scale 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

Summary

Youth involvement in program development, design, implementation, and evaluation of services will benefit the organization, program, community, partners, and young people. This Toolkit was designed to provide strategies, resources, and tips on how to effectively engage youth and adults in the process. We hope that you find the information valuable and useful. As we learn more about youth development, youth/adult partnership and successful strategies, we will add them to future editions of the Toolkit. If you need further consultation, technical assistance, or training, please contact The University of Oklahoma's Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers and/or National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development.

Information about the Centers follows.

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

The University of Oklahoma's National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development (NCWRCYD) increases the capacity and resources of States and Tribes to help youth in care meet the goals of safety, permanence, and well-being. The Center can help States incorporate youth into all areas of programs and services, implement services that address legislative requirements, and prepare for Child and Youth Services Review (CFSR) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) development and implementation. The Center bases its technical assistance and training around four core principles: youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, and permanent connections.

Address: 4502 East 41st Street, Building 4W
Tulsa, OK 74135
Phone: (918) 660-3700
Fax: (918) 660-3737
E-Mail: dansell@ou.edu
Website: <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/>
Contact: Dorothy Ansell, Assistant Director

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Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers

The University of Oklahoma's Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers (RHYTTAC) develop, coordinate, and manage centralized national training and technical assistance, focused on improving Family and Youth Services Bureau funded Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees services provision to runaway, homeless, and street youth and their families. The Centers base their technical assistance and training around four core principles: youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, and permanent connections.

Address: 4502 East 41st Street, Building 4W

Tulsa, OK 74135

Phone: (800) 806-2711

Fax: (918) 660-3737

E-mail: rhytechnicalassistance@ou.edu

Website: <http://www.rhyttac.ou.edu>

Contact: Sue Barton, Assistant Director



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Other Resources

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http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4h_presents.htm

Checkoway, B. & Richards-Schuster, K. Youth Participation: Participatory Evaluation with Young People.

This workbook is for young people who want to develop knowledge for action and change, whether through program evaluation, community assessment, policy analysis, or other studies. It is based on the belief that people have a right to participate in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives, and that evaluation is a vehicle for participation.

http://www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?fld=PDFFile&CID=281&ListID=28&ItemID=5000022&LanguageID=0

Checkoway, B. & Richards-Schuster, K. Facilitator's Guide for Participatory Evaluation with Young People.

This Facilitator's Guide is intended for use in conjunction with the workbook Participatory Evaluation with Young People. It follows its format, and provides additional information, ideas, examples, and exercises to strengthen its facilitation.

http://www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?fld=PDFFile&CID=281&ListID=28&ItemID=5000021&LanguageID=0

Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development. Dr. Renee McKee. (n.d.). Purdue University.

http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4h_presents.htm

Matarese, M., McGinnis, L., & Mora, M. Youth Involvement in Systems of Care: A Guide to Empowerment.

The goal for *Youth Involvement in Systems of Care: A Guide to Empowerment* is to provide a resource to youth, youth coordinators, youth members, professionals, and other adults working with young people. This guide is a starting point for understanding youth involvement and engagement in order to develop and fully integrate a youth-directed movement within local systems of care.

<http://systemsofcare.samhsa.gov/headermenus/docsHM/youthguidedlink.pdf>

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Promoting Positive Youth Development in New York State: Moving from Dialogue to Action. Adolescent Project Team of Partners for Children. (2001).

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/YOUth/>

This paper frames the definitions and principles of, provides the rationale for, and discusses the of Youth Development

Strengthening Positive Youth Development Environments: Four Essential Elements and Eight Critical Elements of Positive Youth Development Programs. Kress, (2005). The University of Wisconsin-Extension.

This article presents the four essential elements and eight critical elements of Positive Youth Development as identified by group of evaluators from the National 4-H Impact Design Implementation Team.

Texas Network of Youth Services. Making it Work: A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships.

This resource contains ideas and tips to help you build effective youth and adult partnerships in your organizations and communities. This guide highlights the many ways that youth and adults can become partners, the levels of partnerships, and what it takes to form and sustain these partnerships.

<http://www.tnoys.org/TNOYSServices/PromotingYouthDev/Youth%20Adult%20Partnerships%20Guide.pdf>

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development maintains information on States with active youth leadership groups.

http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/YD/State_pages.html

Appendix

Is your organization youth friendly?

The Youth Friendly Check List



Adapted from a self-assessment tool from
The Family Support Council
Funded by a grant from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council
Administered by Ohio Legal Rights Service

Youth Friendly Checklist

Agency Administration

Yes	No	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there youth on the agency's board of directors?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency Mission Statement show that it encourages youth input/participation?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are agency's policies and procedures youth centered/oriented?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do youth write and/or approve the agency's policies and procedures on a re-occurring basis?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency train staff on the value of youth input?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do youth orient and train new staff?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are youth considered for employment opportunities?

Information Sharing

Yes	No	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency write documents and other materials in plain language and in alternative formats?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency give youth information regularly and whenever asked?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency talk with the youth in a way they understand (e.g., in sign language or in the family's native language)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency's website contain youth friendly content?

Welcoming Environment

Yes	No	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency welcome youth?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency have an open-door policy welcoming youth at any time?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency ask youth what the agency can do so that youth feel safe giving comments?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a person at the agency youth can call to discuss concerns or file a complaint?

Youth Involvement

Yes	No	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency encourage and facilitate youth involvement on a re-occurring basis?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency have an outreach plan to involve youth?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency have a plan to address specific cultural issues if they are a barrier to youth involvement?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency plan activities that are youth oriented and encourage youth to become involved?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency give youth options, on a re-occurring basis, of how to become actively involved in the operation of the agency?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are youth involved in all phases of planning, delivering, and evaluating services?

Decision Making

Yes	No	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are youth decision makers?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency engage youth in shared decision making on a re-occurring basis?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency make it possible for youth to make informed decisions?

Meetings Inclusion

Yes	No	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are youth included on all committees and meetings?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do youth receive meeting minutes and agendas?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency plan meetings at a time when youth can attend?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency support youth so they can attend meetings (travel reimbursement, child care, etc.)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency cancel meetings if youth are not represented?

Accessibility

Yes **No** **Don't Know**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the entire agency physically accessible (e.g., flat surface from parking lot into building, restroom larger, hallways wider, etc.)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the entire agency programmatically accessible (e.g., are alternative formats, specialized software for computers, etc.), available upon request? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the agency accommodate for special needs upon request? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the agency ask youth, on a re-occurring basis, how to improve the agency to make it more accessible to all youth? |

Service Evaluation


Yes **No** **Don't Know**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the agency ask youth, on a re-occurring basis, what they need and want? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do youth routinely evaluate services and supports? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the agency ask youth, on a re-occurring basis, if they are satisfied with services? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the agency have an evaluation form to assess youth satisfaction? |

Conducting Focus Groups

Focus groups are another way to include youth in the service delivery process and may be conducted as a follow-up to a survey or as the sole means of soliciting youth input. Focus groups usually involve six to ten youth. Within this small group environment, it is possible to obtain a great deal of information in a short period of time.

As with every other aspect of involving youth in service design, delivery, implementation, and evaluation, planning is required to conduct productive focus groups with youth. Consider the following:

- 
1. Schedule sessions that are one to two hours in length at a time when youth are available. Avoid times near holidays or school exams.
 2. In advance of the session, create five or six focus questions.
 3. Hold sessions in a space that offers few distractions. A community conference room or library meeting room is ideal.
 4. Recruit youth who have had a range of experiences while accessing services and who have achieved, or will achieve, a variety of outcomes.
 5. Develop a transportation plan for those attending.
 6. Provide refreshments, particularly if youth are coming from school to participate.
 7. Provide “table toys” for youth to “play with” during the session. Pipe cleaners, plastic Slinkys™, and other inexpensive manipulatives work great.
 8. Provide name tags to facilitate communication.
 9. Create an agenda which includes the following items: welcome, review of agenda, review of goal of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, and wrap up.
 10. Determine how you will record the session. If a co-facilitator is not available, arrange for audio recording. If you audio record, you have to also make a plan to have the recording transcribed.

Most youth will welcome participating in a focus group that will ultimately lead to better services. Emphasize that, although they will only be spending one or two hours together, they will be contributing to a much larger perspective that can make a difference for all children, youth, and families in the service delivery system.

PYD Youth Involvement Checklist

This checklist is intended to help you think through youth involvement in your program/agency. Review it with your Administration, Board of Directors, independent living coordinators, your young people, or other concerned parties.

Organizational and Team Commitment

- 1. Beyond satisfying a federal expectation, do you know why you want to involve youth in program development, design, implementation, and service delivery?
- 2. Have you talked to and determined the commitment from your agency's Executive Management Team and/or Board of Directors?
- 3. Have you talked to and determined the commitment of your youth care workers, your youth, and your program director?
- 4. Have you determined your model for youth involvement?

For example, youth participate as stakeholders. Youth participate as team members and work with staff to complete some or all of the program's tasks. Youth are on the Board of Directors. Youth are employed as peer-educators. Youth are employed in other capacities.

- 5. Have you and members of your program/agency assessed your own stereotypes about youth?
- 6. Are you and members of your program/agency open to suggestions that youth might make?

Youth as Stakeholders

- 7. Do you have a plan for recruiting youth?
- 8. Do you have a plan for educating youth about your program/agency and the PYD Philosophy?
- 9. Do you have a plan or process for seeking the input from youth?
- 10. Do you have a plan to provide youth with follow-up information after meetings/events?

Youth as Team Members

- 11. Do you have a plan to orient youth regarding their role in the program/agency, or on the Board?
- 12. Do you have a plan for training youth to complete the tasks assigned?
- 13. Do you have a plan for arranging youth travel and paying for lodging and per diem?
- 14. Do you have a plan for compensating youth for their time?

Sample Focus Group Questions for Youth Involvement in Program Evaluation

How did the program involve you in your case learning plan?

- How did you participate in the creation of your plan?
- Did the plan reflect your goals? Describe.
- Do you believe the plan focuses on your strengths? Explain.
- How did the plan address the needs you identified at the time of entry to the program?
- How often did you review the plan with a staff member?
- How is the plan updated to reflect your accomplishments as you achieve the goals outlined in the plan?
- Can you add or remove goals from the plan as your personal goals and interests change?
- How do you add or remove goals from the plan?

Did the program provide opportunities to develop and/or enhance permanent connections with family, peers, friends, staff, and other adults significant in your life?

- How did the program provide opportunities for you to call, e-mail, text, or write letters to family members, friends, peers (inside and outside the program), teachers, staff, and/or other significant persons?
- How did the program provide opportunities to learn the value of permanent connections?
- After completing the program, did you believe you had one or more people in your life that you could turn to for support, guidance, friendship, or advice? How do you maintain contact with those people?
- At the time of exit from the program, were you provided with contact information for the program including a staff member's name for you to contact in order to maintain a connection with the program?
- What information would you suggest be provided to youth when they exit a program?

Did the program prepare you to reunite with your family?

- How was your family involved in group therapy while you were in the program?
- Were you and your family involved in family therapy while in the program?
- How were you involved in individual therapy while in the program?
- How did you participate in group therapy while in the program?
- How were you and your family provided an opportunity to address the issues/concerns that resulted in your being in the program?

Did the program prepare you for independence?

- How often did the program provide life skills classes?
- Were youth involved in teaching the classes? Provide details.
- How were you given opportunities to practice life skills?

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- What types of hands-on activities did you participate in to develop or improve life skills?
- Do you know how to open and maintain a checking/savings account?
- Do you know how to develop a budget based on your income and expenses?
- Do you know how to prepare a grocery list and shop?
- Do you have the skills you need to maintain your home? (basic household cleaning, lawn care, what cleaning supplies you need, checking smoke detectors, changing light bulbs, etc.)
- Do you have private transportation or knowledge of how to access public transit?
- Are you currently employed?
- How did participation in the program help you find and maintain employment?
- Do you know who to contact to obtain assistance to meet your basic needs should you need help?

Know Your Alphabet Soup

What do all of the terms and words mean? People who work in programs have created their own language. It is a good idea to learn the words and the terms if you want to advocate for youth and teach them to advocate for themselves and other youth receiving services. Here are some of the terms you will hear when people talk about Positive Youth Development, Children's Services, and Family and Youth Services Bureau, Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs.

- ACF Administration for Children and Families - The ACF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the federal agency which provides oversight to many social service programs for families, children and youth.
- BCP Basic Center Program - provides financial assistance to establish or strengthen community-based programs addressing the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth and their families. Basic centers provide youth with emergency shelter, food, clothing, counseling, and health care referrals. Centers seek to reunite young people with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements.
- CB Children's Bureau is located in Washington, DC and is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Children's Bureau works with state and local agencies to develop programs that focus on preventing the abuse of children in troubled families, protecting children from abuse, and finding permanent placements for those who cannot safely return to their homes.
- FYSB Family and Youth Services Bureau is located in Washington, DC and is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. FYSB administers several Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs including the Basic Center Program, Street Outreach Program, Transitional Living Program, and Maternity Group Homes Program.
- NRCYS The National Resource Center for Youth Services at The University of Oklahoma Outreach, has been resourcing the youth services community for more than twenty-five years, providing training and technical assistance to programs in

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Oklahoma and nationally. NRCYS is the umbrella organization for the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development (NCWRCYD) and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers (RHYTTAC).

- PYD Positive Youth Development is defined as a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive Youth Development (PYD) addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems (National Collaboration of Youth Members).
- HHS U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- MGH Maternity Group Homes - a subset of the Transitional Living Program, the Maternity Group Homes (MGH) program allows pregnant/parenting youth to live with their children in community-based, adult-supervised environments. In addition to the services that youth receive in all transitional living programs, pregnant/parenting youth in maternity group homes receive child care assistance and parenting advice.
- MOA Memorandum of Agreement - An MOA is an agreement made between two or more agencies or organizations.
- RHY Runaway and Homeless Youth
- RHYTTAC The University of Oklahoma's Runaway and Homeless Youth training and Technical Assistance Centers are FYSB funded Training and Technical Assistance Providers for all FYSB Funded RHY Programs.
- SOP Street Outreach Program - funds local youth service providers that conduct street-based education and outreach and that offer emergency shelter and related services to young people who have been, or who are at risk of being, sexually abused or exploited.

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- TA Technical Assistance - help provided by skilled agencies and individuals to States, Tribes, organizations, programs, or agencies.
- TLP Transitional Living Programs provide long-term, supportive assistance to older homeless youth, ages 16 to 21, who can't return to their families but are not yet equipped to live on their own. The programs ease the transition to adulthood for these young people, offering them housing, life skills training, counseling, and education and employment support. Generally, services are provided for up to 18 months, with an additional 180 days allowed for youth less than 18 years old.

Glossary

Area of Development – One of a range of areas in which a young person needs to learn and grow in order to become a fully prepared and fully engaged adult (Ferber, Pittman & Marshall, 2002).

Belonging and Membership – An individual's sense that he or she values, and is valued by, others in the family and surrounding community (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996); connection to another individual or group of individuals on the basis of common interest, formal affiliation, etc. (Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R. (2004).

Collaboration – The process by which several agencies or organizations make a formal, sustained commitment to work together to accomplish a common mission (*The Community Collaboration Manual*, National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations, n.d.).

Connecting – The area of development that focuses on developing positive social behaviors, skills, and attitudes (Ferber, Pittman & Marshall, 2002).

Cultural Competence – Culture is different in race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical ability, language, beliefs, values, behavior patterns, or customs among various groups within a community, organization, or nation (*A guide to enhancing cultural competency of runaway and homeless youth programs*, HHS, ACF, ACYF). Gaining cultural competence is a long-term process of expanding horizons, thinking critically about

the issues of power and oppression, and acting appropriately. Culturally competent individuals have a mixture of beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills that help them establish trust and communicate with others (*Advocates for Youth*).

Generosity – Liberality in giving or willingness to give; nobility of thought or behavior; amplitude; abundance (American Heritage Dictionary, 2006).

Independence – The state or quality of being independent; freedom from dependence; exemption from reliance on, or control by, others; self-subsistence or maintenance; direction of one's own affairs without interference (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1998).

Interdependence - to form networks of support and mutual dependence in personal community relationships (Maluccio, Krieger, & Pine, 1990).

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Interpersonal Skills – The ability to communicate with another individual or group on a social or professional basis. Level of aptitude is based on ease and comfort of all parties involved.

(Youth Development and Youth Leadership. National collaborative on workforce and disability for youth. (2004).

Lifelong Learning – The interest and skill to maintain education, formal or informal, beyond the basic requirements for academic achievement or vocational attainment. (Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R., 2004).

Mastery – Great skillfulness and knowledge of some subject or activity (WordNet 3.0).

Mentorship – A supportive relationship between a youth or young adult and someone more senior in age and experience that offers support, guidance and concrete assistance as the younger partner enters a new area of experience (Sarkees-Wircenski & Scott, 1995).

Opportunities – Chances for young people to learn how to act in the world around them, to explore, express, earn, belong, and influence. Opportunities give young people the chance to test ideas and behaviors and to experiment with different roles. It is important to stress that young people, just like adults, learn best through active participation and that learning occurs in all types of settings and situations (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996).

Peer Mentoring – A relationship where both parties are acknowledged as equal contributors to the relationship and to one another's well being. These partnerships contribute horizontal, rather than vertical, power relationships. Neither party brings nor

attempts to display any "role" power over the other, nor does one member give away his or her personal power to the other (Moyer deRosenroll, n.d.). Peer mentoring involves matching up young people who are believed to have relevant and accessible knowledge for each other. (Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R., 2004).

Permanent Connections – Positive relationships that are intended to last a lifetime. They may be either formal (adoption or reunification with family), or informal in nature (mentors or peer support groups). Very often these relationships are identified by the youth (*National Resource Center for Youth Services, 1999*).

Quality Services – Services that offer (1) relevant instruction and information; (2) challenging opportunities to express oneself, to contribute, to take on new roles, and to be part of a group; and (3) supportive adults and peers who provide respect, high standards, guidance, and affirmation to young people (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996).

Resiliency – The ability and wherewithal to recover from adverse situations through having learned how to avoid such situations in the future or how to maintain a positive mode of coping. (Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R., 2004).

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Self-Advocacy – the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in one’s life and make choices and decisions regarding one’s actions free from undue external influence or interference (Wehmeyer, 1992); the ability of an individual to set goals that are important to him or her and possession of the skills necessary to achieve these goals (Field & Hoffman, 1996).

Service-Learning — a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community; that is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity; that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others (National and Community Service Act of 1990).

Supports — Ongoing relationships through which young people become connected to others and to community resources. Supports can be motivational, emotional, and strategic. The supports can take many different forms, but they must be affirming, respectful, and ongoing. The supports are most powerful when they are offered by a variety of people, such as parents and close relatives, community social networks, teachers, youth workers, employers, health providers, and peers who are involved in the lives of young people (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996).

Vision — The ability to see beyond current conditions to future possibilities and to create actions to make those possibilities into realities. (*Youth Development and Youth Leadership. National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2004*).

Work Readiness — Those skills and qualities that workers must have to learn and adapt to the demands of any job. These include personal attributes, interpersonal skills, thinking and problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and the use of technology (SCANS, 1991; CCSSO Workplace Readiness Assessment Consortium, 1993).

Volunteering – To offer or bestow voluntarily, or without solicitation or compulsion; as, to volunteer one’s service (Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1998).


Positive Youth Development – A process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems (National Collaboration of Youth Members, n. d.)

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Youth Leadership — (1) The ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinion and behavior of other people, and show the way by going in advance (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998); (2) “The ability to analyze one’s own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem to carry them out. It includes the ability to identify community resources and use them, not only to live independently, but also to establish support networks to participate in community life and to effect positive social change” (Adolescent Employment Readiness Center, Children’s Hospital, n.d.).

Tips from California Youth Connection

While The California Youth Connection (CYC) focuses on foster youth the recommendations they provide for involving youth in foster care in policy making are beneficial when working with any youth. The California Youth Connection offers the following tips:

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- **Invest in Preparation!** Invest the time and effort into preparing foster youth and adults to work together on foster care policy. Without sufficient leadership development and preparation, youth are not able to participate meaningfully, and adults are not able to benefit from the valuable expertise they can offer.
 - **Be Aware of Power Dynamics!** Foster care policymakers and providers often operate without any input from youth, even when youth are directly affected by their decisions and practices. Often, adults in the foster care system underestimate the wisdom and creativity of foster youth, and may attempt to control situations where foster youth are involved or try to protect youth from the potential consequences of their mistakes. The flip side is that growing up in the foster care system, youth are subjected to every aspect of their life being controlled by adults, and expect their ideas and opinions to be ignored, derided, or vetoed. Youth feel that they are treated like objects, and have never experienced being an equal partner in decision-making. These factors contribute to a power dynamic, where working jointly on policy issues can be difficult and requires deliberate effort and attention.
 - **Change Your Own Organization!** Be open to changing rules and practices to involve youth. Here are some areas that you will probably need to change:
 - Hours for Meetings and Work - Policy meetings usually conflict with times that youth are at school or work. To involve youth, an effort must be made to hold meetings at nontraditional times, such as late afternoons, evenings, or weekends. When a change can't be made, help youth find out if they can receive school credit for participation. Also, remember that foster youth often need early notice of meetings in order to get permission from parents and/or caregivers.

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- Transportation - Many foster youth struggle because they don't have transportation to get to and from meetings. Hold meetings in locations that are easy to get to on public transportation or convenient to youth, and provide travel vouchers, advances, and immediate reimbursements for transportation costs.
- Food - Many current and former foster youth will not have the income to eat out. When meetings are around meal times, make sure to provide youth with food or with a stipend to pay for meals.
- Agency Staff and Policies - Almost all agencies that affect foster youth have operated from an exclusively adult perspective, so be aware that staff will need cultural competency training BEFORE attempting to meaningfully involve youth. It is important that staff are on the same page about the importance of changing rules to accommodate youth and make them feel they are valued contributing members of the policy team, not just token members.
- Language - Youth are the only experts in how effective and helpful services are, but they often do not know the technical language, acronyms, and terms used to discuss foster care programs and issues. Nothing will make a youth feel that they are not an equal partner quicker than everyone else speaking a different language.

The California Youth Connection is guided, focused, and driven by current and former foster youth with the assistance of other committed community members. California Youth Connection promotes the participation of foster youth in policy development and legislative changes to improve the foster care system. California Youth Connection strives to improve social work practice and child welfare policy.

For more information on foster youth involvement in policy making, contact the California Youth Connection at 415-442-5060 or visit their website at www.calyouthconn.org.

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Resources from the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth

Putting Positive Youth Development into Practice: A Resource Guide

This guide provides a solid understanding of the theory behind the youth development approach, as well as practical advice for launching and running programs that support the positive development of young people. It's a perfect primer for new staff members, board members, and neighborhood allies. <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/PosYthDevel.pdf>

Keep in Touch: Young People Offer Advice on Staying Connected and Living Independently

Let the real-life experiences of formerly runaway and homeless youth convince the young people leaving your program to keep in touch. This brochure gives young people advice on staying connected and living independently once they are on their own. Available in English and Spanish, it includes a handy postcard youth can use to stay in touch with you.

English: <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/keepintouch.pdf>

Spanish: <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/mantenteencontacto.pdf>

NCFY Podcasts: Youth Speak Out About Positive Youth Development Programs

How does Positive Youth Development (PYD) empower youth to make decisions and take control of their lives? The National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (NCFY) thought young people could tell us best. So we asked them. In its PYD audio series, NCFY interviews young people involved with Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) programs. Youth reveal what program practices enrich their lives and help them grow into healthy, self-sufficient adults. <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/podcast/index.htm>

Learning by Doing fact sheet series

What's the best way to learn to design a Web site, write a poem, shoot a basket, or start a business? By doing it! Help the young people you know learn, create, develop, get involved, and be connected.

Connecting With Youth Through Technology

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/lbs_tech.pdf

Drawing in Youth Through the Visual and Performing Arts

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/lbd_arts.pdf

Engaging Youth in Civic Activities and Community

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/lbd_civ.pdf

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Engaging Youth in Writing

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/lbd_write.pdf

Investing in Youth Entrepreneurship

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/lbd_ent.pdf

Rooting for Youth Through Sports

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/pdf/lbd_sport.pdf

The Exchange: News From FYSB and the Youth Services Field

The newsletter of the Family and Youth Services Bureau addresses topics and shares promising practices relevant to TLPs and ILPs.

Addressing the Complexities of Family and Relationship Violence (March 2008)

<http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/exchange/0803dv.pdf>

Aftercare: Staying in Touch With Youth After They Have Left the System (July 2006)

<http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/exchange/0607.pdf>

Transitional Living Programs Move Homeless Youth Closer to Independence (March 2006)

<http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/exchange/0603.pdf>

Assessment and Screening Tools for Measuring Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Independent Living Skills in Adolescents

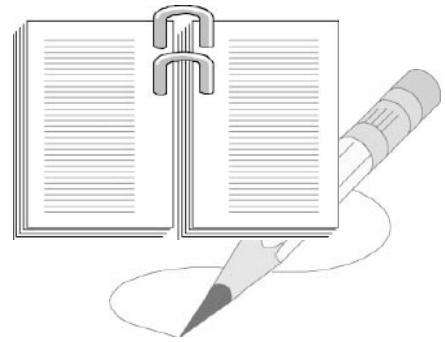
To help youth-service professionals choose the appropriate tools for their agencies and clients, NCFY has compiled a list of screening and assessment tools that are relatively brief and easy to administer. Designed specifically for youth ages 14 to 21, each tool measures one (or more) of three categories relevant to runaway and homeless youth programs: mental health, substance abuse, and independent living skills. <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/satools/index.htm>

Guide to Starting a Youth Program

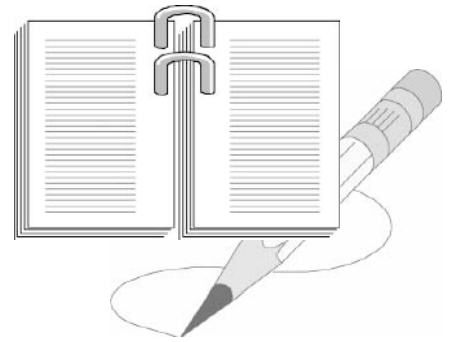
NCFY's *Guide to Starting a Youth Program* gathers together a wealth of online information about how to start and manage a nonprofit organization that serves youth and their families. Rather than duplicate information that's already out there, the guide attempts to put youth workers on the right track by guiding them to Web sites written just for grassroots organizers and youth service professionals. The guide tackles generating ideas, launching the organization, finding funding, locating best practices, and evaluating outcomes and practices. Readers can plunge into whatever topic they need help with.

<http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/guidetostarting/index.htm>

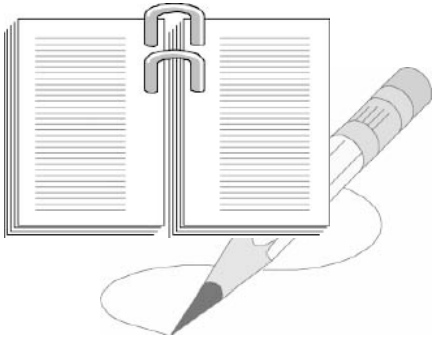
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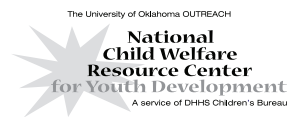


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