



Youth Engagement

From Theory to Practice

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Workshop Objectives

- Hear about youth experiences challenges, and accomplishments of being engaged
- Learn about the relationship between Positive Youth Development and Youth Engagement
- Learn about strategies utilized to prepare an agency to take on youth engagement

Nexus Youth Services

- Creates opportunities for youth by providing high-quality services that are inclusive and responsive to the needs and voices of youth
- Community-based mental health agency in Peel region offering support to youth between the ages of 14-24
- Services include: Community Counselling Program and Youth Drop-in (Nexus Youth Centre)

Our Youth Engagement Challenge

- **Goal:** To enhance the capacity of Nexus Youth Services to formally adopt a model of Youth Engagement
- **3 Phases of Development:**



Phase 1: Planning

Involved...

- Facilitating a Needs Assessment (NA) to understand NYS' current capacity to engage youth
- Reviewing the literature to identify evidence-based/ evidence-informed practices that could assist in addressing some gaps identified in NYS' NA
- Exploring concept of Youth Engagement as it relates to services that regard youth as 'clients'

Youth Engagement Is About...

- Meaningful participation and sustained involvement of youth in an activity with focus outside of self

- Head (Cognitive Connection);



- Heart (Caring);



- Feet (Commitment)



(Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement 2003)

Youth Engagement and Decision-Making

- Youth Engagement is about empowering all youth as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally, and/or that they believe to be important

(Ready....Set....Engage, 2007)

Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing

Continuum of Youth Engagement

Identifies Youth Engagement as existing along a continuum

Youth Services
Approach

Youth
Development

Youth
Leadership

Civic
Engagement

Youth
Organizing



Continuum of Youth Engagement

Youth Services Approach

- Youth regarded as clients
- Services provided as crisis intervention or prevention
- Treatment/supports are designed to address youth problems
- Success measured by organization's ability to help youth overcome personal barriers

Continuum of Youth Engagement Continued...

Youth Development

- Access to safe environments, stable services and supports
- Meet youth where they are at and provide age-appropriate support
- Focus on building/strengthening individual competencies
- Positive self-identity

Continuum of Youth Engagement Continued...

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Includes components of youth development approach plus:

- Builds in authentic youth leadership opportunities within programming & organization
- Helps youth deepen historical & cultural understanding of their experiences & community issues
- Builds skills and capacities of young people to be decision makers & problem solvers
- Youth participate in community projects

Continuum of Youth Engagement Continued...

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Includes components of youth development & youth leadership plus:

- Engages young people in public education & awareness
- Builds skills & capacity for power analysis & action around issues youth identify
- Begins to help youth build collective identity of as social change agents
- Engages youth in advocacy & negotiation

Continuum of Youth Engagement Continued...

YOUTH ORGANIZING

Includes components of youth development, youth leadership and civic engagement plus:

- Builds a membership base
- Involves youth as part of core staff & governing body
- Engages in direct action & community mobilizing
- Engages in alliances & coalitions

Phase 2: Implementation

Our Commitment to Youth Engagement

Offer opportunities for engagement to create a community that values the diverse voices of youth and adults through action, partnership and growth

(Youth Engagement Working Group, 2011)

Laying the Foundation

- Generated interest and excitement by engaging youth
- Generated interest and excitement by engaging staff
- Generated interest and excitement by engaging community partners

Getting Youth Engagement Off the Ground

- Invited former Youth Leaders to become re-engaged in this new project
- Disseminated a report outlining openings, challenges and opportunities for youth engagement at NYS
- Invited youth & adults to participate in a two-day training on youth engagement

Creating A Youth-Friendly Environment

- Engaged youth to participate in the design of a promotional video
- Engaged youth to participate in the re-designing of NYS' drop-in space
- Engaged youth to participate in the re-branding of NYS

Social Media

- Outreach to Youth
- Outreach to Community Partners
- New Avenue to Quantitative Data

Phase 3: Sustainability

- Developed policies & procedures
 - Roles, responsibilities and recognition
 - Health promotion and outreach
 - Public speaking and strategic sharing
 - Role in governance
 - Feedback and concerns
- Engaged Board of Directors & Senior Team



Questions?