

# Y.E.S.



**Say Y.E.S. To Youth:  
Youth Engagement Strategies**

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# **Say Y.E.S. To Youth: Youth Engagement Strategies**

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# Say **Y.E.S.** To Youth: Youth Engagement Strategies

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# Say Y.E.S. To Youth: Youth Engagement Strategies



Within communities across the country a growing movement exists to include young people, generally teenagers, on decision-making boards and community collaborative teams. This move to include the voices and energy of young people has been shown in the literature to improve organizational services, provide young people with opportunities to learn new skills (*e.g., teamwork, responsibility, and problem-solving*), and increase young people's sense of belonging within their communities. At the forefront of this movement stand several youth-service organizations that have created board member and advisory council positions for young people (*e.g., Girl Scouts of America and National 4-H Trust*). The establishment of such decision-making roles transitions young people from recipients of programs to participants in the development, planning, and evaluation of programs.

The movement to engage young people continues to gain momentum as city councils, school boards, and other non-profit organizations make room for young people's voices when making operational decisions (*e.g., Michigan Community Foundation's Youth Advisory Committees*). In the literature,

researchers refer to the inclusion of young people on decision-making boards or community collaborative teams with different terms: youth engagement, youth participation, youth voice, youth empowerment, youth action, youth infusion, and youth governance. All of these terms share an underlying principal; young people as competent citizens capable of making decisions and deserving a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities. The term **youth engagement** will be used throughout this literature review and resource packet to refer to young people participating on decision-making boards or community collaborative teams. Henceforth, the term **community team** will be used instead of decision-making boards or community collaborative teams. However, it should be understood that the term **community team** may include a school board, advisory board, coalition, organizational executive board, or program planning committee.

Working with young people on community teams requires a paradigm shift from viewing young people as future citizens to viewing young people as today's citizens; with the capacity to effect change when given adequate supports and opportunities. Working with young people on community teams also requires a breakdown of stereotypes that both

adults and young people have about each other. The breakdown of stereotypes can occur through positive interactions encountered as adults and young people work together as a team to achieve goals. Successful youth engagement emerges from a mutually beneficial relationship between adults and young people. Adults share power with young people. In this type of relationship, adults not only coach young people through projects but also learn from young people while working with them (*Jones & Perkins, 2005*).

## How To Use The Resource Packet

This youth engagement resource packet includes sections to: (1) assess the team's readiness to involve young people; (2) select young people for team member positions; (3) support and maintain youth engagement over time; and (4) evaluate youth engagement efforts on the team. The sections of the resource packet are sequential, that is, they build off of each other. Each section contains: (a) an overall objective(s); (b) recommended steps to meet the objective(s); and (c) a team activity with discussion questions.

It is recommended that team leaders read through the resource packet in its entirety before presenting the material to team members. After understanding the breadth of the resource packet team leaders may present the material to team members and gradually review each section. The resource packet includes section handouts (see Appendix A) that can be used to initiate a discussion with team members about youth engagement. Teams may work through the resource packet over the course of several weeks or months.

First, spend time reviewing the action steps in each section as a team to determine in what ways the adults are willing to modify the team culture to fully engage young people as team members. Then, if your team decides to initiate youth engagement efforts, revisit each section and take time to complete the section activities and discussion questions. The activities and discussion questions in section one and two are meant to be completed before youth join the team. The activity and discussion questions in section three are meant to be completed one to two months following the selection of youth members. The activities and discussion questions in section four are meant to be completed every six months following the selection of youth members.

Finally, this resource packet provides information on additional practical resources that might assist youth development practitioners who already engage young people on

community teams (see Appendix B for a list of organizations, websites, and other resources about youth engagement). The materials for this resource packet are derived from current research and practitioner knowledge base on youth engagement (see Appendix C for a literature review and Appendix D for a list of references).

## What Is Known About Youth Engagement

Involving young people in decisions that affect their lives and their communities may provide them with opportunities to:

- Build a sense of belonging and connection to their communities (Cargo et al., 2003; Checkoway, et al., 2003);
- Create civic awareness and action (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003);
- Experience a sense of mastery and self-efficacy (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Perkins, Borden, Keith, Hoppe-Rooney, & Villarruel, 2003).

Adults and organizations may benefit from involving young people in operational decisions as well. Zeldin and colleagues (2000) interviewed young people and adults affiliated with non-profit organizations that employed youth engagement policies. They found that as a result of genuine youth engagement efforts:

- Adults witnessed the capabilities and competencies of young people directly and as a result perceived their inclusion in organizational decisions as essential;
- Adults felt more energized and committed to their organizations because of their relationship with young people;




- Young people helped clarify and focus the organizations' mission;
- Organizations became more attuned to the needs of young people within the community and improved their programs and services;
- The inclusion of young people helped organizations demonstrate to funding entities their commitment to youth development.

According to numerous research studies, adults can foster youth engagement by establishing (a) adult support; (b) a youth-friendly environment; (c) opportunities for youth members to complete meaningful tasks; and (d) opportunities for youth members to learn and use new skills. Throughout the resource packet, icons are placed next to the appropriate step to identify which of the four team characteristics it helps to address. A brief review of each team characteristic and its matching icon is summarized below. The complete literature review is provided in Appendix C.

## Adult Support







Supportive adults:

-  Display respect and equality when working with youth (Camino, 2004; Jones, 2004);
-  Clearly state expectations, responsibilities, and the time commitment required for youth to be engaged (Fiscus, 2003; Jones, 2004);
-  Encourage youth to fully participate during meetings by seeking out their opinions or suggestions (Mueller, Wunrow, & Einspruch, 2000).

## Youth-friendly Environment







To create a welcoming, inclusive environment adults may:

-  Remove barriers such as transportation to and from meetings, meeting times and locations, and by-laws that restrict voting privileges (*Young & Sazama, 1994*);
-  Provide clear and ongoing communication (*Mueller, et al., 2000*);
-  Invite youth to speak first at team meetings to avoid feelings of intimidation (*Fiscus, 2003*);
-  **Listen to** and **act on** some of youth's suggestions. When their opinions are valued by the group, youth are more likely to stay committed and involved (*Fiscus, 2003*).

## Opportunities to Complete Meaningful Tasks






Meaningful tasks are created when adults:

-  Give youth increasing amounts of developmentally-appropriate responsibilities and provide assistance when appropriate (*Mueller, et al., 2000*);
-  Create a community team where all members are held accountable to their commitments, including youth (*Mueller, et al., 2000*);
-  Engage youth in a reflection process to analyze what went well and what could be improved upon in the future (*Huebner, 1998*);
-  Create tasks that have benefits that extend beyond the individual and link him/her to the surrounding community (*Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Hoiselle, 2002*).

## Opportunities to Learn and Use New Skills



When involved in meaningful tasks for sustained periods of time, youth:

-  Build cognitive and social competencies (*Eccles & Gootman, 2002*);
-  Foster the development of initiative or intrinsic motivation, which often times is absent in school settings (*Larson, 2000*);
-  Learn and use technical skills that can spark an interest in future education and career pathways (*Ferrari, 2003*).

Youth engagement on community teams may promote healthy youth development and sustainable communities. Thus, successful youth engagement efforts are fostered by (a) supportive adults that respect youth; (b) a youth-friendly environment in which youth feel welcomed; (c) opportunities to complete meaningful tasks which advance group goals, and (d) opportunities to learn and use new skills which build competencies.

## Is your team ready to involve young people?







*Objectives: (1) To identify existing organizational barriers that may prevent young people from participating on the team as youth members. (2) To create an action plan that outlines the necessary steps towards removing organizational barriers.*

The first step to engaging young people on any community team is to assess the team's readiness to include them on the team. Assessing readiness provides the members with an opportunity to discuss the benefits and challenges of integrating young people onto the team. Through this discussion, team members may begin to understand more fully that some changes may be necessary before recruiting young people. Part of the discussion should be focused on the identification of current barriers that may prevent young people from participating or being fully engaged. Moreover, the discussion should lead to specific action steps the team must implement in order to involve and engage young people on the team.


Through this process, the team will learn whether or not the majority of members support the idea of youth engagement. Without buy-in from team members, efforts to infuse young people into the team may prove to be a disappointing experience for the

youth and adults involved with the effort. Discuss the following steps to assess your team's readiness to involve young people on the team with team members. Which are appropriate actions items for your team to take?



### Team Structure

-  Be clear as to why young people are being asked to join the team by creating a purpose statement. Answer the question, "Why are youth needed on this team?"
-  Amend by-laws to acknowledge young people as full members of the team with equal voting privileges as adults.
-  Schedule meeting times in the after-school hours or work with school personnel to excuse youth members from class to attend meetings.
-  Hold meetings on or close to the school grounds so that youth members can easily attend the meeting. This also allows youth members to miss the least amount of time if they are excused from school.




### New Positions

-  Establish at least two youth member positions. Young people feel more comfortable when they have a peer present and it enables a broader range of opinions to be represented.

### Roles for Adults

-  Select an adult mentor for each young person. Adult mentors provide support and help youth members throughout their involvement with the team.
-  Other adult members may coach youth by providing guidance on specific tasks. However, the majority of coaching should come from the mentor to be consistent.

### Team Budget

-  Commit funds in the budget to cover such expenses as trainings, transportation, supplies, and conference registration fees for all members.
-  Reimburse youth members for the cost of gas or bus/taxi fares to get to meetings.
-  If youth members cannot cover costs associated with being a member of the team up-front, consider providing funds to cover the cost in advance.

### Section 1 Team Activity

- Complete the youth engagement case study activity and discuss activity questions (p. 5-6).



## Section 1 Team Activity

### Youth Engagement Case Study

#### Purpose

- (1) To discuss the team features within the case study that enable or hinder youth engagement efforts.
- (2) To identify team features unique to your team that may enable or hinder youth engagement efforts.

#### Time

Approximately 45 minutes (5 minutes to introduce and explain the activity; 20 minutes to read the case study and answer questions in small groups; 20 minutes to discuss the answers in the large group).

#### Supplies

Case study handout  
Flip chart and paper  
Markers

#### Directions

1. Split the large group into teams of 3-5 people. Each team should appoint a recorder and a person to present to the large group.
2. Distribute the case study handout to each person in the teams.
3. Each person reads through the case study and the 2 different scenarios.
4. Teams discuss the different scenarios and activity questions. The recorder writes down their team's responses to activity questions.
5. Teams get back together to discuss their responses. The facilitator writes down responses on flip chart paper.

## Youth Engagement Case Study

The Carson Community Health Center has provided basic medical services to residents living in an urban area for 25 years. Services provided include family medicine, women's health, pediatrics, prenatal care, STD/HIV education and counseling, nutrition education, and general education. The Center receives guidance from an advisory board on strategic planning, operations, marketing, and educational programs. The advisory board is made up of 15 adults and four youth members. The advisory board decided to engage young people two years ago at the recommendation of the doctors. The doctors' reasoning for advocating youth engagement on the advisory board was that over half of the Center's patients were under 19.

### Scenario A

The inclusion of young people on the board required the adult board members to adapt how the board functioned. For example, the monthly meeting times were changed from Monday mornings to late afternoon so that young people could attend. In addition, the advisory board agreed to provide youth members with monthly bus passes to get to the Center for meetings. Youth members can also stop by the Center between meetings to work on tasks and use the office equipment when necessary. A work station was set up for youth members at the Center.

While working at the Center on a flyer announcing an upcoming health education workshop for new mothers, Steve, a youth member, was asked by the advisory board president, Rita, to

review the upcoming board meeting agenda. On the agenda he saw that the meeting starts off with a typical icebreaker and a go-around question which everyone takes turn answering. Next, is a discussion of the services provided by the Center in the past month. Amy, another youth member, has been working with the office manager, Marshall, to create these brief reports. Then, the educational specialists provide program updates. Steve sees that following the specialists' update, he is to talk about his task of creating promotional material for a new health education workshop. Finally, the board members have 20 minutes to meet in their sub-committee groups to discuss issues. Steve serves as a co-chair for the marketing committee with an adult, Megan. Steve remembers that Carmen, another youth member, wants to suggest to the board development committee that training be offered on special event planning. She serves as the co-chair of the fundraising committee and they intend to plan a silent auction but are struggling with planning details. The board meeting will end with a five minute reflection exercise to recap which members will complete what tasks before the next meeting. Steve returns the agenda to Rita with minor changes. Rita asks Steve if he wants to go down the street to get a cup of coffee and discuss his changes.

## Scenario B

Youth members are invited to attend monthly advisory board meetings which are held at the Center on Monday morning from 8:00-9:30. Youth members more often attend the meetings during the summer and less often during the school year. When young people miss a meeting they are to receive a copy of the meeting minutes through email. However, Steve, a youth member, has not received an email from the board in the past two months. He doesn't attend board meetings during the school months. In addition to missing class, it is a 20 minute bus ride and a 5 minute walk to school from the Center. Steve called another youth member, Lisa, to see if she had received any emails from the Center lately, but she had not.

Steve remembers the last meeting he attended in August. He sat through most of the board meeting listening to updates from the office manager on an overview of services provided in the past month and doctors discussing new concerns regarding the Center's services. Then, he listened to the educational specialists give program updates. They asked for ideas on how to promote a new educational workshop for new mothers. Steve wanted to suggest writing a news story to go in the hospital personnel newsletter. He thought if hospital staff knew about the workshop they could tell patients about it. But Steve felt uncomfortable offering a suggestion. There were many adults at the meeting that he didn't know and he felt shy. Finally, the sub-committee

chairpersons gave updates on their work and spent 15 minutes figuring out when sub-committee members would have time to meet next week to discuss new issues. Steve served on the marketing sub-committee, but nobody asked when he was available to attend a sub-committee meeting.

The board meeting was really boring. The only good things about the meeting, Steve thought, were the snacks and seeing the other three youth members again. He thought they seemed nice.

## Activity Questions

1. In what ways do youth members in each scenario participate on the advisory board?
2. How do you think youth members in each scenario feel about their involvement on the board? Why?
3. How do you think adults in each scenario feel about young people on the board? Why?
4. What are the characteristics/practices unique to your team that may enable and/or hinder youth participation on the team?
5. What steps will your team implement to change team characteristics that hinder youth participation?
6. Who is responsible for implementing the steps? What time frame is appropriate for each step?

## Find youth who “fit” your team.





*Objectives: (1) To establish and promote clearly defined roles for youth members. (2) To select young people with qualities that meet the unique needs of your team.*

Youth members will transition into their new roles smoothly when their roles have been clearly defined and explained to them from the beginning. Before recruiting young people, adults may want to first review the roles and responsibilities of adult team members and examine team by-laws. Then, adjustments can be made for youth member positions. For example, will young people serve on the team for the same amount of time as adults? Will young people have the same voting privileges on the team as adults? Will young people serve as a chair or co-chair of a subcommittee as do adults? Reaching a decision on these issues will provide a starting point from which to create a youth member job description.


Just like adults, young people have vastly different skills, talents, and personalities. Thus, seek out young people that best fit the team and the tasks to be performed. Selecting young people for team member positions simply because of their

age would be a mistake. Take time to recruit youth who possess skills that match your team’s needs to greatly impact the future success of your team. Discuss with the team the following steps to recruit youth members. Which are appropriate action items for your team to take?

### Skills Needed by Young People



-  Consider the skills needed by youth members to complete tasks. Keep in mind that for young people this is a learning experience. Adults play the role of guide and coach as young people acquire new skills and talents.
-  The most important skills to look for when selecting young people may be commitment, motivation, and a passion for the team’s mission.


### Responsibilities of Youth Members


-  Identify tasks for youth members to complete. These tasks should represent the variety of operational functions the team performs to achieve its overall goals and objectives. For example, youth members can provide input at meetings, assist with planning team events, correspond with community partners, promote


team programs and functions to others, serve as a committee co-chair, and assist with fundraisers. Remember that the tasks should be appropriate for the age of the youth such that youth ages 12-14 will need much more support for completing tasks than youth ages 15-18.


### Recruitment Process


-  Solicit recommendations from school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, coaches, and staff) local youth-service organizations (e.g., 4-H, Y.M.C.A., and Boys & Girls Club), and church groups. In some cases the team may already have a relationship with one or more of these entities. In other cases this may be the beginning step to forming a new relationship with these organizations.
-  Instead of limiting recruitment to well known youth leaders, club officers, and honor roll students, seek out young people with potential leadership qualities that show a real interest and may have more time to be involved than young people that are heavily engaged in extracurricular activities.


 Recruit young people in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade who will be able to serve as team members for 3-4 years.


 Broaden the search by advertising the youth member position in the local media and posting flyers at popular youth hang-outs.


 Add diversity to the team's composition by selecting young people from under-represented groups (*e.g., ethnicity, gender, and geographic location*).


 Create a short application for young people to complete (*see example p. 9-10*).


 Provide interested young people and their parent(s) with a description of the team and the roles young people will have on the team (*see example p. 11*).


 Form a selection committee to review applications, interview young people, and select youth members.

 During the interview discuss the young person's unique talents, skills, passions, priorities, and goals.

 Select young people that best fit the team and the youth member roles. Give potential youth members the opportunity to think it over before they accept or not.

 Mail letters to all of the young people who were interested in the position to inform them of the team's decision. The letter should include a list of the young person's strengths and weaknesses which will prepare them for future interviews.

 Remind the parent(s) of their child's roles and responsibilities as a youth member of the team in a welcome letter. Include contact information for their child's adult mentor.

 Create a letter of commitment to be signed by the youth member, adult mentor, and team leader that clearly states roles, expectations, and responsibilities (*see example p. 12*).

## Section 2 Team Activity

- Complete the youth member job description and want ad activity and discuss activity questions (p. 13-14).

## Youth Member Application Example

Please fill out and return to <address> by <date>.

### Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the preferred way to contact you?  Phone  Email

### School Information

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

List involvement in school clubs and activities below:

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### Team Involvement Information

What days and times (*write under each day*) are you available to meet?

Monday      Tuesday      Wednesday      Thursday      Friday      Saturday

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have your own transportation to and from meetings and special events?  Yes  No  Sometimes

What forms of team involvement would interest you now or in the future (*check all that apply*)?

Now      Future      Unsure

- |                          |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participate in meetings   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participate in committee meetings                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Co-chair committee meetings   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attend special events   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Assist planning special events  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Write marketing material for the team ( <i>such as news stories</i> ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Develop and/or maintain the team website                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Promote the team and program to others in the community               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recruit volunteers and program participants                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____   |

### Personal Information (*Use additional paper if necessary*)

Why do you want to serve <team name> as a team member?

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**Youth Member Application Example (CON'T)**

What skills will you bring to the team as a team member?

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Describe one youth or community issue that concerns you that the team may be able to address.

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With what other organizations or groups have you volunteered and what was your role?

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Please include anything else you would like us to know about you.

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**Personal References** *(who are not family members)*

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____

## Community Team & Youth Member Description Example

### What does the PROSPER team do in our community?

PROSPER stands for PROMoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience. The team meets monthly to coordinate prevention programs. A family-based and a school-based prevention program are offered to middle school youth and their families. To prepare for the success of these programs, team members:

- Promote prevention programs to the community.
- Solicit donations and funds to support prevention programs.
- Recruit eligible students and families into the prevention programs.
- Prepare for prevention program sessions by securing program facilitators, activity supplies, family meals, and participation incentives.
- Evaluate the success of the prevention programs.
- Publicize the impact of prevention programs to community leaders and residents.

### How does PROSER benefit our community?

Through their work in the community the PROSPER team plans to:

- Help family members respect and support each other.
- Teach life skills to youth that promote healthy life styles.
- Help youth seek positive activities through their school and community.
- Help youth recognize behaviors that may not only destroy opportunities for them but also be destructive to their families and community.

### Who is involved with PROSPER?

The PROSPER team relies on the involvement of its many team members to provide direction in coordinating the prevention programs. Team members are:

- Cooperative Extension Educators
- School personnel
- Family counselors
- Law enforcement
- Clergy
- Community leaders
- Concerned parents
- High school youth

### What will my child do as a PROSPER team member?

Adults on the PROSPER team recognize the value of including young people on the team. Young people bring energy and a fresh perspective to the team's work. Most importantly, younger youth often times look up to their older peers as role models. As such, the PROSPER team recruits 2 high school youth to join the team and promote the team's work to their younger peers. Youth members also:

- Participate in team meetings by providing input and ideas regarding team decisions.
- Promote prevention programs to middle school students by talking to classrooms and staffing information booths at school events.
- Assist prevention program facilitators during program sessions (*helping with the family meal, taking pictures, preparing activity supplies*).
- Attend team trainings and special events.

## Letter of Commitment Example

Youth member name: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth member term is from: \_\_\_\_\_ <date> \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ <date> \_\_\_\_\_

Name of adult mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**The <team > will provide the following to <youth> throughout his/her term:**

- Respect your opinions and ideas.
- Engage you in meaningful activities that provide you with opportunities to learn and use new skills.
- Relay important information to you in a timely manner.
- Upon successful completion of your term the team leader will prepare a letter of recommendation for you.

**<Youth> agrees to complete the following throughout his/her term:**

- Complete the term agreed upon above which may average \_\_\_\_\_ hours per month.
- Attend meetings regularly and provide suggestions, ideas, and opinions to the team.
- Serve on one or more sub-committees.
- Assist other team members with the planning and coordination of special events.
- Work to promote the team's mission and programs to others in the community.
- Help the team to define, monitor, and reflect on the implementation of our mission statement.
- Work with other team members on fundraising activities.

The <team> understands that scheduling conflicts with meetings and/or special events may occur throughout <youth>'s term. When necessary, <youth> will inform the team of his/her scheduling conflicts by notifying his/her mentor ahead of time. <Mentor> is responsible for keeping <youth> aware of team issues through regular correspondence. If conflicts between <youth> and <mentor> arise and cannot be resolved either person may come to <team leader> to discuss the issue further.

---

Signature of youth member

Date

---

Signature of adult mentor

Date

---

Signature of team leader

Date



## Team Activity

### Youth Member Job Description and Want Ad

#### Purpose

- (1) To clearly define the role of youth members on your team by writing a job description.
- (2) To create a want ad that appeals to young people to be used as flyers and announcements in newspapers.

#### Time

Approximately 55-60 minutes (2-5 minutes to introduce and explain the activity; 25-30 minutes to complete the activity; 10 minutes to discuss the job descriptions and want ads with the large group; 15 minutes to discuss the activity questions).

#### Supplies

Job description and want ad handout  
Flip chart and paper  
Markers

#### Directions

1. Break into small groups of 3-5 people.
2. Complete the job description handout by answering all of the questions.
3. Use the completed job description to create want ad examples.
4. Come together as a large group to share completed job descriptions and want ads.
5. As a large group discuss the activity questions.

## Youth Member Job Description

What is the formal title of the role?

---

What is the general purpose of the role?

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What will be the duties and responsibilities of the youth members?

---

What are the estimated time requirements of the youth members?

---

What are the anticipated travel requirements of the youth members?

---

What are the skills and competencies that youth members should possess to be successful in their roles (write down both general and preferred)?

---

What types of training opportunities will be available for the youth members?

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What are the benefits of participating on the team as a youth member?

---

Will youth members be reimbursed for expenses? If so, identify for what and how much.

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Who may be contacted for more information?

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How shall young people apply for the position?

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What is the selection process?

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How will young people be notified of the team's decision?

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When is the application deadline?

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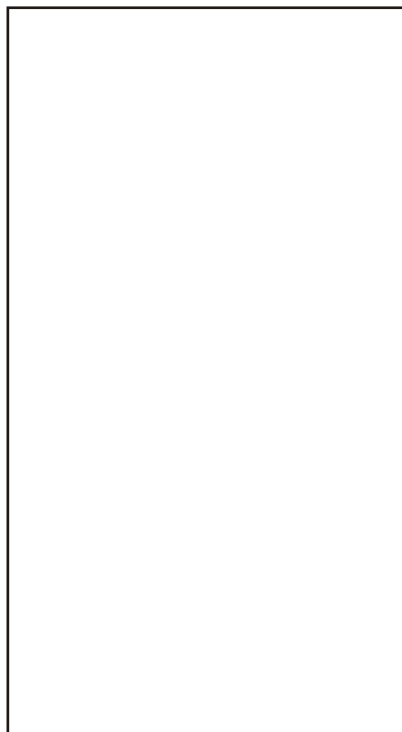
# Youth Member Want Ad

Use the space below to create a flyer to be posted at popular youth hangouts.



Use the space below to create newspaper advertisements with text and pictures.

*For the local newspaper.*



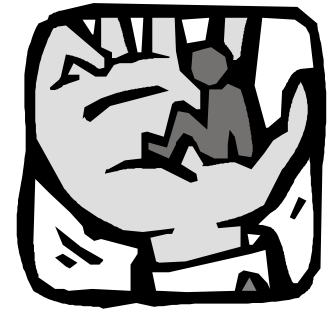
*For the school newspaper.*



## Activity Questions

1. What types of skills, resources, and diversity are currently represented by existing team members? If gaps exist, how can youth members potentially fill those gaps?
2. How is the youth member job description similar to and different from the adult member job description? What are the reasons for the differences?
3. In addition to the local newspaper, where else can the want ad be placed?
4. Where does the team plan to post flyers so that they are visible to a large number of young people?
5. What other types of marketing strategies can be used to announce the youth member position?

## Support and maintain youth on your team.





*Objective: To sustain youth members' interest and involvement in team functions by preparing them for their roles and providing challenging tasks.*

Adults can help sustain youth engagement by providing youth members with meaningful roles on the team. For example, youth members can work on specific tasks or projects. These tasks should be important to the overall mission of the community team. One rule of thumb is that if you as an adult are not willing to complete the task, then do not expect a youth to do it. However, in community teamwork there are often tasks that need to be accomplished that are important to the team's mission but are not challenging (e.g., *stuffing envelopes*). Adult and youth team members should tackle these tasks together as opposed to only asking the youth to complete them. In working at these tasks together, adults are demonstrating their commitment to the team and setting an example for the youth.



Youth can also provide input in the decision-making process and fill leadership roles such as co-chair of a committee. When given increasing amounts of responsibility over time, young people

are more likely to stay involved. Remember that the tasks should be appropriate for the age of the youth such that youth ages 12-14 will need more support for completing tasks than youth ages 15-18. Discuss with the team the following steps to recruit youth members. Which are appropriate action items for your team to take?




### Orientation

-  Orient youth member to the team by discussing the team's mission, history, services, and organizational structure. Also discuss the roles and responsibilities of other team members.
-  Arrange informal get-togethers for team members as a way to build relationships among all members and provide each other support.



### Team Meeting Format

-  Honor young people's time and availability, which may fluctuate due to other commitments (e.g., *school activities and work*). However, the group should lay out a standard number of meetings that all members are required to make to be on the team such as 75%.
-  Make meetings interactive through ice-breakers, small group discussions, go-arounds (*a question is asked and each person around the table states their answer or idea*), and

team-building activities (see *example p. 17-18*). This will not only keep young people engaged but it will assist the adults in staying motivated.

-  New youth members may feel uncomfortable giving their opinions in a large group. Adults can bring young people into the discussion by asking them specific questions about the topic.
-  Explain technical jargon and acronyms to youth members during meetings.
-  Establish a review time at the end of meetings for the team to reflect on discussions, issues, and tasks to be completed before the next meeting.

### Mentoring Roles

-  Send out multiple reminders to youth members regarding team meetings and events (e.g., *postcards, email, and phone calls*). Also, consider asking parents if they have an email account and, if so, would they like to be included on email reminders.
-  Have the mentors set aside time before meetings to discuss the agenda with youth members and answer any questions that they may have.

Following the meetings, adult mentors can discuss with youth members how the meeting went and elaborate on ideas that youth members may have expressed during the meeting.



When needed, adult mentors may want to plan for regular phone calls with the youth member they are mentoring to find out how tasks are progressing and if the youth needs help in completing tasks.



Invite young people out for lunch, ice-cream, or coffee to build relationships outside of team meetings. Adult mentors can do this also to establish ongoing, open communication.



Provide youth members with access to office equipment or other resources when needed.

## Training



Provide regular training opportunities for youth members (*e.g., leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, communication skills, and fundraising*) (see training resources in Appendix B). At the very least, have a skill development retreat for youth members before they join the team or shortly thereafter.



Provide regular training opportunities for adults and young people to work together.



As current youth members come to the end of their term or plan to end their involvement with the team, ask them to recommend another young person to join the team. If time permits, the current youth members can train incoming youth members.

## Section 3 Team Activity

- Complete the web of support for youth members activity and discuss activity questions (p. 19).

## Teambuilding Activity Examples<sup>2</sup>

### Human Pretzel

#### Purpose

- (1) To warm up a new group and break down their inhibitions about working together.
- (2) To provide an opportunity for participants to work as a team and explore the dimensions of teamwork.

#### Supplies

None

#### Time

Approximately 15 minutes (10 minutes to complete the activity and 5 minutes to discuss questions).

#### Directions

1. Divide the group into teams of 6-8 people. Have each team move to a location that allows them to stand in a small circle.
2. Instruct members of each team to extend their left hands across the circle and grasp the left hand of members who are approximately opposite them. Then have them extend their right hands across the circle and grasp the right hands of other people.
3. Inform the teams that their task is to unravel the spider web of interlocking arms without letting go of anyone's hands. They either will be timed (as a way to put pressure on them), or they will be competing with other groups to see who finishes the task first.

#### Questions

1. What was your first thought when you heard the directions?
2. What member behaviors detracted (or could have detracted) from the team's success in achieving its goal?
3. What lessons does this exercise have for future team building?

### Spider Web

#### Purpose

- (1) To understand the value of having a team to work on a problem.
- (2) To get at commonalities among team members.

#### Supplies

1 length of nylon clothes-line or rope (about 8-10 feet for each person in the group)

#### Time

Approximately 15 minutes (10 minutes to complete the activity and 5 minutes to discuss questions).

#### Directions

1. Have a group of about 10-15 people stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder.
2. The facilitator holds a ball of rope and keeps one end in his/her hands.
3. The facilitator asks for someone who also has a birthday in April, likes pineapples, has their driver's license and throws to someone who shares that characteristic with him/her.
4. As each person gets the rope, he/she thinks of a characteristic and throws the rope to a person with a like characteristic.
5. By the end, the web will be strong enough so that one team member may lie on it.

#### Questions

1. Could you have done this with only 2 people? Or 3 people?
2. How many people would it have taken to make the web strong enough from someone to lie on?
3. What is the message this activity has for us as a team?

### Crocodile Mile

#### Purpose

- (1) To have teams solve a problem.

#### Supplies

7 rectangular pieces of construction paper (8 1/2" x 11") for every team of 6 people

Duct tape

#### Time

Approximately 15 minutes (10 to complete the activity and 5 minutes to discuss the questions).

#### Directions

1. Lay the construction paper in a row with about 1' between each and tape to the floor.
2. Have one team member stand on each square, leaving the 7th one empty.
3. The goal is to completely reverse the order in which people are standing on the squares, putting the first person on the square that had been empty in the beginning. Only one person may be on a given square at a time. No touching the ground off the

<sup>2</sup> The Second Mile (personal communication, March 15, 2005).

squares, or the crocodiles will get you (*and you will have to begin again*).

### Questions

1. How well did you do as a team?
2. What was the key to solving the problem?
3. What have we learned about how we work as a team?

## Jenga™ with A Twist

### Purpose

- (1) To introduce the idea that one team member can influence, in negative ways, the work of the entire group.

### Supplies

One Jenga™ game for every 5-8 participants

Jenga™ is a popular game found at most department stores. It is made up of small wooden blocks that build on top of each other to construct a large block tower.

### Time

Approximately 15 minutes (10 minutes to complete the activity and 5 minutes to discuss the questions).

### Directions

1. Divide a large group into smaller teams of 5-8 individuals.
2. Provide each group with a Jenga™ game, set up in the tower, as described in the game directions.
3. Have team members sitting in a close circle, holding hands and keeping their eyes closed. Without letting other team members know, select one team member who will act as a saboteur (*tap on shoulder*).

4. The team's task is to build a tower as high as possible, using all the blocks. However, one of the team members is to secretly attempt to sabotage the work of the group.

### Questions

1. Who sabotaged the team work and how?
2. Where you surprised at who it was?
3. What does this activity tell us about how teams work?

## Group Sit

### Purpose

- (1) To warm up a group and demonstrate the need for teamwork and problem solving skills.
- (2) To demonstrate the concept that a team is only as strong as each individual team member.

### Supplies

None

### Time

Approximately 5-8 minutes (5 minutes to complete the activity and 3 minutes to discuss questions).

### Directions

1. Have the group stand in a very tight circle with their right shoulders in toward the Center of the circle. Before beginning the next step, be sure the circle is round and tight!
2. Instruct participants to place both hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them.
3. On a count of three, have participants sit down onto the knees of the person behind them. This has to be done all at once, or there will be a major collapse.
4. Congratulate the group on their teamwork!

### Questions

1. What team member behaviors helped with the group's success?
2. If problems occurred before the group was successful, how did team members work together to correct the problem and ensure it did not happen when the group tried again?
3. What does this activity tell you about effective teamwork?

## Section 3 Team Activity

### Web of Support for Youth Members

#### Purpose

- (1) To identify the ways in which adult team members support and encourage youth members over time.

#### Time

Approximately 20 minutes (2-3 minutes to introduce and explain the activity; 10 minutes to complete the activity; and 6-7 minutes to discuss activity questions).

#### Supplies

Large, round ball of thick yarn

Flip chart and paper

Markers

Soft ball or balloon (*shape and size may vary*)

#### Directions

1. Stand up and form a circle that includes all team members. Make sure that there is nothing to interfere with the activity in the middle of the circle, it should be open space.
2. One person agrees to act as a recorder and stands next to the flip chart paper.
3. The facilitator holds the round ball of thick yarn in his/her hands. To begin the activity, the facilitator holds one end of the thick yarn in one hand and throws the round ball of yarn to a member on the opposite side of the circle with the other hand.

4. While throwing the ball of yarn to someone else, the facilitator shouts out a way in which he/she supports youth members over time.
5. The recorder writes down the answer on the flip chart paper.
6. The person catching the ball of yarn will then pinch a piece of the yarn with one hand and prepare to throw it to another member on the opposite side of the circle with the other hand. This person will also state a way in which he/she supports youth members over time.
7. Steps five and six are repeated until each member has caught and thrown the ball of yarn or all ideas have been mentioned.
8. The facilitator then throws a soft ball or balloon over the "web" of yarn.
9. The group watches how long the ball is supported by the web of yarn. This visual picture of the web of yarn and the ball is a metaphor for supporting youth engagement efforts on a community team. How extensive is your team's web of support for youth engagement?

## Activity Questions

1. How do adults demonstrate their willingness to share power with young people?
2. What types of activities will be planned to build relationships among youth and adult team members?
3. What leadership opportunities exist on the team for youth members?
4. In what ways do youth (*and adult*) members receive regular, positive feedback and encouragement?
5. What ways to support youth on teams were most and least commonly listed by team members?


## Utilize evaluation to strengthen your team's efforts to involve youth.




*Objectives: (1) To formally assess youth engagement efforts on the team through surveys, interviews, or other evaluation methods. (2) To assertively address problems if they arise.*




Include an evaluation component of your team's youth engagement efforts to provide opportunities for adult and youth members to reflect on their experiences working together. Such discussions can help identify strengths, needs, and also concerns of team members. Topics of interest include achievements, new skills learned, changes in perceptions and attitudes, and issues to be addressed in the future. Teams should plan for regular evaluation activities throughout the year. Discuss the following steps to evaluate youth engagement on your team with team members. Which are appropriate action items for your team to take?

### How to Evaluate



-  Develop a survey or an interview instrument to gather information from adult and youth members regarding their experience working together and things they would like to see improved upon in the future (see example p. 22).

Address issues brought up in the survey or interview with an appropriate response. Respect a youth's privacy by not placing him or her on the spot by focusing attention on the issue during a group meeting. A one-on-one conversation between the mentor and youth member may provide a safer context for discussion. 

### Resolving issues if they arise


-  Establish a protocol for youth members to voice concerns or frustrations, resolving issues if they arise.
-  Investigate whether the issue is the result of the team's infrastructure (e.g., meeting time, lack of training opportunities, or youth members not receiving meeting updates), the result of interpersonal relationships (e.g., disagreements or low levels of support to the youth members by adults mentors) or a result of a youth member's low commitment level to his or her role.
-  If the issue is the result of the team's infrastructure discuss with team members possible changes to be made in the team's infrastructure to become more accommodating for youth engagement efforts. The youth engagement checklist may be a

tool to evaluate the team's infrastructure by answering the question "Are there strategies the team was doing in the past to support youth engagement that are no longer being done?" or "Are there strategies the team could be doing to support youth engagement that are in specific areas identified as weak by the checklist?"






-  If the issue is the result of the interpersonal relationship between a youth member and the adult mentor the team leader should set aside time to talk separately with the team members involved to understand the issue better. Then, the team leader can schedule a time to talk with the team members together in an effort to resolve the issue by employing conflict-resolution skills (e.g., controlling emotions, identifying the problem, explaining feelings using I statements, listening, discussing alternatives, and reaching a compromise).
-  If the team members agree to work out the issue, the team leader may consider asking each person to list the steps they can take in the next few weeks or months to prevent the issue from arising again.



The team leader should check in with the team members periodically following this discussion to ensure that each member feels comfortable with the results. However, if the issue between the youth member and the adult mentor can not be resolved the team leader may want to consider dissolving the relationship and asking another adult member to serve as a mentor for the youth member.

 If the issue is a result of a youth member's low commitment level to his or her role, the team leader may want to ask the youth member to re-evaluate his or her role on the team and his or her commitment level to the team by reviewing the letter of commitment (*see example p. 12*). If the commitment level of the youth member has declined, for whatever reason (*e.g., sports, work, and/or change of interests*), it may be appropriate for the team leader to dissolve their role as a team member for not adhering to the agreed upon letter of commitment.

## Recognizing Youth Members' Contributions

-  Just as you would recognize adult members for their contributions, it is important to recognize youth members publicly for their accomplishments and contributions to the team.
-  Let the community know the benefits of including young people on the team and the accomplishments youth members have made (*e.g., stories in the newspaper*).
-  Inform school personnel of youth members' contributions to the team, especially if young people are excused from class to attend team meetings.
-  In addition to recognizing youth members for their accomplishments, send a note to parents when their child has contributed in a special way. A simple note home is a powerful way to recognize a youth.
-  Develop a process for young people to share with other young people their experiences on the team.

## Section 4 Team Activities

- Complete the youth engagement checklist with spider web evaluation activity and discuss activity questions (p. 23-26).
- Complete the team eco-map activity and discuss activity questions (p. 27-28).

## Survey Instrument Example

On a scale from 1 to 5 please circle the number that best describes your experience on the community team where 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always. There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to know about your experiences on the team.

Statements	Never	Some of the Time	About half the Time	Most of the Time	Always
1. My opinions and ideas are respected by adults on the team.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When possible, my ideas are used by adults on the team.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Team meetings occur at a time that fits with my schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Team meetings are held at a location that is easy for me to get to.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I complete tasks that help the team reach its goals.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The tasks I complete allow me to use new skills.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Team meetings are interactive to prevent boredom.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can participate in leadership roles on the team ( <i>committee co-chair, etc</i> ).	1	2	3	4	5
9. The team provides me with training opportunities to improve my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I need help, I know that adults are willing to assist me.	1	2	3	4	5
11. If I miss a meeting an adult calls me to check in.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel 'in the loop' about team issues.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I would like to have more leadership roles on the team.	1	2	3	4	5
14. During the team meetings I feel comfortable being myself.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I would like to be more involved, but other commitments stop me.	1	2	3	4	5
16. What I like best about my involvement on the team is:					
17. What I've learned through my involvement on the team is:					
18. Adults could improve their support of youth engagement by:					
19. One thing I would change if I could would be:					
20. If I were to recruit new youth members, I would tell them:					

## Section 4 Team Activity

### Youth Engagement Checklist with Spider Web Evaluation

#### Purpose

- (1) To identify current steps conducted by the team to support youth engagement on the team.
- (2) To identify those steps currently not conducted by the team to support youth engagement.
- (3) To identify suggested steps that are feasible for the team to implement.

#### Time

Approximately 30 minutes (2-3 minutes to introduce and explain the activity; 20 minutes to complete the activity; and 6-7 minutes to discuss the activity with the large group).

#### Supplies

Youth engagement checklist with spider web

#### Directions

1. Each team member fills out the youth engagement checklist.
2. Next to each step, check one of the three boxes: yes = regularly, future = will work on in the future, no = not feasible.
3. After completing the checklist add up the response columns within each section.
4. On the spider web mark an X on the line representing the number of yes responses checked in the corresponding sections—team readiness,

recruitment, support, and evaluation.

5. Use lines to connect the Xs.
6. Reflect on high and low areas of the spider web.

### Activity Questions

1. Are there current team functions with which youth members are not involved? What are the reasons? If appropriate, how can young people be included?
2. In what ways can youth members voice their concerns and frustrations about their experience? How are those concerns and frustrations addressed by the team?
3. What have adults learned from youth? What have youth learned from adults?
4. How has the team benefitted from youth engagement?
5. In what ways does the team spread the word about the benefits of youth engagement to the community?

Adapted by Scheve, J. A., & Perkins, D. F (April, 2005) from: Perkins, D. F & Borden L. M. (April, 2003). Spider web analysis for youth program. University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension. Contact information for Perkins is [dfp102@psu.edu](mailto:dfp102@psu.edu).

## Youth Engagement Checklist

For each of the statements indicate if: yes our team does this regularly, future a team goal is to do this in the future, or no it is not feasible for the team to do this now or in the future.

### READINESS

	Yes	Future	No
1. Create a purpose statement as to why the team wants to engage young people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Amend by-laws to acknowledge young people as full team members with voting privileges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Schedule meetings in the after-school hours thereby eliminating the time conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Work with school personnel to excuse youth from school to attend team meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Hold meetings on or close to school grounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Establish more than one youth member position.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Select an adult mentor for each youth member.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Commit funds to the budget to allow for trainings, transportation, supplies, and conference registration fees for all members, including youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Reimburse youth for the cost of gas or bus/tax fares to get to meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Provide youth with money in advance to cover for expenses related to team functions (e.g., trainings, registration, and travel).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Total check marks per column for team readiness:</b>		/	/

### RECRUITMENT

	Yes	Future	No
11. Consider specific skills needed by youth members (e.g., writing, public speaking, and responsibility).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Select youth with commitment, motivation, and a passion for the team's mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Identify tasks for youth members to complete that represent a variety of the team's operational functions (e.g., provide input at meetings, plan events, promote programs to the public, serve as a committee co-chair, and assist with fundraising).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Solicit recommendations for youth members from a variety of community sources (e.g., school, youth-service organizations, and religious groups).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. In addition to current youth leaders, recruit youth with potential leadership qualities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Recruit youth in the 9th and 10th grades to allow youth to serve multiple years before graduating.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Advertise youth member positions in local media and at popular youth hang-outs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Select youth from underrepresented groups (e.g., ethnicity, gender, and geographic location).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Create a membership application for youth to complete.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Provide interested youth and their parents with a job description.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Form a selection committee to review applications, interview youth, and select youth members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Discuss youth's talents, skills, passions, priorities, and goals during the interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Select youth that best fit the team and youth member role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Mail letters to all of the youth who were interested in the position to inform them of the team's decision. In the letter, include strengths and weaknesses of their interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Remind youth members' parents of their child's roles and responsibilities by sending them a welcome letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Create a letter of commitment to be signed by youth members, mentors, and team leaders that clearly state the youth's roles, expectations, and responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Total check marks per column for recruitment:</b>		/	/

## Youth Engagement Checklist (CONT)

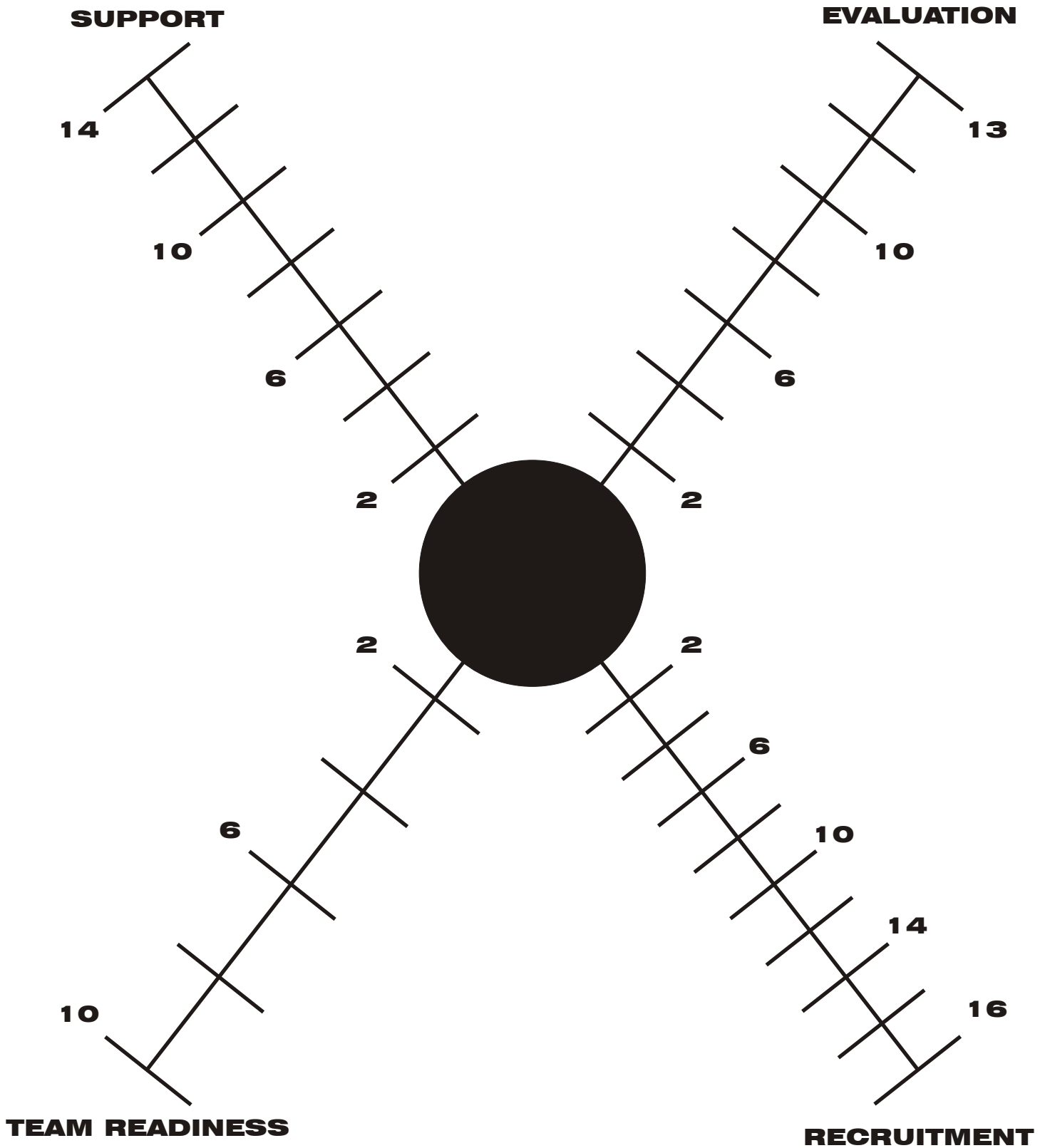
### SUPPORT

	Yes	Future	No
27. Provide an orientation for youth members that covers the team's mission, history, services, and organizational structure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Arrange informal get-togethers for team members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Understand that youth members' time may fluctuate throughout the year due to other commitments and be flexible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Make meetings interactive with ice-breakers, go-arounds, and teambuilding activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Ask youth specific questions about their opinions on a topic during meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Explain technical jargon and acronyms during meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Establish a review time at the end of team meetings for the team to reflect on discussions, issues, and tasks to be completed before the next meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Send out multiple reminders to youth about meetings and special events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Set aside time before and after meetings to reflect with youth about the agenda, their ideas, and tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Contact youth members through quick phone calls to see how tasks are progressing and if they need help to complete tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. Invite youth out for lunch, coffee, or ice-cream to build a relationship outside of team setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. Provide regular training opportunities for youth ( <i>e.g., problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, communication skills, and fundraising</i> ).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. Provide regular training opportunities for adults and young people to work together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. Have current youth members train incoming youth members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Total check marks per column for support:</b>		/ /	

### EVALUATION

	Yes	Future	No
41. Develop a survey or an interview instrument to gather information from adult and youth members regarding their perceptions of the experience of working together and areas for improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. Address issues brought up in the survey or interview with an appropriate response.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. Establish a protocol for youth members to voice concerns of frustrations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. If issues arise, investigate the source of the issue ( <i>team infrastructure, interpersonal relationship, or member commitment level</i> ).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. Use the checklist as a way to assess team infrastructure issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. Use conflict resolution skills to resolve interpersonal relationship issues between youth members and adult mentors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47. Ask youth members and adult mentors to write a list of steps they'll take to prevent issues from reoccurring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48. Use the letter of commitment to re-evaluate youth members' role on the team and their commitment levels if necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49. Recognize youth members publicly for their accomplishments and contributions to the team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50. Let the community know the benefits of including young people on the team and the accomplishments youth members have achieved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51. Inform school personnel of youth members' contributions to the team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52. Send a note to parents when their child has contributed in a special way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53. Develop a process for young people to share with other young people their experiences on the team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Total check marks per column for evaluation:</b>		/ /	
<b>TOTAL CHECK MARKS FOR ALL COLUMNS:</b>		/ /	

**Youth Engagement Spider Web Evaluation**



## Section 4 Team Activity

### Create Team Eco-maps

#### Purpose

- (1) To identify the people and organizations associated with the team and the resources they bring to the team.
- (2) To understand the level of connection each member feels to the team and the reasons they feel connected or disconnected to the team.
- (3) To identify other organizations, businesses, or people in the community that may be involved with the team, but currently are not.

#### Time

Approximately 45-50 minutes (5 minutes to introduce and explain the activity; 25 minutes to complete the activity; and 15-20 minutes to discuss activity questions).

#### Supplies

Poster board  
(one for each person)

Glue sticks

Post-It notes  
(three different colors)

Square cut-outs (1 for each adult member on the team per poster of the same color)

Circle cut-outs (1 for each youth member on the team per poster of the same color)

Diamond cut-outs  
(1 or more per poster)

Star cut-outs (1 per poster)

Black sharpie's®  
(one per person)

Sample eco-map

To save time prepare a sandwich bag of supplies for each team member with:

- 1 sharpie;
  - 1 glue stick;
  - 3 different colored Post-It note pads
- A list of team members; and  
Enough cut-outs to complete the poster.

Another option is to use markers to draw the shapes onto the poster instead of using the cut-outs and glue.

#### Directions

1. On the square cut-outs write the name and organizational (*or other*) affiliation to the team of adult members. 1 name per square.
2. On circle cut-outs write the name of youth members. 1 name per circle.
3. Glue star in the middle of the poster. This represents the team.
4. Place members (*including self*) around the star. Distance from the star represents how connected or disconnected you feel to the team. For the other team members do not estimate their connection or distance to the team. Instead, just place them randomly around the star.
5. Glue pieces down on to the poster.
6. Draw lines connecting yourself to the team depending on how you feel towards the team.
  - a. A heavy solid line means you feel very connected to the team.
  - b. A dashed line means you feel somewhat connected to the team.
  - c. A dotted line means you feel disconnected to the team.
7. For youth members, draw lines connecting yourself to adult(s)

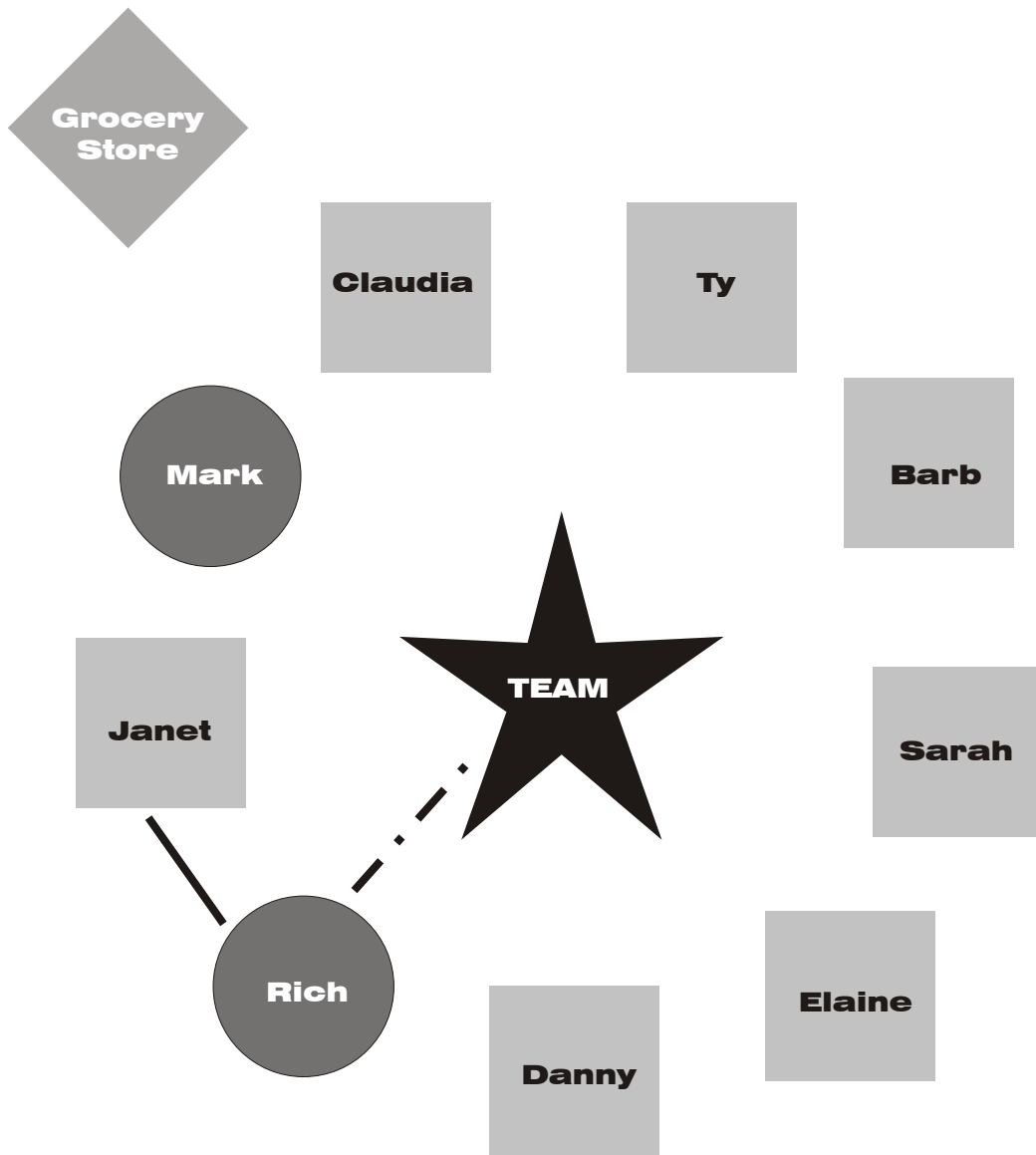
with whom you feel most connected.

- a. A heavy solid line means you feel very connected to the adult(s).
8. On one color of Post-It note, each member writes the resources he/she brings to the team.
  9. On the second color of Post-It note, each member writes reasons why he/she feels connected, somewhat connected, or disconnected to the team.
  10. For youth members, on the third color of Post-In note, write the reasons why you feel connected to the adult(s) which you identified.
  11. On diamond cut-out(s), each team member writes the name of businesses organizations, and/or people in his/her community not involved with the team currently, but could help the team in the future. 1 name per diamond(s).
  12. Glue diamond(s) around the perimeter of the poster.
  13. As a large group discuss the team eco-maps and the activity questions.

#### Activity Questions

1. Did team members list skills and/or resources that other team members were not aware of? If so, how can these skills be utilized by the team?
2. What role can the identified businesses organizations, and/or people have with the team?
3. Which team members would like to approach them to discuss establishing a partnership?

**Example Rich's Eco-map**



- Skills**
- Graphic design
  - Writing
  - Public speaking
  - Commitment
  - Caring
  - Dependable

- Somewhat Connected**
- Miss a lot of meetings.
  - Basketball season.

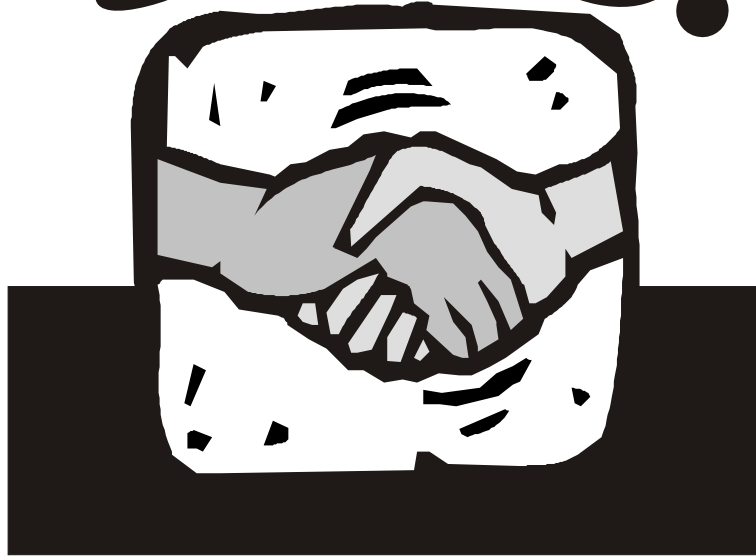
- Close to Janet**
- She calls me to check in.
  - She asks if I need help.
  - When I attend meetings, she asks for my ideas.

**LEGEND**

Star = team	—————	Connected
Circle = youth	- . - . -	Somewhat connected
Square = adult	.....	Disconnected
Diamond = business, organization, and/or people		
Rectangles = (1) skills, (2) dis/connection to team, (3) connection to adult(s)		



**Y.E.S.**



**APPENDIX A**  
**Section Handouts**

## Is your team ready to involve young people?



*Objectives: (1) To identify existing organizational barriers that may prevent young people from participating on the team as youth members. (2) To create an action plan that outlines the necessary steps towards removing organizational barriers.*

### **Team Structure**

- Be clear as to why young people are being asked to join the team by creating a purpose statement. Answer the question, “Why are youth needed on this team?”
- Amend by-laws to acknowledge young people as full members of the team with equal voting privileges as adults.
- Schedule meeting times in the after-school hours or work with school personnel to excuse youth members from class to attend meetings.
- Hold meetings on or close to the school grounds so that youth members can easily attend the meeting. This also allows youth members to miss the least amount of time if they are excused from school.

### **New Positions**

- Establish at least two youth member positions. Young people feel more comfortable when they have a peer present and it enables a broader range of opinions to be represented.

### **Roles for Adults**

- Select an adult mentor for each young person. Adult mentors provide support and help youth members throughout their involvement with team.
- Other adult members may coach youth by providing guidance on specific tasks. However, the majority of coaching should come from the mentor to be consistent.

### **Team Budget**

- Commit funds in the budget to cover such expenses as trainings, transportation, supplies, and conference registration fees for all members.
- Reimburse youth members for the cost of gas or bus/taxi fares to get to meetings.
- If youth members cannot cover costs associated with being a member of the team up-front, consider providing funds to cover the cost in advance.

## Find youth who “fit” your team.



*Objectives: (1) To establish and promote clearly defined roles for youth members. (2) To select young people with qualities that fit the unique needs of your team.*

### **Skills Needed by Young People**

- Consider the skills needed by youth members to complete tasks. Keep in mind that for young people this is a learning experience. Adults play the role of guide and coach as young people acquire new skills and talents.
- The most important skills to look for when selecting young people may be commitment, motivation, and a passion for the team’s mission.

### **Responsibilities of Youth Members**

- Identify tasks for youth members to complete. These tasks should represent the variety of operational functions the team performs to achieve its overall goals and objectives. For example, youth members can provide input at meetings, assist with planning team events, correspond with community partners, promote team programs and functions to others, serve as a committee co-chair, and assist with fundraisers. Remember that the tasks should be appropriate for the age of the youth such that youth ages 12-14 will need much more support for completing tasks than youth ages 15-18.

### **Recruitment Process**

- Solicit recommendations from school personnel (*e.g., teachers, counselors, coaches, and staff*) local youth-service organizations (*e.g., 4-H, Y.M.C.A., and Boys & Girls Club*), and church groups. In some cases the team may already have a relationship with one or more of these entities. In other cases this may be the beginning step to forming a new relationship with these organizations.
- Instead of limiting recruitment to well known youth leaders club officers and honor roll students, seek out young people with potential leadership qualities that show a real interest and may have more time to be involved than young people that are heavily engaged in extracurricular activities.
- Recruit young people in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade who will be able to serve as team members for 3-4 years.
- Broaden the search by advertising the youth member position in the local media and posting flyers at popular youth hang-outs.
- Add diversity to the team's composition by selecting young people from underrepresented groups (*e.g., ethnicity, gender, and geographic location*).
- Create a short application for young people to complete.
- Provide interested young people and their parent(s) with a description of the team and the roles young people will have on the team.

- Form a selection committee to review applications, interview young people, and select youth members.
- During the interview discuss the young person's unique talents, skills, passions, priorities, and goals.
- Select young people that best fit the team and the youth member roles. Give potential youth members the opportunity to think it over before they accept or not.
- Mail letters to all of the young people who were interested in the position to inform them of the team's decision. The letter should include a list of the young person's strengths and weaknesses which will prepare them for future interviews.
- Remind the parent(s) of their child's roles and responsibilities as a youth member of the team in a welcome letter. Include contact information for their child's adult mentor.
- Create a letter of commitment to be signed by the youth member, adult mentor, and team leader that clearly states roles, expectations, and responsibilities.

## Support and maintain youth on your team.



*Objective: To sustain youth members' interest and involvement in team functions by preparing them for their roles and providing challenging tasks.*

### **Orientation**

- Orient youth member to the team by discussing the team's mission, history, services, and organizational structure. Also discuss the roles and responsibilities of other team members.
- Arrange informal get-togethers for team members as a way to build relationships among all members and provide each other support.

### **Team Meeting Format**

- Honor young people's time and availability, which may fluctuate due to other commitments (*e.g., school activities and work*). However, the group should lay out a standard number of meetings that all members are required to make to be on the team such as 75%.
- Make meetings interactive through ice-breakers, small group discussions, go-arounds (*a question is asked and each person around the table states their answer or idea*), and teambuilding activities. This will not only keep young people engaged but it will assist the adults in staying motivated.
- New youth members may feel uncomfortable giving their opinions in a large group. Adults can bring young people into the discussion by asking them specific questions about the topic.
- Explain technical jargon and acronyms to youth members during meetings.
- Establish a review time at the end of meetings for the team to reflect on discussions, issues, and tasks to be completed before the next meeting.

### **Mentoring Roles**

- Send out multiple reminders to youth members regarding team meetings and events (*e.g., postcards, email, and phone calls*). Also, consider asking parents if they have an email account and, if so, would they like to be included on email reminders.
- Have the mentors set aside time before meetings to discuss the agenda with youth members and answer any questions that they may have. Following the meetings, adult mentors can discuss with youth members how the meeting went and elaborate on ideas that youth members may have expressed during the meeting.
- When needed, adult mentors may want to plan for regular phone calls with the youth member they are mentoring to find out how tasks are progressing and if the youth needs help in completing tasks.
- Invite young people out for lunch, ice-cream, or coffee to build relationships outside of team meetings. Adult mentors can do this also to establish ongoing, open communication.
- Provide youth members with access to office equipment or other resources when needed.

## **Training**

- Provide regular training opportunities for youth members (*e.g., leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, communication skills, and fundraising*). At the very least, have a skill development retreat for youth members before they join the team or shortly thereafter.
- Provide regular training opportunities for adults and young people to work together.
- As current youth members come to the end of their term or plan to end their involvement with the team, ask them to recommend another young person to join the team. If time permits, the current youth members can train incoming youth members.

## Utilize evaluation to strengthen your team's efforts to involve youth.



*Objectives: (1) To formally assess youth engagement efforts on the team through surveys, interviews, or other evaluation methods. (2) To assertively address problems if they arise.*

### **How to Evaluate**

- Develop a survey or an interview instrument to gather information from adult and youth members regarding their experience working together and things they would like to see improved upon in the future.
- Address issues brought up in the survey or interview with an appropriate response. Respect a youth's privacy by not placing him or her on the spot by focusing attention on the issue during a group meeting. A one-on-one conversation between the mentor and youth member may provide a safer context for discussion.
- Establish a protocol for youth members to voice concerns or frustrations.

### **Resolving Issues if they Arise**

- Investigate whether the issue is the result of the team's infrastructure (*e.g., meeting time, lack of training opportunities, or youth members not receiving meeting updates*), the result of interpersonal relationships (*e.g., disagreements or low levels of support to the youth members by adults mentors*) or a result of a youth member's low commitment level to his or her role.
- If the issue is the result of the team's infrastructure discuss with team members possible changes to be made in the team's infrastructure to become more accommodating for youth engagement efforts. The youth engagement checklist may be a tool to evaluate the team's infrastructure by answering the question “Are there strategies the team was doing in the past to support youth engagement that are no longer being done?” or “Are there strategies the team could be doing to support youth engagement that are in specific areas identified as weak by the checklist?”
- If the issue is the result of the interpersonal relationship between a youth member and the adult mentor the team leader should set aside time to talk separately with the team members involved to understand the issue better. Then, the team leader can schedule a time to talk with the team members together in an effort to resolve the issue by employing conflict-resolution skills (*e.g., controlling emotions, identifying the problem, explaining feelings using “I” statements, listening, discussing alternatives, and reaching a compromise*).
- If the team members agree to work out the issue, the team leader may consider asking each person to list the steps they can take in the next few weeks or months to prevent the issue from arising again. The team leader should check in with the team members periodically following this discussion to ensure that each member feels comfortable with the results. However, if the issue between the youth member and the adult mentor can not be resolved the team leader may want to consider dissolving the relationship and asking another adult member to serve as a mentor for the youth member.

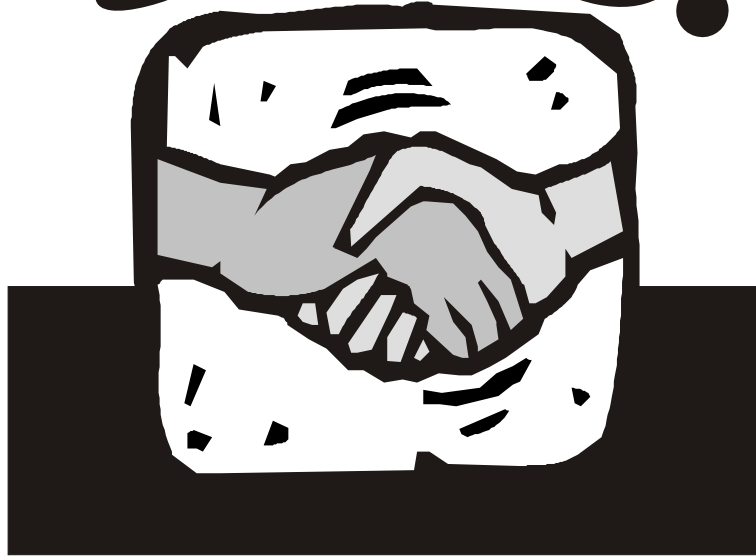
- If the issue is a result of a youth member's low commitment level to his or her role, the team leader may want to ask the youth member to re-evaluate his or her role on the team and his or her commitment level to the team by reviewing the letter of commitment. If the commitment level of the youth member has declined, for whatever reason (*e.g., sports, work, and/or change of interests*), it may be appropriate for the team leader to terminate their role as a team member for not adhering to the agreed upon letter of commitment.

## **Recognizing Youth Members' Contributions**

- Just as you would recognize adult members for their contributions, it is important to recognize youth members publicly for their accomplishments and contributions to the team.
- Let the community know the benefits of including young people on the team and the accomplishments youth members have made (*e.g., stories in the newspaper*).
- Inform school personnel of youth members' contributions to the team, especially if young people are excused from class to attend team meetings.
- In addition to recognizing youth members for their accomplishments, send a note to parents when their child has contributed in a special way. A simple note home is a powerful way to recognize a youth.
- Develop a process for young people to share with other young people their experiences on the team.



**Y.E.S.**



**APPENDIX B**  
**Additional Resources**

## Websites

### **At the Table**

<http://www.atthetable.org>

[info@atthetable.org](mailto:info@atthetable.org)

This is an interactive website where adults and young people can participate in online discussions, post their youth engagement success stories, complete opinion polls, and search through helpful resources. At the Table aims to connect individuals, organizations, and communities to the resources they need to successfully engage young people in decision-making opportunities; foster discussions among young people and adults regarding their youth engagement experiences; and collect the latest youth engagement resources for online distribution.

### **Youth Activism**

[www.youthactivism.com](http://www.youthactivism.com)

[info@youthactivism.com](mailto:info@youthactivism.com)

This site is a clearinghouse of information and resources for youth who want to make a difference and have a voice in issues that directly concern them. The site aims to prove that minors can play a major role in addressing community issues. The clearinghouse also provides help and information to parents, mentors, teachers, principals, policy-makers, and other adult allies who want to collaborate with youth to achieve positive community change.

### **The Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development**

[www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org)

[info@theinnovationcenter.org](mailto:info@theinnovationcenter.org)

The Center assists local organizations' capacity to engage young people through trainings, technical assistance, and other resources. In addition to providing assistance to practitioners, the Center conducts research and informs policymakers on youth and community development issues. Numerous publications and training material can be downloaded or ordered from the website.

### **Center for Youth as Resources**

<http://www.yar.org>

[yar@cyar.org](mailto:yar@cyar.org)

The Center promotes a program model to engage young people in service projects to improve their communities. Young people work in partnership with adults to address a community issue of their choice. Trainings are available to begin a Youth as Resources organization in your community. Additionally, the website provides links to other organizations regarding such topics as civic engagement, volunteering, and fundraising.

### **Community Partnerships with Youth**

<http://www.cpyinc.org>

[thejourneyemail@aol.com](mailto:thejourneyemail@aol.com)

CPY provides training and technical assistance on topics related to youth philanthropy, community youth development, youth adult partnerships, and positive youth development. A variety of curricula and training manuals can be ordered on their website.

### **The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement**

<http://www.tgmag.ca/centres>

[engagement@tgmag.ca](mailto:engagement@tgmag.ca)

With the help of young people, the centre conducts research on youth engagement and develops models of effective strategies to sustain youth engagement over time. The website has a searchable database that summarizes scholarly journal articles pertaining to youth engagement. Other resources found on the website include newsletter articles, workshops and presentations, and youth engagement program tools and models.

## Booklets

### **An Asset Builder's Guide to Youth Leadership**

Search Institute

[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

This publication provides an overview of 18 key concepts to consider when creating leadership opportunities for young people. The 40 developmental assets for positive youth development, established by the Search Institute, are weaved throughout the guide. The Search Institute turned the ideas of youth leadership into specific action steps through worksheets, questions to consider, ideas to try, and asset-building tips all components of the guide.

### **Youth-Adult Partnerships and Positive Youth Development**

4-H Youth Development

University of Wisconsin

[www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/)

The monograph provides a concise summary of the authors' research and application of youth-adult partnerships to address community needs. Implications for practice are discussed following the summaries of research findings.

### **14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making**

Youth on Board

[info@youthonboard.org](mailto:info@youthonboard.org)

### **Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships:**

#### **Training Curricula for Youth, Adults and Youth-Adult Teams**

National 4-H Council

301-961-2800

### **Youth Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual**

The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development

[Info@theinnovationcenter.org](mailto:Info@theinnovationcenter.org)

### **Youth in Governance**

Community Partnerships with Youth

[thejourneyemail@aol.com](mailto:thejourneyemail@aol.com)

### **Youth Leadership Development:**

#### **What Adults Working with Youth Need to Know**

The Pennsylvania State University

<http://pa4h.cas.psu.edu/Curricula/Leadership.html>

### **Shaping the future: Working Together, Changing Communities**

Hampton Youth Commission

[youthcom@hampton.gov](mailto:youthcom@hampton.gov)



**APPENDIX C**

**The Research Literature  
that is the Basis for the Resource Packet**

Opportunities for youth to be engaged in their communities, such as members of community teams, may support healthy youth development (Cahill, 1997; Hyman, 1999; Perkins, Borden, Keith, Hoppe-Rooney, & Villarruel, 2003). Providing such opportunities allow youth to contribute to their own development as well as the development of their communities (Curman & Hughes, 2002; Irby, et al., 2001; Perkins, et al., 2003). Such opportunities are stepping stones not only to a sense of belonging within a community (Cargo et al., 2003), but also to civic awareness and action (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003).

Youth engagement efforts on community teams embody the community youth development framework. As an outgrowth of positive youth development in which young people are viewed as resources, community youth development views youth as partners in social change (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Perkins and colleagues (2003) define community youth development as:

purposely creating environments that provide constructive, affirmative, and encouraging relationships that are sustained over time with adults and peers, while concurrently providing an array of opportunities that enable youth to build their competencies and become engaged as partners in their own development as well as the development of their communities (Perkins et al., 2003, p.6).

The community youth development framework views youth as active participants that can and should contribute to families, schools, organizations, and communities. Youth should not be thought of as future leaders, but rather as leaders of today who deserve a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities (Perkins, et al., 2003). Eccles and Gootman (2002) refer to such opportunities to make a difference in one's social environment as "mattering" (p. 103).

### **Examples of Youth Engagement on Community Teams**

The Seven Circles Coalition, which strives to prevent drug use among adolescents in southeastern Alaska, is a prime example of successful youth engagement within a community coalition (Wunrow & Einspruch, 2001). The coalition exists at two levels, local and regional. The local partnerships address prevention needs specific to their communities. The regional office provides training and technical assistance to the local partnerships. One key component of the coalition is to utilize a youth-adult partnership model to conduct prevention efforts for youth.

At the local level, adults within the coalition value the ideas and opinions of youth members and solicit their thoughts when developing prevention programs. In addition, the coalition allows youth members to take leadership roles in the development, implementation, and evaluation of these programs. For instance, in one community, youth and adults partnered together to open a teen center. Youth play an instrumental role in planning and leading center activities and fundraising efforts. In

another community, youth worked with adults to establish a skate board park. Initially, such tasks included securing buy-in from community residents, fundraising, designing, and constructing the park. After the skate park was built, youth formed a Skate Board to organize skill building clinics and competitions.

At the regional level, two paid youth positions exist to complement the three paid adult positions. Youth and adults work together to coordinate trainings and provide technical assistance to the community prevention partnerships. For example, the regional office organizes two large scale networking sessions each year, publishes the coalition newsletter, and offers trainings on program evaluation and sustainability.

Through experience, the Seven Circles Coalition learned some important steps to fully integrate youth into the organization. The steps included providing multiple trainings for youth and adults involved in youth-adult partnerships, supporting projects initiated by youth, creating paid youth positions, allowing youth to co-facilitate training sessions, and changing organizational policies and procedures to allow youth to be involved.

Another example of successful youth engagement within an organization includes the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of the John Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. The YAC provides valuable insight in the planning, promotion, and

implementation of community health initiatives (Hohenemser & Marshall, 2002). A mutually beneficial relationship exists between the Center's faculty members and YAC members. On one hand, faculty members rely on YAC members' ideas and feedback regarding the Center's work. Their suggestions help build awareness among faculty members regarding the health concerns and priorities of Baltimore's young people. On the other hand, membership in the YAC creates opportunities for young people to assume leadership roles, participate in training opportunities (e.g., time management and facilitation techniques), and organize specific projects for peers in their community.

The results achieved by the YAC did not develop without a supporting organizational culture that facilitated youth engagement efforts. First, the Center fostered an environment of respect and trust between adults and YAC members. Second, adults remained flexible when the YAC pursued new directions. Third, youth were provided snacks at meetings and reimbursement for bus fares or cab rides.

Reviewing the current literature examining youth engagement on community teams reveals four salient team qualities that facilitate successful participation of youth members. Foremost, it is crucial to have genuine adult support of youth engagement among members. Second, a youth-friendly environment is needed to encourage youth to be

fully engaged. Third, youth must be involved in meaningful tasks that advance a community team's goals. Finally, youth need opportunities to learn and use new skills that enable them to build competencies.

### **Adult Support**

The first step to engaging youth on community teams is to build support among adult members. A strong advocate of youth engagement may create an awareness of the need to include youth and foster consensus among the group (Checkoway, et al., 2003). Inviting youth to the table often requires a paradigm shift of how youth are viewed by adults. Traditionally, society has limited the roles available to youth (e.g., students, athletes, and consumers) (Camino & Zeldin, 2003). Contrary to those traditional roles, adults supportive of youth engagement provide youth access to an array of community roles including advisor, planner, decision-maker, implementer, and evaluator. The community youth development framework promotes such roles for young people which enable youth to work alongside adults to improve the quality of life in their communities (Curnan & Hughes, 2002).

Adults demonstrate support in a variety of ways. First, supportive adults display respect and equality when working with youth (Camino, 2002a). In other words, adults work with youth and not for youth. However, Camino (2000b) cautions that "being equal does not necessarily mean being the same" (p. 28). Adults and youth working together must acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of the other person. Youth have limited experience and resources to achieve goals on their own. They need guidance, assistance, and coaching from adults. Youth benefit

from adults who have a broad range of experiences and access to institutional power (Camino, 2000a; O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2002). Adults receive benefits from working in partnership with youth as well. They can feel re-energized by young people's enthusiasm and passion for a cause. Through their relationships with young people, adults may also be exposed to more nontraditional ideas resulting from young people's unique perspective. This partnership between youth and adults is based on mutuality, respect, and reciprocity (Hughes & Curnan, 2000); such a relationship is the foundation of community youth development.

Second, supportive adults clearly state expectations, responsibilities, and the time commitment required for youth to be engaged (Fiscus, 2003). Without such a clearly defined role, youth may become confused about their purpose and value to the team. To avoid this, adults can create a job description and review it with youth members. Third, supportive adults inform parents of their child's responsibilities as a member of the team and make themselves available when parents have questions or concerns (Bernard, 2004). Fourth, supportive adults encourage youth to fully participate during meetings by seeking their opinions or suggestions (Mueller, Wunrow, & Einspruch, 2000). Especially in the beginning, youth may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group. Therefore, it is essential for adults to ask youth specific questions during a meeting or talk with them

afterwards to get their opinions and answer questions. Finally, supportive adults regularly set aside time to reflect with youth (Kahne, Honig, & McLaughlin, 1998). To ensure that youth members receive these types of support throughout their involvement with the team, it may be necessary to identify an adult mentor for each youth member (Fiscus, 2003).

### **Youth-friendly Environment**

Adults committed to community youth development believe “young people are capable, competent members of society whose voices and opinions are valuable” (Yohalem, 2003, p. 376). To affirm such beliefs, adults need to create an environment of inclusion where youth feel welcomed and appreciated. In doing so, organizational barriers that may prevent youth from fully engaging need to be identified, acknowledged, and removed. Common barriers include transportation to and from meetings, meeting times and locations, and by-laws that restrict voting privileges (Young & Sazama, 1994). For example, Zeldin (2004) found that youth felt respected when adults made structural improvements that more fully allowed them to participate. One such youth “appreciated that the board changed the way it conducted board meetings to allow for more time in small groups, informal conversations, and other activities which gave youth time to build relationships” (p. 15). Addressing organizational

barriers that limit youth engagement may be the largest obstacle for a team to overcome. If adults remain flexible and committed to involving youth, then the organization and services it offers may greatly benefit.

In addition to eliminating organizational barriers, clear and ongoing communication between adults and youth is necessary (Mueller, et al., 2000). Throughout meetings, acronyms and technical jargon should be explained to prevent confusion and to foster an atmosphere of inclusiveness. Mueller and colleagues (2000) recommend inviting youth to speak first at team meetings to avoid feelings of intimidation that may discourage youth from asserting themselves as meetings progress. Solicitation of youth’s opinions and suggestions not only reaffirms adult support of youth engagement but also establishes a youth-friendly environment in which youth feel accepted. However, without listening to and acting on youth’s suggestions, youth engagement efforts may be weakened. Conversely, when youth feel their opinions are valued by the group, they are more likely to stay committed and involved (Fiscus, 2003).

### **Opportunities to Complete Meaningful Tasks**

Youth engagement efforts risk being devalued to tokenism, decoration, or even manipulation unless genuine opportunities exist for youth to participate in decision-making processes and complete meaningful tasks (Hart, 1992). In their work with youth-adult partnerships, Mueller and colleagues (2000) found that youth are more likely to remain engaged when given increasing amounts of developmentally-appropriate responsibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to give youth

time to learn and grow in their new roles. Depending on the age and skill-level, youth may perform small tasks before moving on to larger responsibilities.

An essential tenet in the community youth development framework is the transfer of skills between adults and youth (Lane, 1996). This takes place through appropriate guidance and coaching by adults (Camino, 2000a). Therefore, adults need to assist youth in their responsibilities, with their assistance decreasing as the skills of youth increase and they feel comfortable completing tasks on their own. In addition, adults need to create a community team where all members are held accountable to their commitments including youth (Mueller, et al., 2000). For example, adults may remind youth of approaching deadlines and request updates on their progress. After the completion of projects, adults should engage youth in a reflection process to analyze what went well and what could be improved upon in the future (Huebner, 1998). It is important that youth not be deterred by unexpected or disappointing outcomes. Instead, these become teachable moments in which youth learn how to take risks and “fail courageously” (Perkins & Borden, 2003, p. 334).

Youth engagement in meaningful tasks is most fruitful when the benefits extend beyond the individual and link him/her to the surrounding community (Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Hoisell, 2002). Therefore, the tasks youth perform should help the organization meet overall goals

and objectives. For example, the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and their Families trained and assisted youth in the evaluation of the city's youth-serving programs (Kirshner, O'Donoghue, & McLaughlin, 2002). The Youth Advisory Committee for the John Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health Promotion and Disease organized a weekend retreat for the city's youth to identify problems affecting youth and develop a plan of action (Hohenemser & Marshall, 2002). Such experiences build civic competency, social connectedness, and social responsibility among youth (Checkoway, et al., 2003).

### **Opportunities to Learn and Use New Skills**

The community youth development framework encourages the development of opportunities for youth to learn new skills and experience a sense of mastery and self-efficacy (Perkins, et al., 2003). Such opportunities exist for young people when they are engaged on community teams for sustained periods of time. Cargo and colleagues (2003) found that youth involved in a community health intervention experienced compromise, teamwork, cooperation, perspective-taking, and a breakdown of stereotypes through their involvement with the project. In fact, such skills proved necessary for the survival and success of the project. When youth work collectively with other adults to achieve a

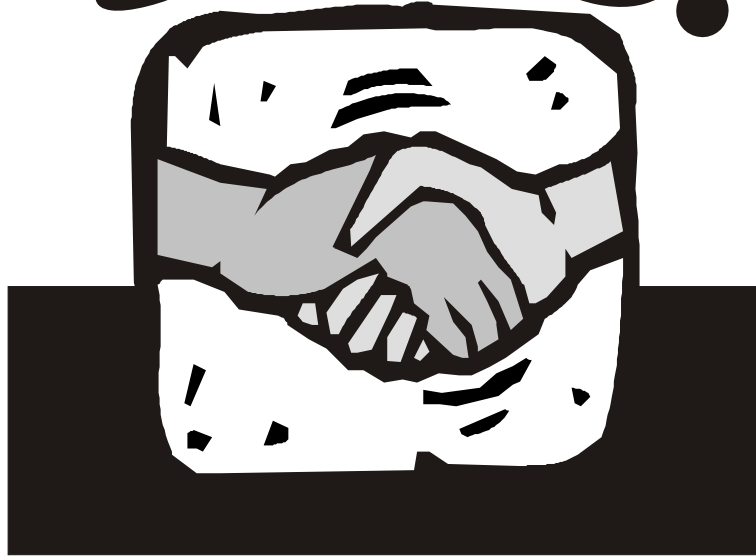
common goal, they also practice problem-solving and decision-making skills. Such opportunities enable young people not only to build cognitive and social competencies (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Listen, Inc., 2003) that can be applied to other areas of their life, but also foster the development of initiative or intrinsic motivation, which often times is absent in school settings (Larson, 2000).

In addition, youth engagement on community teams creates opportunities for young people to learn and use technical skills that can spark an interest in future education and career pathways. For example, a community affiliated with the Seven Circles Coalition created a weekly radio program to address issues relevant to young people (Wunrow & Einspruch, 2001). Youth members, in partnership with adults, help write, produce, and edit the radio program as well as public service announcements.

Youth engagement on community teams a cornerstone of the community youth development framework, is a viable pathway to healthy youth development and sustainable communities. Successful youth engagement efforts are fostered by (a) supportive adults that respect youth; (b) a youth-friendly environment in which youth feel welcomed; (c) opportunities to complete meaningful tasks which advance group goals; and (d) opportunities to learn and use new skills which build competencies.



# Y.E.S.



## **APPENDIX D**

### **References**

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