

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Three elements are essential for effective youth engagement: establishing a youth-friendly environment, building a sense of belonging, and nurturing a sense of self-efficacy.

ESTABLISHING A YOUTH-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

- Communicate through “channels” young people typically use- text messages, Twitter, Facebook, etc.
- Arrange transportation
- Provide incentives
- BE FLEXIBLE about etiquette, dress, times and dates of the meetings
- FOOD!
- If possible hire 2-3 young people to work together.
- Make the meetings as FUN as possible!

BUILDING A SENSE OF BELONGING

- Designate a space/desk for the youth
- Involve them in decisions that affect their lives
- Partner the young person with an adult!
- Actively listen to, and respect the ideas of young people.
- Organizational change to support youth partners.
- Encourage them to plan and facilitate meetings and activities
- MOST IMPORTANT: Clearly communicate expectations. Create ground rules, sign a contract, or create a job title and role.

NURTURING A SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY

- Gradually increase tasks and responsibilities over time
- Make time for reflection sessions
- Assist young people in developing skills like leadership and self-advocacy
- CELEBRATE successes!