

THE POWER OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



GOALS OF THIS PRESENTATION

Identify first steps
to organizational
culture change

Help agencies
overcome real
world challenges

Offer support for practical
youth engagement
strategies

Share best practices for
meaningful youth engagement



THINK ABOUT IT....

*What does youth
engagement mean to
you?*



*What do you hope to
learn from this
presentation and
workshop?*



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IS...

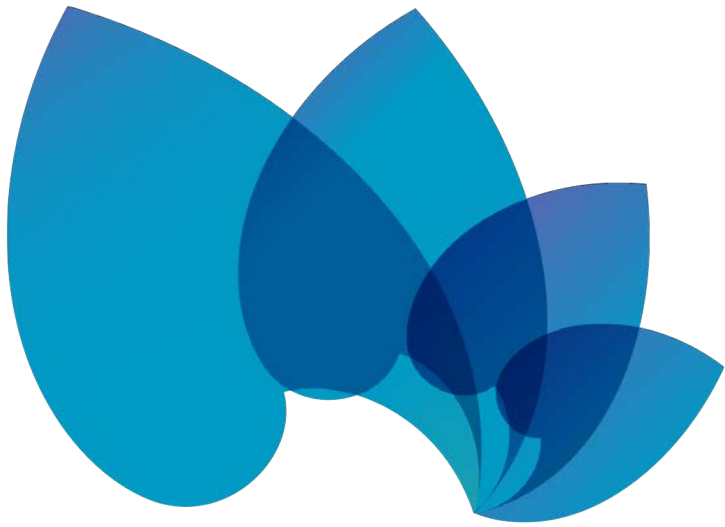
A strategy providers use to recognize that youth have important insights into what they need -- making consistent, thoughtful, and sustainable efforts to include their voices in service planning and delivery. An element of positive youth development.

Based on 4 principles:



Without it, we risk missing the mark entirely!





HARRIS TRANSITION COALITION

Engaging transition-age youth and their family members and caregivers in program planning, design, and implementation is an important and unique component of the initiative. The VOICES of youth, caregivers, and services providers join together for positive change.



Hogg Foundation *for* Mental Health

ADVANCING RECOVERY AND WELLNESS IN TEXAS



DEFINE YOUR VISION

STEP 1

- ✓ What is your vision for engaging youth in your program?
- ✓ What is your motivation?
- ✓ What expectations do you have?
- ✓ What roles do you think youth play?
- ✓ What resources exist to ensure success?



STEP 2

ASSESS READINESS

- ✓ Where do you think your agency currently falls on the ladder?
- ✓ Where is your agency hoping to be in the future?



ORGANIZING AND GOVERNING

Youth have a central role in the organization's structure, driving programmatic or strategic decisions. Youth are empowered to be part of shared decision-making processes and have the opportunity for youth to learn from life experiences and expertise of adults.

YOUTH-INITIATED LEADERSHIP

Youth serve as peer leaders in a paid or volunteer capacity. Youth lead activities with their peers or with adults. Adults are involved only in a supporting role.

YOUTH-INITIATED PARTNERSHIPS

Youth and adults join together as equals to accomplish programming, plan activities, operate the program, or complete specific tasks.

ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with youth. Attempts are made to use youth-friendly procedures and language.

INFORMED DIALOGUE

Youth give ongoing advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. Youth are informed as to how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. Youth are involved in evaluation of programming.

ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED

Youth are assigned a specific role and informed as to how and why they are being involved. This includes inconsistent youth involvement or temporary consultations such as focus groups or surveys.

TOKENISM

Young people appear to be given a choice, but in fact they have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

DECORATION

Young people are used to bolster a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth.

ASSESS AGENCY STRENGTHS

STEP 3

What does our agency do particularly well?

What are our agency's strengths?



STEP 4

IDENTIFY CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

What do [_____] do that gets in the way of OR makes it difficult for youth engagement?



LESSONS LEARNED (SO FAR...)

It takes...

- Time & Teaching
- Humility – *can you take it?*
- Flexibility – *in scheduling, policies, procedures, and more*
- Patience and Persistence
- Creativity – *youth may learn best from other youth, etc.*



PARTICIPANT VOICE

*“I’m encouraged and excited about bringing the youth into shared decision-making and planning in a real way-- **not in a token way**, not just a survey. We have added paid positions and included them in the workforce. **There will be challenges, but I think we’re going to learn a lot.**”*

*“It was exciting-- youth with mental health conditions speaking about their experiences, **eager to make their voices heard.**”*

*“After one of the meetings someone wrote ‘**you just gave me hope.**’ I laminated that.”*

*“We had to get past our own history of the way we were accustomed to working and realize **this was different.**”*

*“We learned that youth and their caregivers are very willing to share their perspective and, in fact, are **honored to be asked.**”*

*“The difference is that while we always did engage the youth, it was not always purposeful and intentional. We learned that **sometimes more is not more.**”*

*“It was sometimes a challenge encouraging them to use their voice in the meetings. They are accustomed to listening, and after we opened the door **they talked for hours.** We told them we’re here to learn from you. **You are the experts.** “*

*“It was all very **refreshing!**”*



THANK YOU!

TNOYS

TEXAS NETWORK OF
YOUTH SERVICES

THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.

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