



SECTION 2

Community Outreach &

Partnerships

Forming Youth-Adult Partnerships

FORMING SUCCESSFUL YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS FOR A COMMON GOAL

Youth engagement acknowledges both youth as resources in rebuilding communities and that helping young people requires strengthening families and communities. It has three components:

1. Viewing young people and families as partners, rather than clients, and involving them in designing, delivering, and evaluating programs and services;
2. Giving all youth access to both prevention and intervention services and programs that meet their developmental needs;
3. Offering youth opportunities to develop relationships with caring, supportive adults.¹

Examples of Opportunities to Partner with Youth to Coordinate Your Youth Count

- Partner with youth to plan your magnet event. Youth can help come up with creative ways to attract youth to the event and to make the event fun and appealing for other young people. Youth may also be able to help with outreach activities, recruiting volunteers, and soliciting in-kind donations (door prizes, survey incentives, etc.).
- Partner with youth to administer the Homeless Youth Survey Tool. Youth data collectors may be able to help you identify locations where homeless youth reside and identify youth who are homeless. They may also be well-suited for administering the survey, given their unique ability to build rapport with other youth and offer peer support.

Tips for Engaging Young People

Youth engagement is the result of young people being involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change.

- “Youth engagement happens in [youth-adult partnerships](#) that are structured so that both groups contribute, teach, and learn from each other.

¹National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (1996) Reconnecting youth and community: A developmental approach. Washington D.C.: Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) p. 11

- This means involving youth in planning and in making decisions that affect themselves and others.”²

Planning for Youth Engagement:³

- Be conscious of young people’s schedules when planning meetings.
- Be clear on roles & responsibilities for both youth and adults.
- Involve young people from the very beginning to build ownership.
- Think of and act as if young people are full, equal partners in the project.

Training Youth:

- Create opportunities that foster mutual learning.
- Provide orientations that are beneficial to support both young people and adults.
- Ensure orientations are relevant and helpful in getting things done effectively.
- Incorporate young people’s suggestions about what they need to learn and consider using youth to train other youth.
- Include food and networking time at orientations.

Tips for Making Youth/Adult Partnerships Work⁴

Challenges	Solutions
Adults assume youth are not serious	Listen: Have real conversations without making assumptions
Both groups think what the other says is set in stone	Question: Ask open-ended questions to get more ideas. Be willing to ask for clarification
Adults make decisions for the good of the young people and youth make decisions without involving adults	Share: Discuss how decisions will be made and who will have more weight in deciding; sometimes youth and sometimes adults
Either group assumes they have been left out of the loop	Talk: Find ways to communicate and share in addition to meetings
Either group assumes the worst of the other	Trust: Adults must know that youth have important things to contribute: same with youth
Adults think they know what youth want & what is “best” for young people	Involve: Ask young people what is “best” for them. Youth are resources and partners in community development.

²ACT for Youth Center of Excellence: Available online at http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/engagement/

³8 Considerations for Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships~ Youth Service America: http://www.ysa.org/tip_sheet.cfm

⁴Bailey, M. & Lazarus, R. (2001) Partners in leadership: Lessons from the field. *CYD Journal* 2(20), 46-48

