



Youth Development Toolkit for Parent Centers

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Youth Leadership and Parent Centers

Welcome to RAISE's Youth Leadership Toolkit for Parent Centers. Developed in 2020 by RAISE in collaboration with other stakeholders, this toolkit is a resource for Parent Center professionals who are engaging youth on a regular basis, have begun to develop and recognize more skills in their youth, and are looking to take the next step in supporting youth leadership. This toolkit is meant to guide professionals and organizations in finding the many opportunities to incorporate programming centered in youth development. Providing meaningful participation to the youth that you serve will propel them forward in their journey of becoming empowered, self-directed, young adults.

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RAISE offers Technical Assistance (TA) to seven PTIs across the country, including: REACH, New York Parent Partnership, Open Doors for Multicultural Families, STELLAR, The LINK Center, Project LAUNCH, and Shift. In addition to formal TA, RAISE supports youth and young adults with disabilities and their families through the transition from secondary school and into competitive employment and independent living.

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Part 1
Welcome / About

INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly apparent that incorporating youth voice and engaging them in their own development is essential in having the greatest impact on both the individual and the community¹. Professionals and organizations are continuing to make strides in providing programming that works with youth, instead of around them. However, these experiences must go beyond simply bringing youth to the table. Programming must reflect a conscious and direct effort to provide youth development and leadership experiences. As a result, youth will enjoy the positive effects on their skills related to self-advocacy, self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-determination^{2, 3}. In turn we can expect to see higher student achievement, lower dropout rates, and better post-school outcomes overall^{2, 3, 4}.

We are hoping by now that this sentiment is sounding familiar. We have introduced this idea in each toolkit of our series which was developed as a means of guiding you through the Youth Engagement Continuum¹. The first toolkit Youth Engagement Toolkit for Parent Centers, serves as an introduction to the steps beyond the intervention phase and into higher level youth engagement. The following two toolkits will focus on two specific steps of this continuum that fall into the development phase. These are youth development and a specific subset of that development: youth leadership. The toolkit you are reading now will focus on youth leadership.

Ideally you have read through both the Youth Engagement Toolkit for Parent Centers then went on to review the Youth Development Toolkit. You have gone through the Assessment of Youth and Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL) and recognized you are making great strides in incorporating youth voice, engaging them, and developing necessary skills. If you feel ready to review the tools in this document, that means you are recognizing that your youth can, and should, be doing even more. As we mentioned in the previous toolkit, youth development encompasses many pieces that make up the whole process with one of the largest subsets being youth leadership. Within this subset there are many skills to engage your youth in learning so that they may take the next step.

This toolkit is meant to provide a framework to inform your work with youth. We encourage you to take these tools and dig deeper with those around you. Just as in the Youth Development toolkit, we will be utilizing components of an assessment tool that you can use with your agency. The Assessment of Youth/Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL) allows agencies and organizations to assess the extent to which these entities utilize authentic youth voice and meaningful participation⁵. As you work through the toolkit, we will provide strategies for checking in with these documents to gage your progress and efficacy.

¹"An Emerging Model for Working with Youth," Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing. Retrieved June 26, 2020, https://fcyo.org/uploads/resources/8141_Papers_no1_v4.qxd.pdf

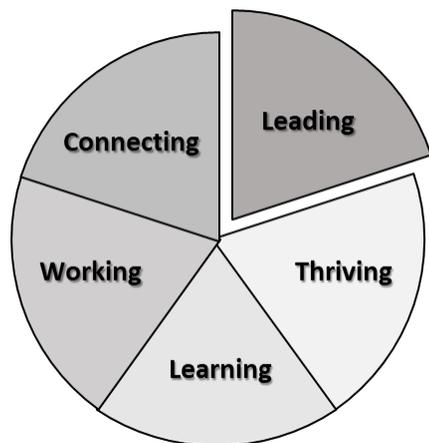
² Larson, R.W. (2000, January). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 170-183.

³ Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R. (2004, June). Youth development and youth leadership: A background paper. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth.

⁴ Sagawa, S. (2003). Service as a strategy for youth development. In Lewis, A. (Ed.) *Shaping the future of American youth: Youth policy in the 21 st century*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.

⁵ Youth MOVE National & Regional Research Institute, Portland State University. (2016). *Assessment of Youth/Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL)*.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP



Thriving, Learning, Working, Connecting, and Leading⁶. These were the five developmental areas we used to view competency building in our Youth Development Toolkit. Here, we will focus on *Leading* and helping youth be more self-determined and better self-advocates. Youth Leadership can be defined as the act of controlling and directing their own lives based on informed decisions⁷. Beyond the competency skills discussed in the last toolkit, the literature points to twelve key components of effective youth leadership programming⁸. We have combined some of these principles and will focus on skill building in the following five areas: leadership styles, critical thinking and decision making, sense of community, responsibility, and service.

What to Expect

As we mentioned in our introduction, this toolkit is meant to provide a framework that can spark ideas and conversations amongst you and your colleagues and youth so that you may translate it into your own work. Each competency will be highlighted in one section and review the following:

- Introductory information and/or research on that competency
- Guiding framework for translating into your own work with youth
- Tips and/or examples on how to incorporate youth voice

In addition, we will provide suggestions along the way for how some of these strategies fit into the overall assessment of your organization in relation to how well you are engaging youth and utilizing their voices.

Why is this important?

Youth taking the next step.

You have likely already done incredible work setting the stage and creating space for youth to develop competencies that will help make them more successful individuals. Leadership is a part of this process, but it is also the next step in taking those skills and empowering youth to engage in the world around them and direct their own path. Remember that youth are the priority, but you are the facilitator. To use an analogy, you both are in a partnership building a house. You may buy the land, provide the tools and materials needed, and discuss the blueprints, but the youth are going to build the house. The more youth are involved in building their own houses, the more they will thrive.



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⁶ Ferber, T. & Pittman, K., with Marshall, T. (2002). State youth policy: Helping all youth to grow up fully prepared and fully engaged. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment.

⁷ Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities: Basic skills for successful transition. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

⁸ Woyach, R. B. (1996, Spring). Five principles for effective youth leadership development programs. Retrieved May 25, 2005, from http://leadershipcenter.osu.edu/Publications/L_Link/LL_1996/spr_96.pdf

THE BASICS

You are about to dive into another toolkit! Just as in the Youth Development Toolkit, many of the skill areas we are about to dive into overlap and leave opportunities open to cover more than one skill area in any given activity. You will likely find some activities covering all five. If this feels overwhelming and you are looking for a place to begin, remember to stop and check out the “tips” section in each skill area along the way regarding which basics can support building that particular skill.

To review, the term “basics” here is meant to provide a ground-level framework for your work with youth. In this toolkit, and in the resources we have shared, there is a lot of information regarding each specific content area. The information in this toolkit is meant to provide a frame of reference and context on what your focus should be when working to help guide youth leadership. The basics of youth leadership can be thought of as the tenants to be woven into all you do. In an effort to help ground your work and set you on a path to use what you have learned in your own individual ways; we will list them here. Remember to reference your YVAL as well. To help make the connection as you utilize the assessment at your organization or agency, we have listed some YVAL themes that fit best with the following basics.

Authentic Experiences

- Theme 2: Collaborative approach - respecting and valuing youth as partners
- Theme 6: Participation in developing programming/program policies

Meeting them where they are

- Theme 3: Empowered representatives – maximizing potential and seeing the impact of their decisions

Modeling

- Theme 4: Commitment to facilitation and support of youth/young adult participation - through dedicated staffing

Leadership Styles

- Theme 8: Leading initiatives and projects - leading projects *they* design

Sense of community and belonging

- Theme 1: Overall vision and commitment - clear efforts to promote participation

Opportunities for critical thinking

- All themes!

Dignity of Risk

- Theme 8: Leading initiatives and projects - leading projects *they* design
- Theme 7: Participation in evaluation – from how it will be evaluated, to gathering information and reporting

Part 2
Core Content

LEADERSHIP STYLES

If you were to look up leadership styles for even just a few minutes you would find a vast network of definitions and perspectives. When thinking of leadership styles there are broad types and an infinite number of leadership strategies. Each style or strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages and can be used based on context. To start the conversation, have an idea of four broad leadership styles⁹.

Authoritarian	Laissez faire	Democratic	Servant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No participant input • Less creative problem-solving • Effective in urgent decision-making situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands off leadership • Can be slower with lower productivity • Encourages group decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members are a part of a team • Slow progress can be discouraging • Members feel more involved and motivated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by serving others, not leading • Meant to stimulate thought, not decide • Goal of promoting well-being of those around them

Within each of these styles there are many strategies to effectively engage people in the goals of the team. For youth learning to lead more self-directed lives, the team consists of anyone involved in their daily activities. This could be parents, siblings, case workers, teachers, and so on. It will not be enough that the team is committed to a youth-driven approach. These skills and strategies will be a crucial part in guiding their team to focus on the lives that they want. Below are four domains that will help build confidence and strength amongst the team¹⁰.



Youth understanding leadership style basics can help them begin the process of finding their own individuality and gain a better understanding of those around them. Leadership styles are often learned in recreational or after-school activities. Many youth with disabilities may not access those opportunities, so there is a need for intentional development in this area³.

⁹Stewart, Janelle. "Exploring Leadership Styles to Be an Effective Leader – Part 1." MSU Extension, 28 Nov. 2016, www.canr.msu.edu/news/exploring_leadership_styles_to_be_an_effective_leader_part_1#:~:text=%E2%80%9C4%2DH%20Bac kpack%20to%20Adventure. Accessed 26 June 2020.

¹⁰Rath, T., Conchie, B., & Press, G. (2008). Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams, and why people follow. Simon and Schuster.

Your Leadership Styles Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** model different types
 - Youth with disabilities may not be accessing experiences that would typically reveal a variety of leadership styles and strategies. Make sure your programming exposes them to many different styles so that they can begin to see where they fit in and gain experience in interacting with leaders of all types.
- **DO** find each opportunity
 - You don't have to do a huge project or event to get leadership style practice. There are small moments every day that offer opportunities for self-direction. Need to organize lunch for everyone? Let the youth take the lead. Trying to set up a projector system? Ask them to help!
- **DO** help cultivate their styles
 - You may recognize particular leadership styles in your youth before they do. Get creative and make experiences that support those styles, then discuss with them what you have been observing

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** get stuck on one leadership style
 - Different situations call for different leadership styles and strategies. Provide challenges in a new activity or new environment that force youth to take different perspectives and utilize different strategies to succeed.
- **Do NOT** over-lead
 - Sometimes our notions of what our title or job responsibilities mean get in the way of us doing what is best for the youth we work with. Just because you are a coordinator does not mean you have to coordinate all the details of an activity or event. Change your mindset to the house building analogy from the beginning of this toolkit. Find the land, gather the tools, discuss the blueprints. In other words, create boundaries, teach them the skills, support their plan.

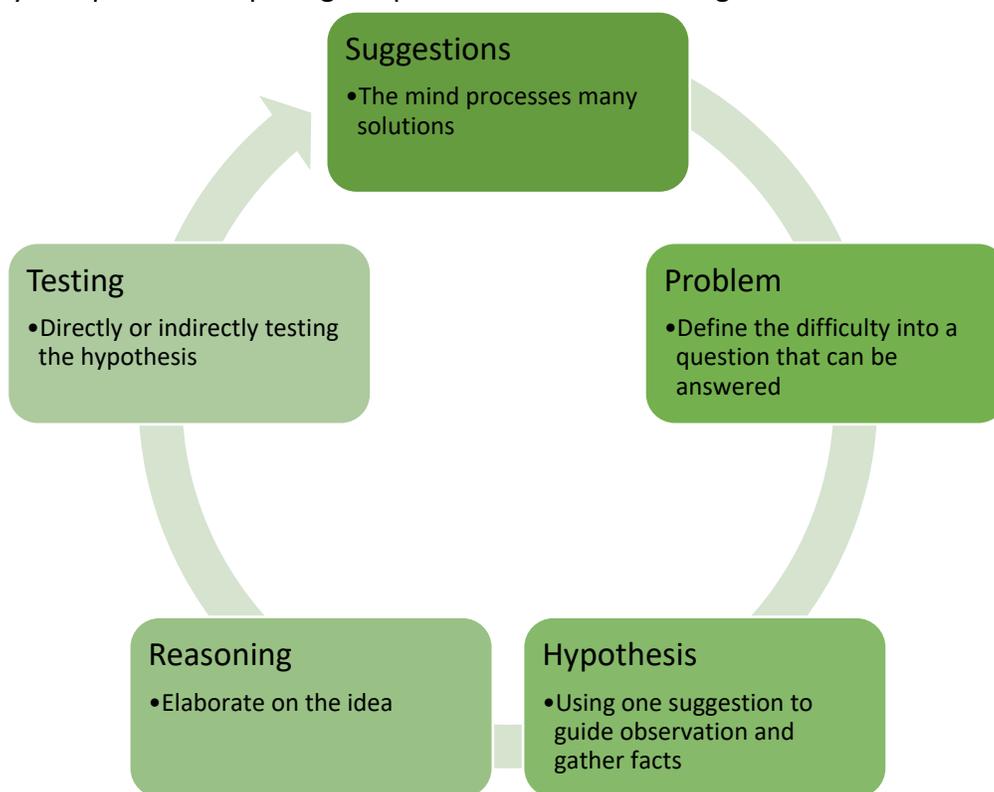
Colleague Conversations

- **What is your level of knowledge?** In the last toolkit each framework began with checking on your population to understand where they were at in their development. That is still relevant in all of the work you do but when taking the next step it will be important for you to understand where you stand on these particular areas so that instead of just teaching youth how you lead, you are helping your youth find out how THEY want to lead.
- **Where can we start?** when developing leadership in youth there are a new set of basic tenets to remember when you don't know where to start for a particular skill. Some basics to stick to when thinking of developing leadership styles include meeting them where they are, modeling, and sticking to authentic experiences.
- **Check these places out too:** 4-H has long been cultivating leaders in young people. They are a great resource on programming and providing information for leadership strategies.

CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION MAKING

Many of the exact definitions of critical thinking all agree on a central concept: careful, deliberate thinking directed towards some goal. It is this reason that critical thinking and decision making are often closely linked. This goal has long been put forth in the education system as a critical skill for students so that they can gain autonomy and be successful in life¹¹. For individuals with disabilities this choice has often been taken away from them. Whether it be due to protective instincts or underestimation, the youth you work with have likely been in the back seat of decisions affecting their lives. Building skills to think critically and make decisions will increase not only their own self-confidence, but also the confidence in those around them to step back and watch youth lead.

In order to teach these skills and engage them in practice of critical thinking and decision making, it is important to understand the process. Just like the process of youth development, this is not a skill you can learn, memorize, and gain expertise. It is important to understand the various phases involved and practice each of those skills to be able to apply it to new and ever-changing situations. Below are five phases widely accepted as comprising the process of critical thinking.



Leaders are frequently put in the position to solve problems and make decisions. While one could do this without much thought, the best leaders will carefully and rationally think of the options and utilize all resources and information to solve it. This skill creates another level of trust in those that you lead. Before leading a group of people, the youth we work with must first begin by gaining confidence in themselves to make these decisions.

¹¹ Hitchcock, David, "Critical Thinking", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/critical-thinking/>>.

¹² Dewey, John, 1910, *How We Think*, Boston: D.C. Heath.

¹³ Hrasok, Ali. "- I'm a Leader PA." *Www.Imaleaderpa.Org*, www.imaleaderpa.org/plan-details.html?lib=579. Accessed 29 June 2020.

Your Critical Thinking and Decision Making Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** assess barriers
 - Throughout the critical thinking process, people can run into roadblocks. When information is incomplete, or biases are in play, it can make informed decisions feel impossible. Make sure you help youth recognize these issues and support bringing in the right tools to help.
- **DO** address the “self” in the room
 - Depending on your population, the youth you work with may not have ever been asked to think of what they want. Be alert and recognize when a youth is trying to make the choice, they believe you or their parents would want them to make. Encourage them to ponder their values and interests and use that to guide their decisions.
- **DO** encourage questions
 - Asking questions is such a big part of the entire critical thinking and decision-making process. Making informed decisions means gathering information and the best way to gather information is to ask questions!

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** ever ignore the process
 - We are constantly thinking critically and making decisions without much brain power. It becomes second nature to work through our process of taking information in and finding solutions that we don't even recognize it. Make sure you are bringing youth along when it relates to your work. Eventually youth will be the ones making those decisions, but until then, discuss openly your considerations, hypotheses, and reasoning for arriving at an answer.
- **Do NOT** over-lead
 - Do you remember the idea of dignity of risk from the previous toolkit? At its core, dignity of risk describes the right of individuals to take some degree of risk when making self-directed decisions. Keeping youth from failure can actually impede their growth, restricting them from fully engaging in the development process. Allow your youth to make less than ideal choices if they think it is the right one, then teach them how to evaluate what worked and what did not.

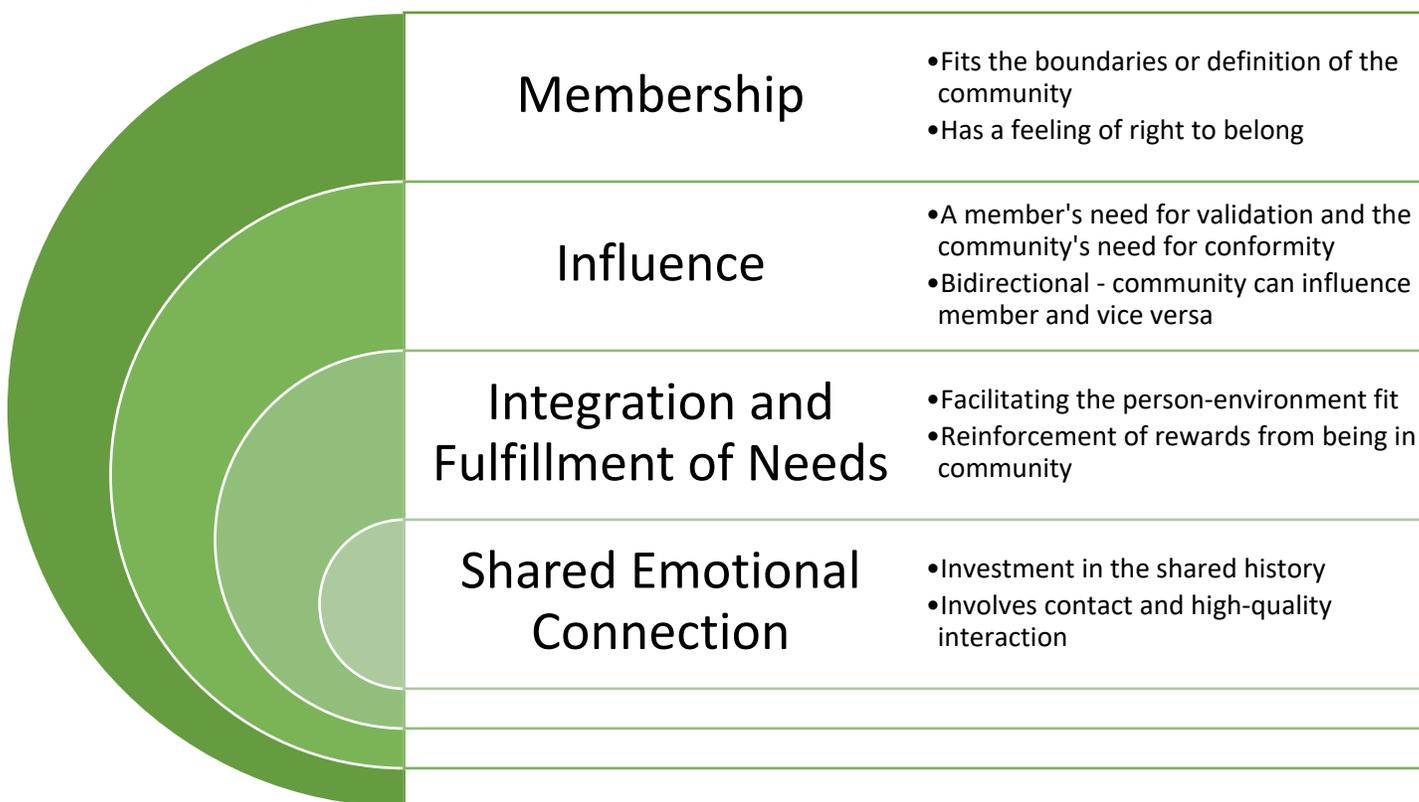
Colleague Conversations

- **What is your level of knowledge?** While we outline common phases of the critical thinking process, we all go about it in different ways. Assess the way you typically make decisions and the way that others do too. Your strategy may be helpful to some youth but having multiple strategies in your toolbox could help others find their own style that works for them.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. if you aren't sure exactly what to do remember to stick to things like dignity of risk, opportunities for making decisions, and ways they can self-advocate.
- **Check these places out too:** Many agencies have curriculum to develop soft skills such as the Office of Disability Employment Policy. Check out their Soft Skills to Pay the Bills Manual here – dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/. For our educators and professionals alike, you may also want to check out the self-determined learning model of instruction here - <https://selfdetermination.ku.edu/homepage/intervention/>

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Communities can be defined by many different ideas. Many definitions describe the criteria of what does or does not make you a part of a community. Here we want to focus on the *sense* of community. It is this critical skill that can enhance their abilities in self-determination.

Much of the literature supports the definition and theory of sense of community as a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together¹⁴. The four elements of this experience are described below.



It is also important to note that any one person can be a member of several communities, some of which, may overlap. The concept of community mapping has been introduced so that individuals with disabilities can begin to see the stretches of their communities and optimize these relationships as resources for their success. Just as the above definition, these community maps can be conceptualized through geographical means (concrete mapping) or by the mapping of assets or specific targets (abstract)¹⁵. Developing a youth's sense of belonging to these communities would support their involvement and be a critical factor in their self-direction of utilizing those resources.

¹⁴McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of community psychology, 14*(1), 6-23.

¹⁵Tindle, Kate, et al. "Transition Planning: Community Mapping as a Tool for Teachers and Students." Research to Practice Brief, vol. 4, no. 1, 2005, www.ncset.org/publications/researchtopractice/NCSETResearchBrief_4.1.pdf. Accessed 26 June 2020.

Your Sense of Community Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** discuss roles
 - Every great community recognizes the value that each individual brings to the collective group. Work with your youth to begin to identify their unique position as a part of the larger group.
- **DO** create a method of reinforcement
 - Beyond an individual feeling as though they have a right to belong, we have learned that there needs to be a sense of reinforcement in terms of what they get out of the group. Just as there will be different roles based on the individual, they may also each desire something different out of the group. Be sure to ask and recognize what motivates each of your youth to be within your community.
- **DO** go beyond the obvious
 - Being a part of your organization or agency is one reason they belong to this community, but it may not be enough to create a true sense of belonging. Push yourself and your youth to identify common values and beliefs that unite you for a common goal.

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** ignore history
 - Help youth gain a deeper understanding of the history that unites them. This includes disability history, but also the history of the group itself and each of their individual paths that brought them there.
- **Do NOT** ignore intersectionality
 - The youth you work with may either be deeply rooted in the disability community, or have been avoiding it all together. Encourage your youth to recognize and respect their membership in several different communities. It is very easy to feel that membership to any one community can put them in a box. More and more people are recognizing intersectionality of diversity groups and learning to incorporate all of these aspects into their identity.

Colleague Conversations

- **What is your level of knowledge?** As an individual that exists as a part of the community you are trying to build with your youth, you bring your own background and diversity to the mix. What communities do you feel you belong to and how do they relate to this one? Do you find yourself committed to belonging to this community? Asking our youth to buy in means we have to buy in ourselves. If we don't, what could we be doing to feel more connected?
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. If you aren't sure exactly what to do remember to stick to things like authentic experiences, sense of belonging, and self-determination.
- **Check these places out too:** The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition has a vast resource database which includes various articles and worksheets related to community or resource mapping. Check it out at <https://transitionta.org/>

RESPONSIBILITY

Being responsible is defined as being liable to be called to account as the primary cause, motive, or agent¹⁶. This means that responsibility entails being held accountable to whatever action or decision you are overseeing. As youth age and mature they are typically held more and more accountable for their actions. When developing a youth’s self-advocacy and self-determination it is important to not only hold them accountable to their actions, but to provide them with opportunities to feel and be responsible for what is happening around them.

Family structures may decide to dictate tasks at home that the young person is responsible for, but youth programs should work to expand beyond these responsibilities. Volunteering, processing, and internalizing the necessary motivation and characteristics are all key components in successful development of responsibility in youth¹⁷. Let’s look closer at this learning cycle.

Taking on a new role or obligation

- Goals of a role are more defined, but the means are open-ended
- Choosing the role allows some sense of volunteered choice

Ongoing experience of the obligation

- Allows for processing beyond initial excitement
- Creates opportunity problem solving when there are challenges or strain

Fulfilling obligation

- Opportunity to recognize internal motivation
- Sense of confidence in the perseverance and completion of tasks

Changes in self and behavior

- Increased sense of maturity and dependence
- Enhanced sense of self-worth

So often individuals with disabilities feel removed from the plans being made for their own lives, such as an IEP, and are thus left disconnected. Providing opportunities for youth to develop accountability and responsibility will support their self-confidence and in turn their ability to self-direct.

¹⁶Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Responsible. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved July 12, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/responsible>

¹⁷Salusky, Ida & Larson, Reed & Griffith, Aisha & Wu, Joanna & Raffaelli, Marcela & Sugimura, Niwako & Guzmán, Maria. (2014). How Adolescents Develop Responsibility: What Can Be Learned From Youth Programs. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 24. 10.1111/jora.12118.

Your Responsibility Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** let youth set the stage
 - For the most part, people feel a greater responsibility to the things that were their ideas. At the beginning of a new year, sit down with your youth and have them come up with goals, rules, and activities for the group. Let them know you will support but they are in the driver's seat!
- **DO** set the standard
 - Part of a youth's internal motivation will be general character and the other will be if they actually feel accountable. Set a high expectation so that they feel most encouraged to push through challenges.
- **DO** incorporate evaluation
 - Responsibility involves a learning cycle. Implicit in that is the need for an evaluative process. This does not mean you need a formative assessment, but rather deliberately discuss the process of successfully achieving their goals. As youth gain more and more confidence, discuss ways they could have carried out the task even more effectively.

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** make it unreasonable
 - Going through challenges and strain can be helpful in the overall development of responsibility. However, it is important to note the even greater benefit that they receive having gotten through those challenges. It is about setting up situations that will allow your youth to complete the full learning cycle so that they can increase their self-belief.
- **Do NOT** fake the responsibility
 - Adults have a tendency to "fake" responsibility with young people, especially youth with disabilities. It all goes back to dignity of risk. Allow youth the real responsibility of making choices and accepting the responsibility of whatever comes with that.

Colleague Conversations

- **What is your level of knowledge?** If you are a person that holds a position working with youth and are reading this document as a means of enhancing that work, one could assume you are a responsible individual. Think about your own development in being accountable and how you can translate that into your work with youth.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. If you aren't sure exactly what to do remember to stick to things like authentic experiences, critical thinking and decision making.
- **Check these places out too:** Character building has recently been added as a piece of social emotional learning in schools. In response, curriculum exists in many SEL sites related to specific skills that build character, such as responsibility. You can see some examples here - <https://www.goodcharacter.com/teaching-guides/high-school/>

SERVICE

Service in this context means the act of serving such as a helpful act or some useful labor that does not produce a tangible commodity¹⁸. Civic engagement is sometimes used in conjunction with service but usually refers to addressing issues of public concern. For now, we will focus on a first step and look at what community service means and what the benefits are. In recent years, funding has increased for service learning and its integration into education curriculum. The National Youth Leadership Council published standards for quality practice¹⁹.

Meaningful Service

- Meaningful and personally-relevant activities

Link to Curriculum

- Instructional strategy to meet learning goals

Reflection

- Prompt deep thinking and analysis of one's self and relation to society

Diversity

- Understanding and mutual respect of diversity of all participants

Youth Voice

- Strong voice in all aspects of planning, implementing, and evaluating

Partnerships

- Collaborative and mutually beneficial

Progress Monitoring

- Assess quality and progress towards goals

Duration and Intensity

- Address and meet community needs

Each standard has a list of indicators of successful engagement of that standard. Under meaningful service:

- Appropriate in terms of age and abilities
- Address issues that are personally relevant
- Interesting and engaging activities
- Understanding of their actions in relation to larger issues
- Attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served

While there are aspects of altruism in the benefits to communities when youth participate in service, there are also undeniable benefits to the youth themselves. Especially in relation to their progress as leaders, a study showed self-reported increase in empathy and desire for future action²⁰. Furthermore, this desire to continue participating in community service was linked to the recognition that their individual skills and talents were useful in the work that they took part in²⁰. In creating a paradigm where youth feel empowered as resources of their communities, we enhance their individual feelings of self-efficacy and begin to change perspectives in the world around them.

¹⁸Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Service. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved July 12, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/service>.

¹⁹"K-12 Service-Learning Standards - NYLC." *Www.Nylc.Org*, National Youth Leadership Council, www.nylc.org/page/standards. Accessed 29 June 2020.

²⁰Lakin, Rebecca, and Annette Mahoney. "Empowering Youth to Change Their World: Identifying Key Components of a Community Service Program to Promote Positive Development." *Journal of School Psychology*, vol. 44, no. 6, Dec. 2006, pp. 513–531, 10.1016/j.jsp.2006.06.001. Accessed 13 Dec. 2019.

Your Service Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** identify relevant skills
 - Part of successful development is making sure experiences lead to an increase in self-confidence and efficacy. Work with your youth to identify unique skills and talents that can be used to serve their community.
- **DO** find the right fit
 - While service is about volunteering our time, it is not dissimilar to finding the right fit at a job. Some environments, site supervisors, or activities just aren't the right fit for certain individuals. Sure, service learning involves doing good in the community for the simple fact that it is a good thing to do. Meaningful civic engagement, however, would include a personal connection to the task at hand. Help youth engage in activities that have personal value to them, so they are even more invested. Discuss all aspects of the community service opportunity and adjust as needed.

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** do it on your own
 - This is where resources come in. Communities are often extremely grateful for the help and are more than willing to discuss opportunities at their site. Access individuals in the community that can provide a breadth of opportunities for your youth.
- **Do NOT** jump right in
 - Since volunteering is not considered a job experience, youth are often put into opportunities with little to no preparation. Set them up for success by reviewing responsibilities, logistics, and goals prior to their start. This can help boost success the first time around and increase the likelihood they will want to engage in another opportunity.

Colleague Conversations

- **What is your level of knowledge?** Participating in community service is typically a very personal experience when done correctly. What is your experience with service? Who are our community partners? Make sure you familiarize yourself with various methods, activities, and environments to engage in service so that you can adjust based on individual needs.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. If you aren't sure exactly what to do remember to stick to things like authentic experiences, sense of belonging, and basic service learning.
- **Check these places out too:** dosomething.org is one central, youth friendly, hub of activities, initiatives and other engagements that center around civic engagement. With useful search tools, this is one way to find a good fit for everyone!