



# Youth Development

**WHAT IS IT? >>** Youth development is the process by which young people seek to meet their basic physical and social needs and build competencies and skills to succeed in adolescence and adulthood. For youth workers, this strategy helps young people reach their full potential.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO THE TRUST? >>** The Trust recognizes that when young people are permitted to have a voice, make decisions and choices and contribute, they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. This is a valuable lens through which to offer programs to meet young people's needs.

Youth participation is the cornerstone of youth development. Allow young people to make and implement decisions with you while sharing responsibility for the outcomes. This means genuinely involving young people, not merely putting them on advisory boards or under-utilizing their potential.

It is our expectation that all grantees will fully involve and use the knowledge, skills, and attributes of youth in the design and implementation of their programs. The Trust encourages all grantees working with children and youth to expose parents, guardians, and caregivers to the youth development framework, which they can incorporate in their parenting.

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES >>** What do we ultimately want for young people? Simply put, we want them to trust others, acquire self-confidence, develop values that will ensure productive lives and become thoughtful people who can communicate with others and contribute to society. Having a vision of what we want for youth will help guide decision-making about how to best provide opportunities that support young people's successful transition to adulthood.

**PROMOTING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT VIA PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT >>** The youth development perspective begins with an emphasis on clearly defining youth outcomes, which are the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors that we want young people to achieve. All parents want their children to succeed. Parents need to know the developmental outcomes and how they are expressed by children and youth.

## 7 Simple Steps for Creating Positive Youth Development

### 1. CREATE A CODE OF CONDUCT TOGETHER.

Programs in which young people and staff create a code of conduct together have fewer "behavior problems." Why? Young people have a stake in rules that seem fair to them.

### 2. GET YOUNG PEOPLE TO DECORATE THE PROGRAM SPACE.

Collages, murals, quotes, icons, posters, portraits, manifestos are all ways that young people can make sure that the space reflects who they are.

### 3. SOLICIT YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPINIONS.

Seek young people's input through surveys, focus groups, councils or other methods and use that information. Make sure that young people know that they have made a difference.

### 4. ALLOW YOUTH TO THINK.

Make time for young people to journal, discuss, analyze, evaluate and go over what they have learned and experienced. This satisfies the developmental need of reflection and promotes critical thinking.

### 5. GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE A CHANCE TO SHINE.

Culminate learning projects through presentations, displays, exhibits and performances. Tangible items – such as posters, photos, programs, plaques, CDs, t-shirts – are good reminders of the experience.

### 6. LET YOUTH SET GOALS.

Guide youth as they work toward their goals. Collective goal-setting can generate team building. We can help young people make sure their goals are achievable that they have support.

### 7. CULTIVATE YOUTH AMBASSADORS.

Youth are engaging speakers, visitor guides, orientation assistants, fundraisers, even lobbyists. They are an invaluable asset and will gain genuine leadership experience.