

Engaging Youth in Services



Stephanie Sikes

TAYLRD State Level Youth Coordinator
&

Janice Johnston

BH Program Administrator
KY Division of Behavioral Health



Who are you?


- Who do you serve?
- Where do you work?

What is youth engagement?

- Youth/Young Adults/Young People = 14-30...for this presentation, 18-30
- Authentic Youth engagement happens when young people understand and are invested in the service that they receive.

Why is youth engagement important?

- Youth are more likely to benefit in services they engage in
- Properly engaged youth show better outcomes
- Engaged Youth gain skills and learn how to partner
- Engaged youth feel valued, which makes the world a better place!!!



How can we tell how we are doing with youth engagement?



**KNOWN
TO OTHERS**

BEHAVIOR

SEA LEVEL

**UNKNOWN
TO OTHERS**



IMPACT

VALUES – STANDARDS – JUDGMENTS

ATTITUDE

MOTIVES – ETHICS - BELIEFS



The Spectrum of Adult Attitudes and Behavior

Style #1: Objects

Adults exercise arbitrary and nearly total control over youth.



Style #2: Recipients

Actions of adults are based on what they believe is good for young people.



Style #3: Resources

Leadership and decision making roles are shared by adults and young people.

ATTITUDE TYPE

**Youth as
Objects**

**Youth as
Recipients**

**Youth as
Resources**

**Youth as
Partners**



TO

FOR

WITH

When **attitude is changed**
When **thought is changed**
When **behavior is changed**
When **action is changed**

thought is changed
behavior is changed
action is changed
result is changed



Thinking Organizationally

- Hart's Ladder
- Spectrum of Youth Engagement

Ladder of Youth Voice



8. Youth/Adult Equity
7. Completely Youth-Driven
6. Youth/Adult Equality
5. Youth Consulted
4. Youth Informed
3. Tokenism
2. Decoration
1. Manipulation

Adapted by Adam Fletcher (2011) from work by Roger Hart, et al. (1994)

Hart's Ladder

Spectrum of Youth Engagement

Youth Engagement Spectrum					
Disengaged	Engaged with Risk	Under-Engaged	Engaged Youth	Highly Engaged	Over-Engaged

- Preventing Youth Disengagement and Promoting Engagement Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

Dis-Engagement

- Young people feel alienated or disconnected, unvalued or unable to contribute in a meaningful way.
- They may lack knowledge and skills or face structural barriers that limit their engagement, such as prejudice or limited resources and opportunities.
- Young people are also excluded from particular processes because they are considered to be deficient in skills or knowledge.
- Factors that Contribute
 - Youth Mistrust Systems
 - Systems mistrust Youth
 - Youth Viewed as Recipients of Service rather than resources
 - Lack of flexibility in practices that support youth involvement

Under-Engagement

- **Engaged with Risk** - young people feel connected and valued but their relationships or the activities they engage in put them at risk i.e. gang violence, drug and alcohol use.
- **Under Engaged** - young people are concerned about issues and want to be engaged in a range of settings but face barriers to participation (political, socio-economic, cultural, etc.).
- Factors that contribute
 - Lack of resources
 - Restrictive Organizational Policies
 - Constrictive Natural Environments, And Social Expectations
 - STIGMA!!!!

Engagement

- **Engaged** - young people are aware of issues, want to make a difference and are positively connected to institutions which support their engagement.
- **Highly Engaged** - young people have a heightened understanding and involvement in issues of concern, and a strong desire and capacity to participate in conventional ways and institutions.
- Factors that Contribute
 - Given access to experience and skill building (asked for advice)
 - Given space to act in formal and informal contexts
 - Have access to resources and are motivated to engage with others
 - Youth Viewed as resources

Over-Engagement

- **Over-Engaged** – young people undertake a high level of commitment and address focused issues of concern. Organizations often rely on these young people for their expertise and ability to 'represent' youth. Organizational expectations place these young people at risk of burn out or emotional stress.
- Factors that Contribute
 - Little support from adults
 - Pressure to deliver instead of authentically engage
 - Youth sometimes tokenized

Tips from Youth

- Be flexible in means of communication...texting, social media (can be done professionally), etc.
- Be flexible in meeting times/locations
- Be open to questions (we question everything!!!!)
- Make the space comfortable
- Be empathetic and talk to us in strength based ways
- Promote our skills and leadership (encourage us with gentle challenges)
- Understand YOUTH CULTURE!!!!
- Career Services





Tips from Youth

Be willing to
learn from us!!!

Looking at your organization



- Where is your organization at in youth engagement?
- What examples do you have of effective youth engagement in your organization or in your work personally?

Putting it all together

- Time to set some goals!!!

Questions



Resources

- https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/120/filename/Preventing_Youth_Disengagement_and_Promoting_Engagement.pdf
- Adult Attitudes towards youth assessment