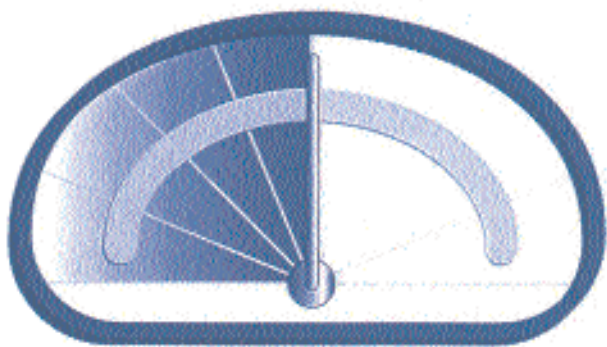# A Guided Tour of Youth Development

Second Edition

A youth development program

is designed to meet the human

developmental needs of youth

and to build a set of core assets

and competencies needed

to participate successfully

in adolescent & adult life.

Dear Friend:

Please join us on an exciting
tour. On this tour, you will see
some new sights and some
familiar ones. You will experience
fresh ideas and invigorating
concepts. You will make that great
leap between theory and practice. And you
will end up in a beautiful place – a place where youth grow
into healthy, caring and responsible adults.

This is a tour of youth development. We will guide you
through a youth development program, pointing out the
hidden treasures – caring and trusting relationships,
engaging activities, and many others. This is no ordinary
tour. You will see things that are supported by years of
research and have been developed through a formal and in-
depth process called Networks for Youth Development.

Since the original publication of this booklet, we have field
tested the best practices named here through peer assess-
ments. We analyzed the results of these assessments and
revised this Tour Guide.

We will be your tour guides. We are members of *Networks for Youth Development*. In Networks we work together to promote youth development as a field of practice and mastery.

On our tour you will see the key components of the program. If you have any questions along the way, please ask. *(Turn to the last page for contacts.)*

We have designed this tour in the hopes that, upon completing it, you will decide that you, too, support the framework of youth development. You may be running, working in, participating in, linking with, advocating for, or supporting youth development programs.

So come on, let's begin our tour.

Alianza Dominicana

Children's Aid Society

Chinatown YMCA

The Door

Fund for the City of New York

Good Shepherd Services

Phipps Community Development Corp

Project Reach Youth

Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center

We are community-based youth-serving agencies in diverse neighborhoods in New York City working with the Fund for the City of New York. We are committed not only to articulating the importance of youth development but to providing supports and opportunities for all young people. We are committed to directing organizations which adhere to the goals and principles of youth development.

Welcome to a youth development program.

Organizational Structure that is Supportive of Youth Development

❶ Supportive mission and leadership

- Mission statement of organization (and/or the appropriate unit of the organization) supports youth development

- Staff is knowledgeable about mission statements

- Board of Directors includes at least one member with knowledge of or experience in youth development

- Board of Directors has a presence at agency functions/events of youth programs

- The organization's budget, and/or appropriate unit of organization's budget, is reflective of youth development mission:
  - ✓ mix of funding sources,
  - ✓ continuity of funding streams.

❷ Open Communication

- Information about changes (in program, funding, etc.) and about why those changes occur flows throughout the agency

- There is opportunity for staff dialogue built into the organization

❸ Emphasis on staff development

- The organization supports training at all levels and is committed to implementing what is learned at the trainings

- Physical environment and facility is supportive of staff development

- Staffing patterns support and reflect the mission of the organization, i.e., status of full-time/part-time workers, caseload sizes, etc.

❹ Appropriate linkages to community and field

- The organization does advocacy work in policy, funding and practice in youth development and related issues

- The organization reaches and serves the number of youth targeted

Environmental Factors to which Special Attention has been Focused

❶ Provide agency-wide orientation

- Total agency orientation to all youth regardless of the specific activity for which they enter the program

- Newsletter, *or*
    Bulletin boards, *or*
        Announcements

❷ Develop individual plan

- Written group or individual plans should address the needs, interests, and issues of young people

- Attention is paid to youth's expectations and goals

- Availability of referrals through resource directories and staff contact

❸ Be aware of what youth is experiencing

- Mechanism for staff to come together for periodic review of participants' status and plans

- Attention is paid to family, peers, school, community, other agencies

- Follow-up outside of program related activities (e.g., phone calls)

- Staff meetings for interdisciplinary or inter-activity planning

❹ Promote multi-cultural understanding

- Cultural competency training for staff/youth

- Ethnic/cultural background of staff and administration reflective of population served

- Curriculum of programs foster and promote multicultural understanding

Opportunities
for
Contributions
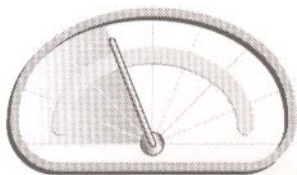
❶ Ensure youth participation in organization

- Youth contribute ideas for projects, activities, etc. which are accepted and acted upon
- Youth play a role in implementing parts of program
- Mechanisms for meetings between youth and/or staff and/or managers
- Paid employment, *or* stipended, *or* volunteer opportunities within program (such as clean-up crews, security patrol, supervising teen lounge, etc.)

❷ Provide community service opportunities

- Structured activities exist in which youth participate in community services such as: peer tutoring, counseling, education with people outside the organization, helping the homebound or homeless, park landscaping and clean-up, etc.
- Staff support is built into community service opportunities

❸ Maintain participant feedback

❸ Maintain participant feedback mechanisms

- Opportunity for young people to be engaged in reflection, feedback and modification in community service and all program activities

- Youth give feedback about their opinions and ideas about what happens in the program overall and/or in specific activities (i.e., evaluation forms or group conversations with participants or structured focus groups with participants)

❹ Include youth leadership

- Formalized youth councils or committees

- Youth have a defined voice in the governance of the program (this could include being on the Board of Directors, having a role in policy and decision making and implementation, having meetings between youth councils or leadership groups and program administration, etc.)

- Youth leadership opportunities such as community meetings, youth forums, journals, radio shows or other places for a youth voice

❺ Involve youth in community development

- Mechanism for young people to be involved in the community (including community development projects such as needs assessments or mapping reports)

- Ongoing relationships between youth, police, fire, schools or other community agencies (evidenced by regular meetings, participation in councils, volunteer activities, etc.)

- Opportunities for civic involvement such as: letter writing campaigns to elected officials, voter registration drives, etc.

- Mechanism for community input

❻ Create youth ownership of programs, space, etc.

- Youth are members of the organization with membership responsibilities and membership cards

- Youth know how the program is funded and participate in fund-raising and/or advocacy activities

- Youth show visitors or new participants the program, *or* youth play a role in orientation

- Youth play role in setting-up and decorating the space

- Symbols: T-shirts, caps, cards, etc. to create identification with program

Caring and Trusting Relationships
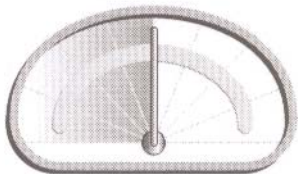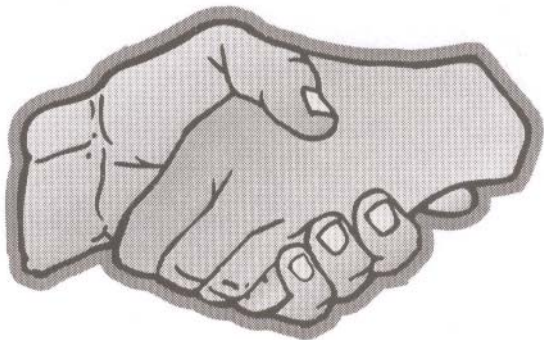
❶ Provide one-to-one relationships

- Each participant has a primary person

- System in which staff and youth track young person's progress over time, revises plans, coordinate resources, etc.

- Individualized contact with a primary person that includes planning that is interactive

❷ Involve families, caretakers

- Parent councils, *or*
  On-going parent groups, *or*
  Parent events, *or*
  Parent nights when teens present to or perform for their parents, *or*
  Parent awareness meetings

- Mechanism for parental input

- Mechanism for parents to talk to staff about their children's needs

❸ Create caring, family environment

- Provision of youth development training to all

personnel — not just counseling staff

- Structured opportunities for youth to take responsibility

- Opportunity for all staff and youth to come together for events, etc.

- Recruitment and training of adult volunteers and/or mentors

- Personalized nature to interactions — for example, staff call youth by name, etc.

- Mechanisms for handling problems other than expulsion

- Procedure for youth having access to staff for grievances, ideas, etc.

- Space is appropriate (there are places to congregate, etc).

- Confidentiality is apparent by where records are kept, where staff sit, etc.

- Stability in staff

❹ Recognize individual accomplishment of all program participants

- Awards or recognition for accomplishments and contributions

- Recognition for progress and ongoing participation

❺ Offer services within the framework of confidentiality

- Written policies regarding confidentiality of client information including waivers contained in files which allow confidential information to be shared with sign-off by person involved

- Confidentiality policy is communicated to participants through membership agreement or other mechanism

- Confidentiality procedures included in new staff orientation and/or agency-provided training and/or other mechanisms

- Confidentiality principles are established with youth in group and one-to-one sessions

- Attention is paid to privacy (e.g., private space for counseling)

❻ Establish and maintain positive interactions between youth and staff

- Point of entry to program is welcoming

- Staff advocates for participants

- Relations between youth and staff are characterized by:
  - ✓ Respect,
  - ✓ Distinguishing young person's behavior from their personality,
  - ✓ Being non-judgmental,
  - ✓ Open and interactive communication

❼ Maintain open communication within organization

- Personalized contact at all levels of organization

- Open door policy that allows youth to know they can approach staff at any time to talk about their concerns

- Telephone system is user-friendly

Engaging
Activities
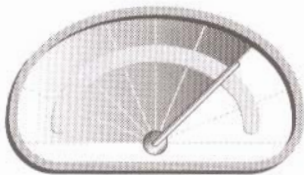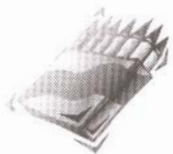
- Conflict resolution/peer mediation available

- Opportunities to understand the viewpoints, lifestyles and cultures of others

❺ Provide life skills training

- Classes/workshops that cover a variety of life skills, e.g., money and time management, health maintenance, educational attainment, job searching, networking, home management, communication, etc.

- Career readiness training

❻ Focus on strengths and resiliencies (not deficits and problems)

- Setting goals with young people (e.g., goals for increasing skills and knowledge, improving life conditions, etc.)

- Staff and youth set individual short term goals/evaluate progress

Engaging
Activities
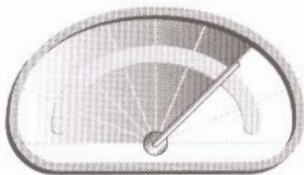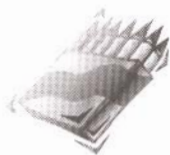
❶ Balance individual and group activities

- Workshop training or group sessions are supplemented with individual counseling sessions on participant needs or opportunities for individual study, activity, etc.

- Large and small groups are present

- One-to-one activities exist

- Time and space for socializing

❷ Instill curiosity to learn from broad range of experiences

- Activities involve questioning, experimentation, and exploration (e.g., field trips, guest speakers, etc.)

- Activities are interactive and participatory (hands-on)

❸ Incorporate fun

- Non-targeted laughter occurs during activities

- Active participation including team building activities, opening up meetings with some type of game, the use of games and role plays in presentation, etc.

- New activities are periodically added to programs

- Staff exhibits sense of humor

❹ Provide developmentally appropriate activities

- Similar activities and topics are structured appropriately for different developmental/age groups

- Staff/participant ratios and group sizes vary with activity

❺ Foster creativity/flexibility

- Activities/workshops/classes involving arts, music, theater, dance, etc.

- "Choice" activities where youth can make decisions on parts of program that they would enjoy within the larger youth program

Factors that Promote Continuity for Youth in the Program
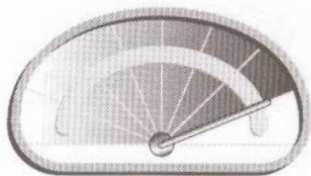
❶ Establish consistency within program

- Each youth has a primary person who is responsible for looking out for them

- A regular schedule is maintained

❷ Create room for youth to continue to grow within the agency

- Activities for a continuum of age groupings

- Opportunity for youth to volunteer in a variety of areas and/or with a variety of age groups, *or* promote from within – hire youth that have participated in programs

- Opportunity for youth to try out different activities at different times over the long term

❸ Support young people to bridge to adulthood

- Youth are assisted with goal setting, planning and life skills development

- Mechanism for youth to maintain connection to program
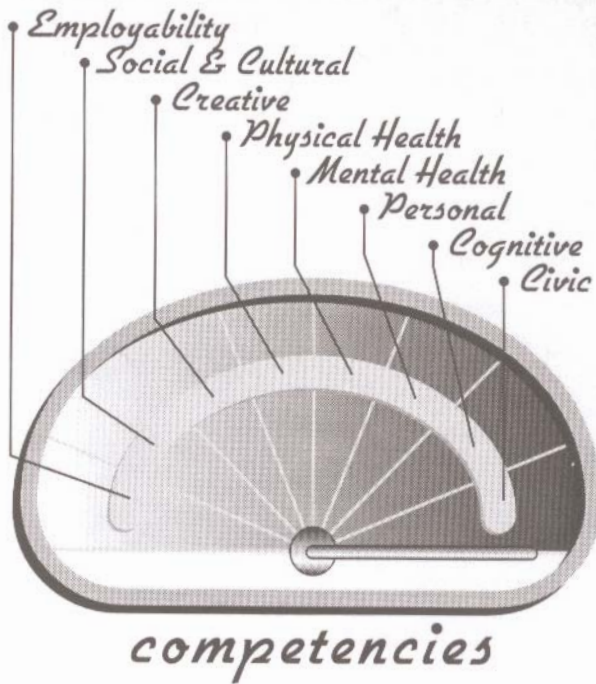
❹ Create closure

- Agency provides formal rituals to mark transition from one state to another:
    - ✓ Final awards dinner, **or**
    - ✓ Certificates and trophies given out to participants, **or**
    - ✓ Youth present their work and reflect on their experiences, **or**
    - ✓ End-of-the-day rituals, **or**
    - ✓ Graduation from programs
- One-on-one closure that includes discussion of transition
- Point of closure that includes individual assessment of what has been accomplished and what future should look like including referrals addressing individual needs, where appropriate

❺ Retain youth within program until appropriate termination

- Follow-up procedures itemized as part of staff responsibilities

How do you know that you're in the right place?

Because youth have acquired:

- Employability
- Social & Cultural
- Creative
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Personal
- Cognitive
- Civic

competencies

Welcome
to the Gift Shop
of Youth Services

Let's look in the display case to see what you can take with you!

The Handbook of Positive Youth Outcomes:

Featuring those competency areas in which youth development programs can make a difference.

What It Takes – Core Competencies for Youth Work:

Lists the skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that youth workers need.

Assessment Tools:

A complete set of assessment instruments based on the best practices named in this book. Tools for self assessment as well as peer assessment are available.

Measuring Youth Outcomes:

A research report on the status of the field.

For price listings and to order any of the above items, contact:

Youth Development Institute
Fund for the City of New York
✉ 121 Sixth Avenue
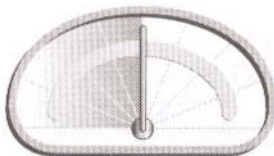New York, NY 10013
📞 tel (212) 925-6675
📠 fax (212) 925-5675

Be sure to specify the item you are ordering and the number of copies desired.

For more information, contact:

Networks for Youth Development
Youth Development Institute

✉ Fund for the City of New York
121 Sixth Avenue, 6th floor • New York, NY 10013

📞 *tel* (212) 925-6675 • 📠 *fax* (212) 925-5675

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Buggin' Out Productions, a project of **Youth Force**