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Framework

The Youth Development Framework for Practice is at the core of all CNYD's work. The research-based framework was developed in partnership with Dr. Michelle Gambone of Youth Development Strategies, Inc. and Dr. Jim Connell of the Institute for Research and Reform and adapted from their Community Action Framework for Youth Development to reflect youth development in a youth-serving organizational context. Local youth workers, agency leaders and funders provided crucial input during the adaptation process. The Framework is a road map for youth workers, organizations and policy-makers that identifies desired long-term outcomes for young people and explains the youth development practices that need to be in place to achieve these outcomes. Specifically, the Framework focuses on five supports and opportunities that young people need to experience in a youth development program in order to move towards these positive long-term outcomes. Program effectiveness can then be measured by participants' experience of these five factors. The five supports and opportunities are:

**Safety, so young people feel:**

- Physically and emotionally secure.

**Supportive Relationships, so young people can experience:**

- Guidance, emotional and practical support
- Adults and peers knowing who they are and what's important to them

**Meaningful Youth Involvement, so that young people can:**

- Be involved in meaningful roles with responsibility,
- Have input into decision-making,
- Have opportunities for leadership, and
- Feel a sense of belonging.

**Skill Building, so that young people can have:**

- Challenging and interesting learning experiences which help them build a wide array of skills, and
- Experience a sense of growth and progress.

**Community Involvement, so that young people gain:**

- An understanding of the greater community, and
- A sense of being able to make an impact in their community.

The Framework then goes one step further by identifying the links between these supports and opportunities and the organizational practices necessary to support quality youth programming. The nine organizational practice areas are:

- Low youth to staff/volunteer ratios
- Safe, reliable, and accessible activities and spaces
- Flexibility in allocating available resources
- Range of diverse, interesting, and skill-building activities
- Continuity and consistency of care
- High, clear, and fair standards

- Ongoing, results-based staff and organizational improvement process
- Youth involvement
- Community engagement

As depicted below, the Youth Development Framework for Practice provides a clear path from nine clearly-defined organizational practices to the desired outcome of young adults who have achieved economic self-sufficiency, healthy human relationships and positive community involvement. It has become an invaluable tool for organizational change, program design, staff development, program assessment and strategic planning and decision-making within organizations and across the youth services community.



Click to enlarge

If you would like to learn more about CNYD's Youth Development Framework for Practice, please consider attending one of our workshops or participating in the Youth Development Learning Network.

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