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Enhance Authentic and Meaningful Youth Engagement: Using the Y-VAL

Brie Masselli, Youth Program Director
Alice Topaloff, Operations Coordinator
The development of the contents of this presentation were supported by funding from the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, United States Department of Education, and the Center for Mental Health Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (NIDRR grant H133B990025). This presentation was also supported with funding from the National Technical Assistance Network for Children’s Behavioral Health under contract with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Contract #HHSS280201500007C. The content does not represent the views or policies of the funding agencies. In addition, you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.
Presenters

Brie Masselli, MA
Youth Program Director,

Alice Topaloff, MS
Operations Coordinator,
Who We Are:

- **Youth MOVE National** is a youth-driven, chapter-membership organization dedicated to improving services and systems that serve youth, such as mental health, juvenile justice, education, and child welfare.

- **MOVE** stands for **Motivating Others through Voices of Experience**. Members share their voices of experience through advocacy and leadership activities to change the very systems they have lived through.

- There are more than 65 chapters nationwide.
Overview

- The value of youth-driven care
- The value of young adult participation in advising and decision-making at the organizational level
- The need for assessing best practices for youth engagement
- Overview of the contents of the Youth and Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL)
- The process for implementation of Y-VAL assessment and TA
Youth Voice

Research shows patients and their families who actively engage with their health care teams have better outcomes, often choose less expensive options when participating in shared decision-making, and express greater satisfaction with their health care experience. Center for Advancing Health Report: Here to Stay- What Health Care Leaders About Engagement:

- Engagement is active
- The health care system doesn’t make engagement easy
- Everyone benefits from engagement
- Engagement is demanding and many are unprepared
- Partnerships are required

Youth Driven Care

Youth Driven that young people have the right to be empowered, educated, and given a decision-making role in the care of their own lives as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all youth in the community, state and nation. This includes giving young people a sustainable voice and then listening to that voice. Youth guided organizations create safe environments that enable young people to gain self sustainability in accordance with the cultures and beliefs with which they identify. Further, a youth guided approach recognizes that there is a continuum of power that should be shared with young people based on their understanding and maturity in a strength based change process. Youth-guided organizations recognize that this process should be fun and worthwhile.
Meaningful Participation

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)
Benefits of Authentic Youth Engagement

- Contribute to the designing and implementation of new policies
- Changes institutional culture and practice
- Builds awareness & common understanding
- Builds sense of community
- Builds self efficacy
- Improves individual and organizational outcomes
What is the Y-VAL?

• Provides a framework of key indicators of meaningful and successful Y/YA voice in program design at the agency level.

• Assessing allows for a collective and reflective process to better understanding where the agency with Y/YA Voice
  • Promotes a shared vision for success
  • Identifies strengths and needs
  • Supports with moving towards sustainable engagement

• Help young people advocate for meaningful participation and support

• Aids in assessing impact of technical assistance
Developing the Y-VAL

• Partnership with Portland State University

• Review of existing assessment tools that looked at youth voice in organizational programing

• Input, review and edits from Youth MOVE National’s Youth Best Practice Committee

• National validation study
Y-VAL Themes

- Overall Vision and Commitment
- Collaborative Approach
- Empowered Representatives
- Commitment to Facilitation and Support
- Workforce Development
- Participation in Developing Programs & Policies
- Participation in Evaluation
- Leading Initiatives and Projects
Responses

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Overall vision and commitment

Formal Policy

• The agency has a formal policy that describes why and how it involves young people in advising and decision making.

• This policy
  • describes the types of decision making and advising that Y/YA will participate in
  • describes the levels in which the Y/YA will have decision-making power they will have (for example, if Y/YA will have equal say in what it decided).

• Young people collaborated in developing this policy and it is periodically updated to reflect new circumstances.

• The policy is written in language that young people find easy to understand.
Domain 1: Overall Vision and Commitment

Poll: Formal Policy
The agency has a formal policy that describes why and how it involves young people in advising and decision making.

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Collaborative approach

Youth- and young adult friendly meetings

• The agency has worked with young people to establish good meeting practices that encourage young people to engage in meeting activities.

• Good meeting practices include providing meeting materials in advance, keeping meetings short and efficient, beginning with ice-breakers or sharing time, explaining acronyms and jargon, and providing food and taking regular breaks.

• Meetings are scheduled at times and locations that Y/YA can attend.
Empowered representatives

Appropriate Representation

- The young people who are a part of the agency’s decision making have received or are receiving services, or they have similar lived experience to the young people that the agency serves.
Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation

Dedicated Staff Time

• The agency employs someone to help support Y/YA to participate in advising and decision making.

• This person is either a Y/YA with lived experience or someone with relevant expertise that is selected by Y/YA.

• If the agency does not have a staff member who does this, then the agency contracts with a Y/YA-run organization to support Y/YA participation.

• Y/YA have significant input in selecting the person for this role and may prioritize demonstrated skills in supporting Y/YA participation over lived experience.
Domain 4: Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation

Poll: Dedicated Staff Time
The agency employs someone to help support Y/YA to participate in advising and decision making.
Workforce development

Staff Training

• Staff orientation and training clearly communicate the agency’s respect for young people’s perspectives and commitment to empowering Y/YA participation in decision making.

• Staff orientation and training describe the agency’s policies around facilitating and supporting Y/YA voice.

• Y/YA are involved in developing and delivering this aspect of the staff orientation and training.

• All staff are provided professional development focused on support for Y/YA voice, collaboration with young people, Y/YA empowerment, and positive Y/YA development approaches.
Domain 5: Workforce Development

Poll: Staff Training
Staff orientation and training clearly communicate the agency’s respect for young people’s perspectives and commitment to empowering Y/YA participation in decision making.
Participation in developing programming/program policies

Respect of youth and young adult culture

• Young people have significant input in efforts to ensure that agency climate, environment and policies reflect Y/YA culture and preferences.

• These efforts may include Y/YA involvement in:
  • social media and communications policy and management,
  • aspects of the physical environment (Y/YA-friendly décor, etc.),
  • policies around Y/YA privacy and confidentiality, and

• Developing opportunities for Y/YA community engagement and informal peer support.
Participation in evaluation

Feedback on services

• The agency regularly gathers confidential feedback from young people receiving services to ensure that programming is meeting their needs.

• Young people do not experience negative consequences as a result of giving honest feedback.
Leading initiatives and projects

Control of funds

• Y/YA leaders control or co-control funds they raise or co-raise.

• There is transparency about how these funds are distributed and used (e.g., Y/YA understand that the costs of hosting a fundraising event may be deducted from the amount of funds raised).
Poll: Control of funds
Y/YA leaders control or co-control funds they raise or co-raise.

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Implementing the Y-VAL in your agency

- At least 15 people will need to take the survey (youth/young adult and adult participants)
- A point person at the agency will be sent a survey link, and asked to share the link with relevant people in the agency
- YMN will help sending reminders, track participation, etc.
- YMN will generate an agency-specific report including:
  - Y-VAL scores
  - Areas of growth
  - Resources and Technical Assistance in those areas

Interested in taking the tool? Contact Josie Badger badger@raisecenter.org
Interested in learning more about the tool? Contact YMN info@youthmovenational.org
Questions
Stay connected & for more information

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Thank You
for joining us for this Webinar!

Please complete our survey

For more information, please contact us at:
raisecenter.org