Youth Inclusion Facilitator Instruction
Engaging in Community Collaboration

Youth programs are only one part of the world in which youth live, learn, and grow. Youth are constantly balancing between their individual environments of family, school, youth programs, etc.,[41] and in order to thrive, they need to feel safe and welcome across all settings. Youth programs are uniquely placed to assist families and communities in creating a network of inclusive environments that ensure a continuity of safety for youth.[42]

Through community collaboration, program staff should help youth who may not feel empowered to develop relationships with role models or support youth in developing and providing education to the greater community about issues they face as individuals.[8]

Program managers can also play a role by researching and providing information to program staff concerning resources available outside of the youth program, particularly for youth who may not feel empowered.[24, 8]

Parents, guardians, stakeholders and other adults who understand and support youth programs help to create a community where inclusion is valued and all youth are welcome, safe, cared for, and respected.[26] This understanding builds a sense of continuity for youth, who will then be better able to trust the safety of the environments around them.[52]
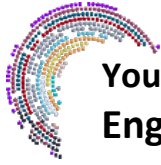
Strategies for Engaging in Community Collaboration

Identify: Identify the systems already in place to connect youth with people and organizations in the community.

Strengthen: Take steps to strengthen the program's relationship with other community organizations (e.g., schools, church youth groups, local 4-H clubs, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troupes, etc.).

Talk: Talk with youth about whom they admire and why.

Develop: Develop a program to connect youth with a mentor.

Ask: Ask youth to explain the issues that are important to them.

Support: Identify ways the program can help support issues that are important to youth within the community.

Workshops related to Engaging in Community Collaboration

Electronic Communication Policy Review
First impressions do sometimes last, and in today's social media saturated world, your impression could be left by a tweet, hashtag, or email. Engaging with the community means having a clear message and then knowing how to stay on that message across all of the publications, forms, posts, and broadcast messages generated by your program for parents and the broader community.

Managing Difficult Communication

Explaining how your program is inclusive, welcoming, and safe for all youth is an important job. It is one that the program manager cannot accomplish alone. Staff play an important role in helping youth, parents, and other caring adults understand why an inclusive program is so important to creating a positive environment for youth. The program should clearly communicate these program values through print and electronic communication.

Understanding Social Media in Community Engagement

Many youth programs have safeguards in place to protect youth and staff from inappropriate interactions via social media but often overlook the importance of using social media to communicate with youth, parents, guardians, and other community stakeholders. Using social media tools wisely will help program staff avoid some of the unintended consequences of using social media as well.