



Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Building Relationships

Workshop Description: This workshop includes information and practice for developing the skills necessary for building strong and meaningful relationships among youth. These skills will include learning how to show respect among youth as well as between youth and staff, instilling an open line of communication with youth, and showing youth support through building a safe and open environment.

For this module, the workshops will include a series of activities aimed at demonstrating or introducing skills that you will need to develop in order to interact and build relationships with youth. These activities, followed by larger group discussions, will prepare staff for interacting with youth on a regular basis.

Preparation Time: The designated preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Youth Inclusion Training website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 1 hour to complete all activities within this guide.

Materials:

- Printed copies of Program Feedback Survey for each staff member. This survey can be accessed under the Resource section of the Youth Inclusion Training website.
- Printed copies of *4-Corners* activity handout.
- Two large blank white sheets of paper or a whiteboard.
- 4-Corner signs that say
 - “Strongly Agree”
 - “Agree”
 - “Disagree”
 - “Strongly Disagree”
- Blindfolds. These can be bandanas, cloth napkins, etc.
- Paper and pens for participants.

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Youth Input, Directions, and Leadership. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide and any others related to this topic (e.g., Gathering Youth Input and Community Building). In addition, gather all necessary materials, familiarize yourself with the workshop guide, and set up a generic obstacle course to be used in the *Building Trust* activity.

Knowledge: Understanding Strategies for Building Relationships

Before you start any of the activities in this workshop read the following section to learn more to understand the strategies for building relationships.



Youth program staff may not understand how to create a system where youth have input, give direction to the program, and serve in leadership roles. The basics of this system are the same as those for any good relationship.

Respect Show respect for the each participant’s experiences, opinions, and abilities. Listen and ask inspiring questions.

Communication Communicate in a clear and concise manner while practicing active listening during interactions with youth.

Support Adults who support youth provide connections to other adults, information about funding and systems, and encouragement in participating in new activities. Youth input does not mean the adult checks out. The adult role is to facilitate and, more importantly, to ensure youth are working in a safe environment.

These strategies in action look like this:

Provide Context and Background	Providing background information about important issues to youth at the appropriate level facilitates understanding and involvement. When youth have a basic understanding of topics like the value of a diverse environment, the importance of building up people who have less privilege, or the foundation of religious equality, they are better able to participate in decision-making in a meaningful way. Without this baseline information, it may appear that youth do not support something when truly the youth have not been given the full information about the value of that concept or topic.
Build a Foundation of Trust	Trust is critical to an individual’s credibility and effectiveness when working with youth. Without it, youth will not share their ideas, opinions, or preferences. See the earlier section on relational strategies for building trust. Keep in mind that keeping your word is a great way to build trust. Program staff should spend some time setting and clarifying the ground rules for group dynamics and developing a language of respect and inclusion to open and maintain channels of communication among youth as well as between youth and staff.
Establish an Environment to Share	Early in the process, staff will want to get feedback from youth and facilitate decisions among youth about the options they brainstorm. Depending on what the youth are trying to accomplish and the age of the youth, staff might offer a survey, conduct a short circle discussion to decide, or conduct a vote with feet (a process where youth move from one part of a room to another to signify their choice). The youth program staff role in this component is to facilitate getting the feedback as well as to allow enough time for youth to give their input in a respectful manner.



Practice Active Listening Skills	<p>Active listening skills are a tool for building trust and rapport by demonstrating concern or interest. Program staff can use these skills to help youth answer the question “What do you want to do?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Ended Questions. “What activities did you really like last year?” or “You didn’t attend the last couple of activities. What was it about the activities you didn’t like?” are questions that require more than a simple yes or no and encourage youth to share more details.• Withhold Judgement. Give youth time to finish their thoughts, articulate their ideas, and provide details.• Paraphrase. Reflect statements back to youth. This technique shows you are listening and allows them to clarify.
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Objectives:

- Develop skills for building relationships with youth.
- Practice active listening skills and how to utilize these skills when communicating with youth.
- Support youth by building a safe and inclusive environment.

Introduction (5 to 7 minutes):

- Describe the topic of building relationships with youth including the importance of providing context and background about issues that are important to youth, establishing trust through active listening skills, and building an environment where youth feel safe enough to share.
 - What to say: “Today we are going to talk about how to build relationships with youth that are based on a foundation of trust. You will develop the skills necessary to build a meaningful relationship with youth through respect, communication, and support.”
- Transition into the Prior Knowledge Activity
 - What to say: “First we are going to start off with what you already know about how to form these relationships and what you think youth look for and need in a program staff/mentor.”

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- Ask the staff to share what they think are important strategies for establishing trust with youth. Once staff have exhausted these strategies, you can follow up by asking staff what you should not do when trying to connect and build a relationship with youth. Record responses on a large sheet of blank white paper.
 - Questions for this section can be phrased as follows:
 - “How would you develop a line of communication between youth and you?”
 - “What does active listening look like?”
 - “What are some things you should not do or say when trying to establish a trusting relationship with youth?”



- Ask the staff what they think they still want to know about this topic or if there is anything they need clarification on. Again, write staff responses on a sheet of paper.

Activities:

Activity: *Building Trust* (15-20 minutes)

- Describe the *Building Trust* activity:
 - What to say, “We are going to do a series of activities and brainstorm ideas about how to effectively implement some of the skills you will need to communicate with and build trusting relationships among youth.”
- Lead the *Building Trust* activity:
 - For this activity, set up a short obstacle course. If your group is large, you can set up more than one. The obstacle course(s) shouldn’t be too complex or include sharp cornered items.
 - Have the staff pair up. Within each pair, one person is blindfolded and the other is not. Have the pairs navigate the obstacle course. If more space is available outside, you can relocate this activity.
 - Have the staff member that is not blindfolded verbally guide their partner to avoid any obstacles. After a few minutes, have the partners switch roles. This will help demonstrate the importance of communication and trust among staff.
 - Come back together as a whole group and discuss why it is important that youth trust adult staff. Discuss what some guidelines may be for developing and maintaining trust among youth.
 - Possible discussion questions might include:

For the blindfolded participants:

How did it feel to be guided by another staff member?

How can you use that understanding to better relate to youth?

For the guides:

What were some of the difficulties you experienced guiding the blindfolded participants?

How can you use that understanding to better understand the obstacles that could arise when forming adult-youth relationships?

Activity: *Gathering Youth Feedback/Sharing Environment* (15-20)

- Describe the *Gathering Youth Feedback/Sharing Environment* activity:
 - You can transition by saying “Now we are going to practice some of the tools you can use when gathering feedback from youth. One feedback method is via a survey.”
- Lead the *Gathering Youth Feedback/Sharing Environment* activity:
 - Hand out the *Sample Program Feedback Survey* to each staff member and have them read it over.
 - Ask the staff to work individually to try to come up with any additional questions they think may be beneficial to include in a program survey.
 - Discuss what they came up with as a larger group.
 - Next, say “Another method that can be used to gather youth input is discussion feedback. This format entails youth and staff sitting together and the staff leading the



discussion to try to get youth to share their opinions on a variety of topics. Often, this type of discussion takes place early in the program to try to gauge what youth are looking for in the program. For example, maybe you want to know whether or not the program is meeting youth's needs and interests. You want to know what is working or whether or not youth are enjoying the activities."

Activity: 4-Corners Feedback (15 minutes)

- Describe the *4-Corners Feedback* activity:
 - Explain the purpose of this feedback method by saying "The 4-Corners feedback activity evaluates youth's responses to a series of statements by having them say that they either strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that is read."
- Lead the *4-Corners Feedback* activity:
 - Choose one person to act as the program staff while all others play the part of youth. Designate spots in the room for strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. You may want to write the words on a card or paper and place them on the floor or wall. Then have the person acting as the program staff read from a series of statements in the *4-Corners Activity Statements* handout and have the remaining staff respond to each statement by moving to the corner that most accurately reflects their opinion. Be sure to emphasize that those responding to the questions being read should pretend to be youth in the program as this is essentially a mock trial of how program staff can interactively receive feedback from youth.

Activity: Listening Skills (Part 1) (20 minutes)

- Describe the *Listening Skills (Part 1)* activity:
 - The first part of this workshop is a game that emphasizes the importance of listening closely. Note that this activity works best when the size of the group is large. If the group of staff participants is small, skip Part 1 of this activity.
- Lead the *Listening Skills (Part 1)* activity:
 - Have all staff participants sit in a large circle. One person will volunteer to start off and make up a story of their choice. When they are done with 3 to 5 sentences, have them stop and ask another participant to continue. Before another person can continue adding to the story, they have to repeat the last sentence that was said. If the participant fumbles, takes longer than 3 to 5 seconds, or cannot restate the last sentence, then they are out. The last person standing wins.
 - You will need to facilitate this activity by telling participants when to stop, determining who is next, and being the judge on when someone is eliminated or not.
 - After the completion of the game, have staff remain in a circle and ask them what they thought was challenging about the game. Then ask them what they thought they could have improved on. These questions will help drive home the importance of active listening skills.

Activity: Listening Skills (Part 2) (10-15 minutes)

- Describe the *Listening Skills (Part 2)* activity:



- What to say, “Active listening skills include providing feedback to the speaker that you are hearing and understanding what they are saying. To do this you need to be able to send both nonverbal and verbal signals to youth. More than nodding your head and affirming their statements with an occasional “uh-huh” or “yes,” you need to provide the youth with feedback that indicates you are engaged in the conversation. You do this through questions that draw out further information. One simple way to do this is by asking questions that cannot be answered with a yes or a no. Questions that start with who, what, and how will help.
- Lead the *Listening Skills (Part 2)* activity:
 - Break the staff into groups of two (a group of three is also fine if there is an odd number). On the *Conversation Starters* handout, there are 5 scenarios. Assign one scenario to each group and have them brainstorm how they would start a conversation with that particular youth to show that they are listening and paying attention to details. Provide the group with paper and pens so they can write down their ideas.
 - Allow about 5-7 minutes for staff to brainstorm their questions.
 - Ask the small groups to return and ask them to share their questions with the large group.

Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the staff’s responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the staff what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as “What part of the activity made you realize that?”

Resources:

Handout: *Sample Program Feedback Survey*

Handout: *4-Corners Activity Statements*

Handout: *Conversation Starters*

Sources:

Footnotes in this document can be found as references within the Youth Inclusion Implementation Guide at http://reach.umn.edu/inclusion/pdf/Youth_Inclusion_Implementation_Manual.pdf

The Handout: *Sample Program Feedback Survey* adapted from YMCA. (n.d.). Program Survey. Retrieved August 18, 2018, from <http://www.projectcornerstone.org/pdfs/evaltoolkit/phase1/PCprogramsurvey.pdf>

The Handout: *4-Corners Activity Statements* adapted from YMCA. (n.d.). Four Corners Exercise. Retrieved August 18, 2018, from <http://www.kyymca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Four-Corners.pdf>



Youth Inclusion Handout: Sample Program Feedback Survey

Directions: Please fill out the following survey honestly. Your answers are completely confidential.

1. How old are you?
 - a. 10 years old or younger
 - b. 11 years old
 - c. 12 years old
 - d. 13 years old
 - e. 14 years old
 - f. 15 years old
 - g. 16 years old or older

2. What is your sex?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

3. What grade are you in?
 - a. 4th
 - b. 5th
 - c. 6th
 - d. 7th
 - e. 8th
 - f. Other

The next questions ask about happy you are with the program.

4. How often do you attend the program?
 - a. Once a week
 - b. Twice a week
 - c. 3 times a week
 - d. 4 times a week
 - e. Every day

5. How satisfied are you with the program?
 - a. Very unsatisfied
 - b. Unsatisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Satisfied
 - e. Very Satisfied

6. Do the program staff treat you with respect?
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree



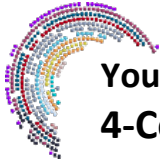
Youth Inclusion Handout: Sample Program Feedback Survey

7. Do you enjoy the activities in the program?
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

The following questions are open ended. Please write your response in the box provided.

8. What is your favorite part of the program? Why?

9. If you could change one thing about the program, what would it be?



Youth Inclusion Handout: 4-Corners Activity Statements

Directions: Respond to the following statements by moving to the location in the room that best represents your opinion. The responses are: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

1. In this program, I get to help plan, choose, or lead activities.
2. I enjoy the activities in this program.
3. I like being involved in this program.
4. In this program I feel safe.
5. In this program, there are clear rules about what I can and cannot do.
6. The adults who work or volunteer with this program really care about me.
7. The adults who work or volunteer with this program listen to what I have to say.
8. The adults who work or volunteer with this program challenge me to do my best.
9. The adults who work or volunteer with this program are positive role models for me.
10. The adults who work or volunteer in this program encourage me to do well in school.
11. I could do go an adult in the program for advice if I had a serious problem.
12. Other youth in this program care about me.
13. Other youth in this program are positive role models for me.
14. Being involved in this program has taught me clear rules about what is okay and what isn't.
15. Being involved in this program has made me want to get more involved in the community.
16. This program has helped me learn how to make better decisions.
17. This program has helped me learn about people who are different from me.
18. This program has helped me learn I can do things I didn't think I could do.



Youth Inclusion Handout: Conversation Starters

Directions: Assign each of the groups one of the following scenarios to start a conversation.

1. A youth arrives at the program after school and you can tell that they are quieter than usual and keeping to themselves rather than hanging out with and talking to their friends.
2. You overhear one youth talking about their weekend and mention that they were in a baseball tournament.
3. A while ago you heard a youth talk about his brother going to college in the fall. You know that this youth and his brother were very close and the youth looks up to him a lot.
4. A youth recently saw a movie that just came out. You have seen the trailers for this movie and have wanted to see it yourself.
5. You know that a youth doesn't enjoy to play sports, but is very musically inclined. They are in the orchestra and enjoy practicing every day.