



## Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Developmental Levels and Inclusion

**Workshop Description:** This workshop will explore the different developmental characteristics of youth at various ages and stages in order to better understand the youth that youth program staff interact with. By understanding the stages of development and their associated physical, social, emotional, and intellectual characteristics, staff will be able to make a larger impact on youth development.

**Preparation Time:** The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 20 to 30 minutes. This allows for facilitators to familiarize themselves with the background reading on the Youth Inclusion Training website, the background information in this module, collecting and organizing materials, and gathering any additional information needed.

**Instruction Time:** It will take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete all activities within this guide.

### Materials:

- Paper and pencil for each participant.
- Envelopes containing the pieces of the puzzles in the Resources section of this workshop guide titled Instructional Aid: *Developmental Puzzle Key* for each age group (9-11, 12-14, and 15-18). There should be enough envelopes for each group to have one.
- Uncut copy of Instructional Aid: *Developmental Puzzle Key* for each of the age group puzzles.
- Printed copies of the blank *Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups*.
- Instructional Aid: *Sample Characteristics of Age Groups*
- Two large pieces of blank paper and/or whiteboard space.

**Preparation Instructions:** Prior to this workshop, you should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Supportive Adult-Youth Relationships. In addition, you should review the background information in this guide and any others related to the topic (e.g., Using Relational Strategies, Responding to Youth's Questions, Responding to Bullying, etc.). You should also print each of the Development Puzzles, cut out the pieces, mix the pieces of the age group puzzles up, and place the pieces in the envelopes for each team. Finally, print out enough copies of the *Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups* so each staff member has a copy. You should also be familiar with the responses for each of the worksheets and be prepared to facilitate a discussion regarding their content.

### Knowledge: Understanding Ages and Stages

Understanding the developmental levels of youth helps program staff understand why youth interact the way they do in many situations. Youth developmental levels are studied through four major areas of



development: physical, social, emotional, and intellectual (cognitive). Just as physical growth patterns vary from youth to youth, developmental growth patterns can vary as well. For example, youth may be physically 15 years old, but have the emotional development of a 13-year-old and social development of a 16-year-old. By understanding the continuum of growth, you will be better able to understand what may influence how youth react.

**Early Adolescence (9- to 11-year-olds).** This age group focuses on comparisons and may find comparisons with the success of others difficult and detrimental to self-confidence. Youth in this age and stage judge ideas in absolutes (right or wrong) and do not tolerate much middle ground. Relational aggression or trying to hurt someone by damaging their social status or relationships (think rumor spreading) and emotional bullying are more common among girls in this age group. Access to electronics increases opportunities for bullying at this age and developmental level.<sup>53</sup>

**Middle Adolescence (12- to 14-year-olds).** With a wide range of sexual maturity and growth patterns between and within gender groups, physical differences can be the focus for this age group. This is when youth begin to grow into their adult bodies and when the ears, nose, hands, and feet may be larger or disproportionate to the rest of the body. During this age and stage, youth begin to look more to peers than to parents for recognition, acceptance, and trust. Youth may act a certain way to get a laugh or attention from their peers in this age group.<sup>53</sup>

**Late Adolescence (15- to 18-year-olds).** As youth grow and mature, the range of physical size and maturity shrinks. At this age and stage, youth physical growth is tapering. However, emotionally, intellectually, and socially, this age group is continuing to develop. Youth 15 to 18 years old begin to test sexual attractiveness as well as accepting and enjoying their own uniqueness. Youth still seek status and approval from peer groups and look for the confidence of others in their decisions.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout adolescence, youth seek to define their identity and may comment on peers who do not fit in with their crowd to help themselves fit in. Bullying reaches its peak in early adolescence and then decreases in high school.<sup>54</sup> More 8- to 15-year-olds identify teasing and bullying as a bigger problem than drugs, alcohol, sex, and racism.<sup>55</sup> Early adolescence is a time when significant differences can contribute to an environment of insecurity and bullying.

Youth may not fully think through the dangers and implications of their actions when they are with a group of peers. Although youth are developing the ability to understand individual differences, they may put aside these emerging cognitive skills and join with bullying friends rather than stand out by defending someone who is singled out.<sup>56</sup>

### Objectives:

- Increase staff understanding of youth's characteristics and behavior.
- Understand how youth's developmental stages impacts adult-youth relationships and relationships with their peers.



### Introduction (5-7 minutes):

- Introduce the topic of developmental levels by saying “In this session, we will be looking at developmental characteristics of youth including physical, social, emotional, and intellectual (cognitive). By properly identifying these stages, we will have a better understanding of why youth interact and react in many different ways. Youth don’t develop at the same rate, which is why understanding development on a continuum is important for understanding and influencing how youth interact and react.”

### Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- Ask the staff to brainstorm the different developmental characteristics for 9-11-year-olds, 12-14-year-olds, and 15-18-year-olds. Record their responses making three different columns, one for each age group.
- Ask the staff how developmental stages play a role in adult-youth relationships, specifically in youth programs. Again, record their responses.
- Ask the staff if they have any questions about developmental characteristics for any of these age groups that they hope to have answered.

### Activities:

#### Activity: *Characteristics of Youth Puzzle* (45 minutes)

- Describe the *Characteristics of Youth Puzzle* activity:
  - What to say: “We are going to do an activity that visually illustrates the different development characteristics of youth with the goal of answering the question ‘What developmental growth patterns are there and how do they influence program staff interactions with youth?’”
- Lead the *Characteristics of Youth Puzzle* activity:
  - First, separate the staff into about four groups. The size of these groups will vary depending on how many participants there are.
  - Distribute one envelope to each group containing the pieces of the three different age group puzzles (9-11, 12-14, and 15-18).
  - Explain that the envelope contains three different puzzles in it. The puzzle for each age group is in the form of a geometric figure. The puzzle for the 9- 11-year-old group is in the shape of a circle, the 12-14-year-old group is shaped like a hexagon, and the 15-18-year-old group is shaped like a triangle.
    - What to say: “The goal is to identify, separate, and put together the three different puzzles. You will therefore need to determine which characteristics best fit the age you have from the set of pieces contained in your envelope. One suggestion is that you first brainstorm with your group about the characteristics you believe are common to each of the ages.”
  - Let the groups work while you monitor their progress.
  - *Instructor Note: If the groups become stuck you can offer clues:*
    - “There are three colors in each puzzle.”



- “There are about 10-11 pieces per puzzle.”
  - Once the staff have been working on the puzzle for about 10 minutes you can inform the staff that when they think they have each of the puzzles correct to check in with you. You will then check the group’s puzzles against the key. If they are correct, congratulate them and have them talk amongst themselves until the other groups are finished. If the group is incorrect, let them know which of the puzzles contains incorrect information and allow them time to alter their puzzle.
  - Once all groups are finished, facilitate a brief discussion as a large group. Some of the questions you can ask staff include the following:
    - “Do these characteristics seem appropriate to the ages that they were assigned? Why or why not?”
    - “Are they familiar to you?”

### **Activity: *Developmental Stages and Youth Programming* (30 minutes):**

- Describe the *Developmental Stages and Youth Programming* activity:
  - What to say, “Next, we will look further into youth developmental characteristics, specifically in regards to how those characteristics affect staff interactions with them.”
- Lead the *Developmental Stages and Youth Programming* activity:
  - Have staff remain in the same groups as the puzzle activity and distribute the *Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups* so that members of a group all have the same age group.
    - For example, one group of four staff members has the worksheet on 9-11-year-olds, another group has the worksheet on 12-14-year-olds.
  - Have the staff fill out their worksheet with what the developmental characteristics for their assigned age group mean for program staff interactions with youth.
  - *Instructor Note: For example for youth 9-11-year-olds a social implication might be that they follow rules out of respect for authority, an intellectual implication might be that youth vary greatly in academic abilities, interests, and reasoning skills.*
  - Move around the room and assist groups when necessary. Allow groups 15 minutes to finish their worksheets. If groups finish before the 15 minute time period, move on.
  - Facilitate participant responses for their worksheets and talk about the implications they came up with. Feel free to reference the sample worksheet responses located in resources.

### **Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):**

- Return to the staff’s responses from earlier. Ask 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:

Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups

Instructional Aid: Sample Age Group Worksheets

Instructional Aid: Developmental Puzzle key

### 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](http://reach.umn.edu/inclusion/pdf/Youth_Inclusion_Implementation_Manual.pdf)

4-H Military Partnerships. (2008). *Preparing the youth development professional, Day 2, Session V.*

Retrieved from Kansas State University. <https://4-hmilitarypartnerships.org/educator-staff/resources/curriculum/pydp/Day2P.pdf>



## Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups

**Directions:**

**Characteristics of 9-11-year-olds**

**Physical:**

**Social:**

**Emotional:**

**Intellectual:**



## Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups

**Directions:**

**Characteristics of 12-14-year-olds**

**Physical:**

**Social:**

**Emotional:**

**Intellectual:**



## Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Characteristics of Age Groups

**Directions:**

**Characteristics of 15-18-year-olds**

**Physical:**

**Social:**

**Emotional:**

**Intellectual:**





## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Sample Characteristics of Age Groups

### Characteristics of 9-11 year olds:

#### Physical:

- Experience steady increases in large muscle development, strength, balance, and coordination.
- Are quite active with boundless energy.
- Are maturing at differing rates between the sexes. Girls will be maturing faster than boys and some may be entering puberty.
- Are increasing in manual dexterity, small muscle coordination.

#### Social:

- Generally see adults as authority.
- Believe punishment should be a direct consequence of misdeeds.
- Follow rules out of respect for authority.
- Feel loyalty to group, club, etc. Enjoy code language and passwords.
- Identify with same sex group. Many prefer to be with members of the same sex.
- Prefer working in groups in cooperative activities.
- Expand and use reasoning skills to solve problems, negotiate, and compromise with peers.

#### Emotional:

- View right behavior as “obeying” rules set by those in power.
- Accept parent/family beliefs.
- Admire and imitate older boys and girls.
- Are developing decision-making skills.
- Are making some movement toward taking responsibility for own actions.
- Emphasize similarities between self and friend(s).
- Are beginning to question parental authority.
- Look to adults for guidance and approval.
- Need involvement with caring adult.
- Find comparisons with the success of others difficult and eroding in self-confidence.

#### Intellectual:

- Vary greatly in academic abilities, interest, and reasoning skills.
- Have increased attention span, but have many interests which change rapidly.
- Are beginning to think logically and symbolically. Still prefer concrete ideas.
- Are learning to use good judgment.
- Judges ideas in absolutes; right or wrong, fabulous or disgusting, etc. Do not tolerate much middle ground.
- Want to use their skills to explore and investigate the world.
- Have interests in collections and hobbies.
- May express feelings through creative writing.



## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Sample Characteristics of Age Groups

### Characteristics of 12-14 year olds:

#### Physical:

- Exhibit a wide range of sexual maturity and growth patterns between genders and within gender groups.
- Experience rapid changes in physical appearance.
- Growth of hands and feet, nose and ears may be faster than arms and legs and face causing concern for appearance and clumsiness.

#### Social:

- Are interested in activities involving the opposite sex; learning to live with the opposite sex.
- Are looking more to peers than parents. Seek peer recognition.
- Seek acceptance and trust.
- Tend to regard sex in a depersonalized way.
- Search for adult role models.
- Tend to reject ready-made solutions from adults in favor of their own.
- Question authority and family values.

#### Emotional:

- Compare themselves to others.
- Are concerned about physical development and emerging sexuality.
- See themselves as always on center stage.
- Body changes can set up situations of great embarrassment.
- Are concerned about social graces, grooming, and being liked by friends.
- Abandon views of parents as all powerful.
- Strive for independence, yet want and need parents help.
- Need information for making decisions.
- Seek privacy from parents/adults.
- Want to be part of something important.

#### Intellectual:

- Find justice and equality to be important issues.
- Think abstractly and hypothetically.
- Are developing skills in the use of logic. Can understand cause and effect.
- Can solve problems that have more than one variable.
- Can imagine consequences.
- Are ready for in-depth, long-term experiences.
- Have moved from fantasy to realistic focus on their life's goals.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Want to explore the world beyond their own community.
- Are curious about the environment.



## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Sample Characteristics of Age Groups

### Characteristics of 15-18 year olds:

#### Physical:

- Are concerned about body image.
- Exhibit smaller range in size and maturity among peers.
- Tend to have realistic view of limits to which body can be tested.

#### Social:

- Tend to romanticize sexuality, but are moving toward a more realistic understanding.
- Search for intimacy.
- Test sexual attractiveness.
- Make commitments.
- Can commit to follow through with service.
- See adults as fallible.
- Desire respect.
- Are apt to reject goals set by others.
- Renegotiate relationships.
- Want adult leadership roles.

#### Emotional:

- Desire respect.
- Are beginning to accept and enjoy their own uniqueness, but still seek status and approval of peer group.
- Look for confidence of others in their decisions.
- Develop their own set of values and beliefs.
- Take on multiple roles.
- Gain autonomy.
- Are introspective.
- Can see self from viewpoint of others.
- Take fewer risks.
- Can initiate and carry out their own tasks without the supervision of others.
- Search for career possibilities.
- Desire a role in determining what happens in their world.

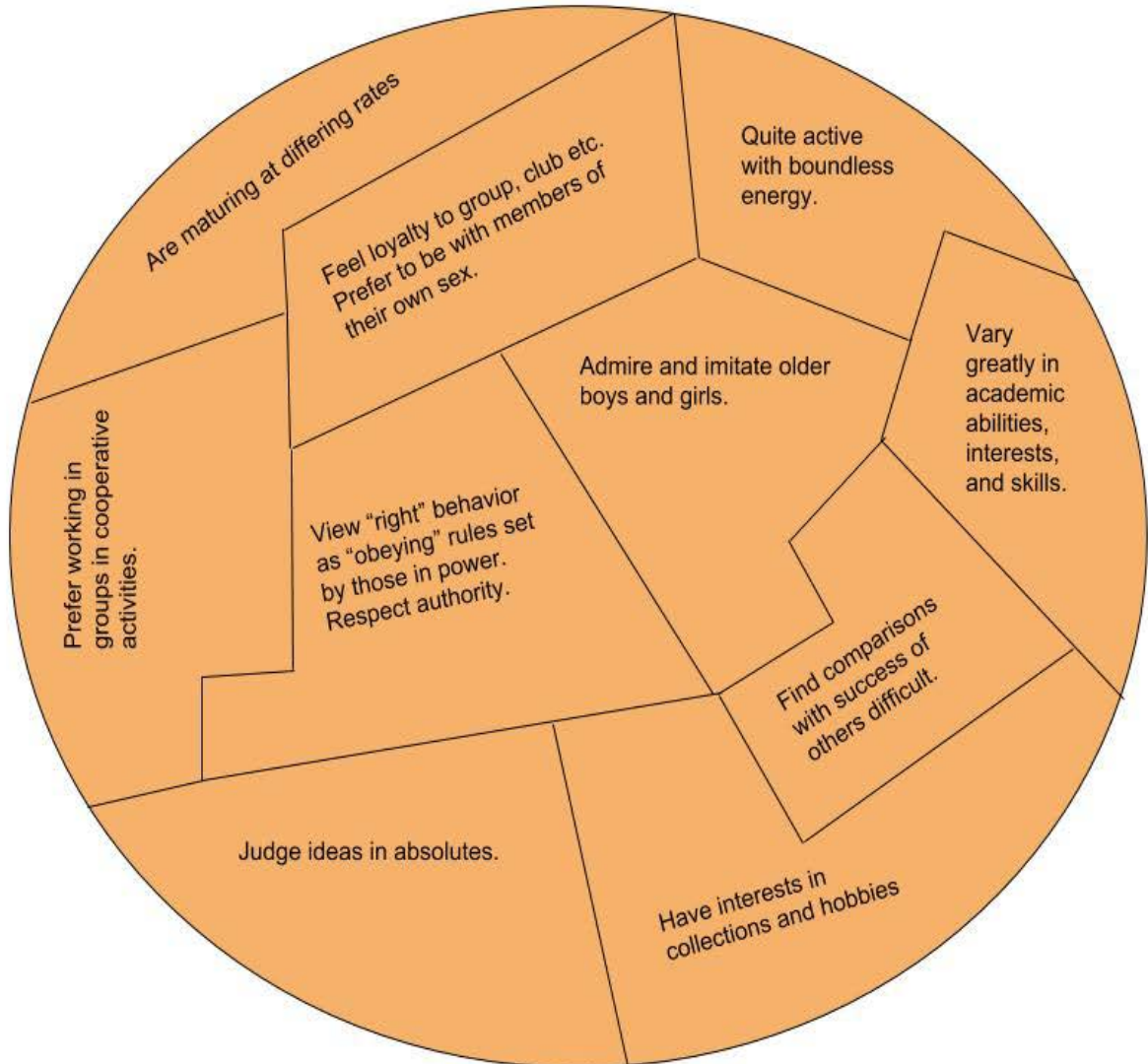
#### Intellectual:

- Are mastering abstract thinking. Can imagine impact of present behavior on future.
- Enjoy demonstrating acquired knowledge.
- Can consider many perspectives of a given issue.
- Develop theories to explain how things happen.
- Create new possibilities from information.
- Will lose patience with meaningless activity.



## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Developmental Puzzle Key

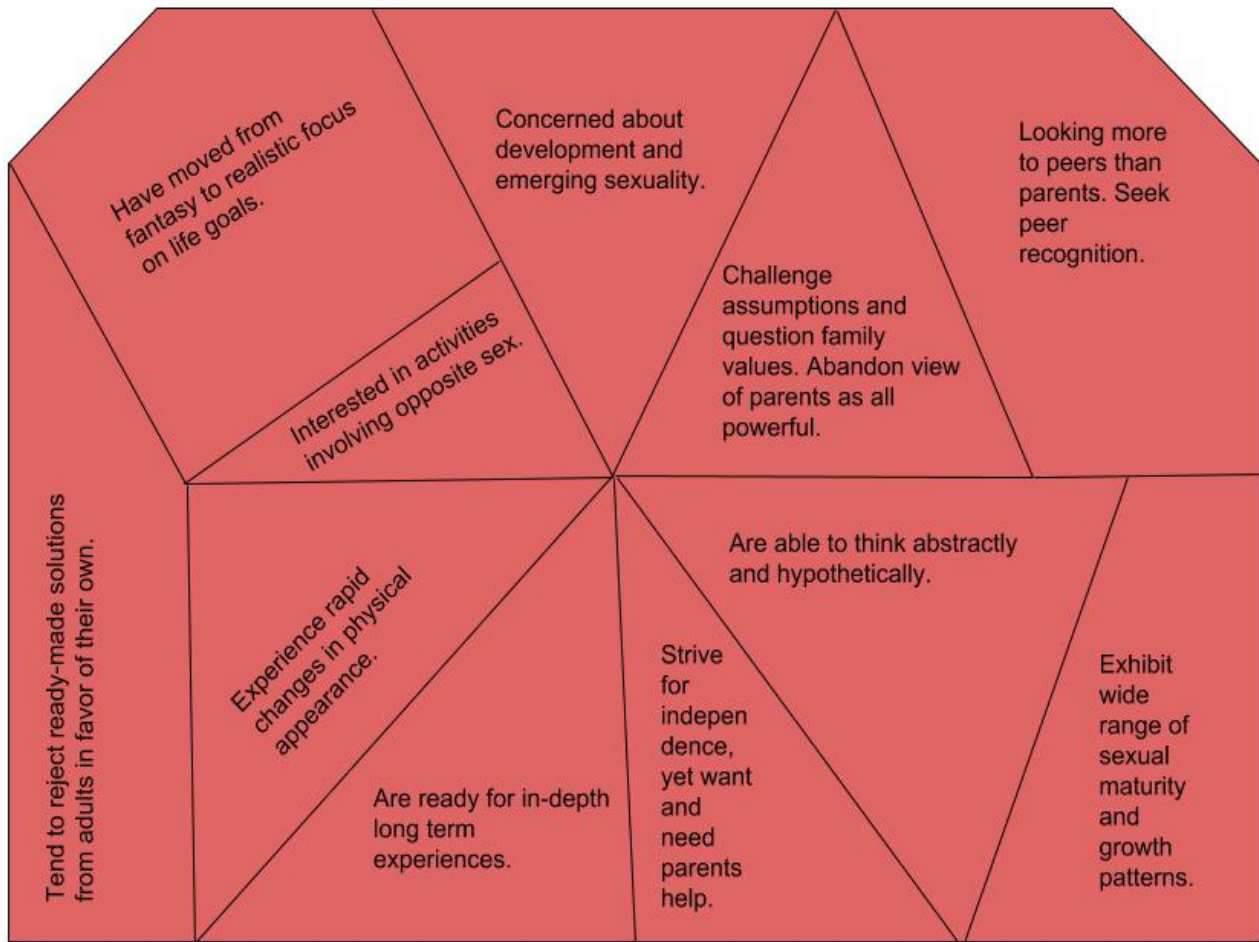
### Age group 9-11 Development Puzzle:





## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Developmental Puzzle Key

Age group 12-14 Development Puzzle:





## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Developmental Puzzle Key

Age group 15-18 Development puzzle:

