



## Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Being a Role Model

**Workshop Description:** This workshop guide includes information on the skills necessary for being a good role model for youth. The activities within this workshop will aid in identifying and developing the skills for creating a mentor-mentee relationship with youth as well as identifying the different roles you can play in a youth's life.

For this module, the workshop includes two activities in which you will brainstorm what it means to be a youth role model and what different types of roles you may fill for different youth. These activities, followed by larger group discussions, will prepare staff for interacting with youth and modeling positive interactions with other staff and youth.

**Preparation Time:** The 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 45 to 50 minutes to complete all activities within this guide.

### Materials:

- Large blank sheets of paper and/or whiteboard space (Note: Two are for the Prior Knowledge activity and one is for *Roles of a Mentor* activity. In addition, you will need one additional sheet for each group during the *What Does a Competent Youth Worker Look Like* activity).
- Markers or pens (three to four per group).
- Tape.
- One 3" x 5" index card for each staff participant.

**Preparation Instructions:** 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 workshop guide and any others related to this topic (e.g., Relational Strategies, Supporting LGBTQ Youth, etc.). Finally, gather all necessary materials and familiarize yourself with the workshop guide.

### Knowledge: Understanding Strategies for Being a Role Model

A role model is an individual who is looked up to and serves as an example to others. For many youth and children, some of the most important role models are their parents and caregivers. Youth look up to a variety of role models who ultimately help shape the development of youth and how they behave in school, relationships, or when making decisions (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2017).



The Oregon Community Foundation has identified several ways that positive adult role models can develop supportive relationships with youth (Kipp and Ruffenach, 2016):

*Express Care.* Positive adult role models are attentive to youth and show an interest in who they are and what they care about. Adult role models should also invest time and energy in their activities with youth and be dependable.

*Challenge Growth.* Adults should encourage youth to continuously improve by inspiring them to set goals for the future. To do so, adults should set expectations for youth to live up to their full potential and push them to stretch their thoughts and abilities. At the same time, adults should set boundaries and enforce appropriate limits.

*Provide Support.* Positive adult role models provide encouragement, acknowledge efforts and achievements, and can help students learn by guiding them with assistance and feedback. Positive adult role models should advocate for students when necessary.

*Share Power.* Program staff can promote a sense of control or power by allowing youth to help make decisions. Youth opinions should be incorporated into decision-making about programming. Positive adult role models should demonstrate respect by treating youth fairly, taking them seriously, and responding to their needs, abilities, and interests. Adults can collaborate with youth to help them solve problems and achieve goals.

*Expand Possibilities.* Adults should connect youth to opportunities and introduce them to people who can help them grow and explore by exposing them to new experiences and ideas. Developmental experiences are a critical avenue through which youth learn and develop. Adults can help youth reflect on these experiences so that they might gain knowledge and meaning from them. Adults can also help youth navigate barriers that prevent them from attaining their goals.

### **Objectives:**

- Identify the qualities of a good youth program role model.
- Explore the roles that mentors and role models can play in the lives of children and youth.

### **Introduction (5-7 minutes):**

- Describe what it means to be a youth's role model by highlighting the importance of adult-youth role model relationships.
  - What to say: "Today we are going to discuss what it means to be a good role model to youth and what being a good role model looks like. The goal of the workshop is to ultimately answer the question 'How can youth program staff be a role model to youth within the program and what does being a role model entail?' You will develop the skills necessary to build these relationships with youth to promote positive youth development."



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

- Ask the staff to share what they think it means to be a good role model for youth. Record staff responses on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard.
- Ask the staff what they still want to know about this topic or if there is anything they are unsure or concerned about. Again, record staff responses.

### Activities:

#### Activity: *What Does a Competent Youth Worker Look Like?* (15-20 minutes)

- Describe the *What Does a Competent Youth Worker Look Like?* activity:
  - What to say: “We are going to do a series of activities and brainstorm ideas about some of the skills you will need to build trusting relationships with youth and how to be an effective role model.”
- Lead the *What Does a Competent Youth Worker Look Like?* activity:
  - Divide staff participants into groups of about five people.
  - Provide each group with a large piece of paper and a set of markers.
  - Instruct the groups to draw an outline of a person and then fill it with symbols, drawings, and words to illustrate the knowledge, skills, and attributes of a positive role model. Some thoughts and questions to consider when answering this question may include: What are some characteristics you associate with role models? Who do you typically think of when you hear the word “role model”? How would you describe the actions of someone you see as a role model?
  - Once each group is finished, they will present their paper youth worker to the whole group.
  - Once each group has presented, debrief the activity by discussing some of the common themes and topics. As a facilitator, you may ask: “What were some of the common themes relating to what characteristics role models have or what were some of the characteristics that stood out to you and why? What were some of the common skills or strengths you associated with someone being a good role model? Why do you think these certain skills are important and why?”

#### Activity: *Roles of a Mentor* (20 minutes)

- Describe the *Roles of a Mentor* activity:
  - What to say: “Now we are going to have you reflect on the qualities that you associate with a good mentor and role model.”
- Lead the *Roles of a Mentor* activity:
  - Give each participant an index card and ask them to think back to when they were a child or youth.
  - Ask them to silently identify one person, preferably someone who is not a relative, who was a kind of role model for them.
  - Have staff think about why that person was important to them and recall the qualities of that person that made him or her so valued. Ask them to write down two or three of those qualities on the index card.



- Have participants share briefly about the role model they identified and what qualities they valued in them. As they are sharing, list the qualities on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard.
- If a quality is repeated as the staff are sharing, put a check mark next to that quality each time it is mentioned.
- Review the items on the list, noting which were mentioned most often. If no terms or qualities are repeated within the group, then have staff note which they feel are most important.
- Ask staff to next identify the roles that a mentor can play in youth's life. List their responses on the white board or large paper for all to see. (Examples might include resource, guide, etc.)
- Next, using the list of roles the group created, lead a brief discussion about what each of the roles might involve. Specifically, how role models may support youth and how their actions emulate being a good role model.
- Allow for a few minutes for staff to talk about how they can incorporate these role model characteristics into their roles as youth program staff. Ask them about their hopes and concerns for their roles. For example, ask which of the qualities of their childhood role models they admired and if they feel confident they possess that same quality.

### 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:

None

### 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)

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. (2017, March). Role models and children. Retrieved from [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-and-Role-Models-099.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-and-Role-Models-099.aspx)

Kipp, H., Ruffenach, C., & Janssen, C. (2016). K-12 student success: Out-of-School time initiative; Positive adult role models: A learning brief. *The Oregon Community Foundation*. Retrieved from [https://www.oregoncf.org/Templates/media/files/grants/k12\\_student\\_success/2016%20Positive%20Adult%20Role%20Model%20Learning%20Brief.pdf](https://www.oregoncf.org/Templates/media/files/grants/k12_student_success/2016%20Positive%20Adult%20Role%20Model%20Learning%20Brief.pdf)



The *What Does a Competent Youth Worker Look Like?* activity was adapted from:

Dotterweich, J. (2015). Section 5: Youth worker competencies. In *Positive youth development 101: A curriculum for youth work professionals* (pp. 60-63). Retrieved from [http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/pyd/pyd\\_pyd101curriculum.pdf](http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/pyd/pyd_pyd101curriculum.pdf)

The *Role of a Mentor* activity was adapted from:

Tuttle, K. (2010). Role of a mentor activity. In *TRiO/SSS/WaTEP mentor guidelines & code of conduct manual* (pp. 6-7). Retrieved from <http://www.wacampuscompact.org/retentionproject/members/trainingmanuals/Mentor%20Orientation%20Training%20Manual%20v.pdf>