



Guide for Best Practices in Positive Youth Development

Youth Thrive is a collaborative partnership working together to support all youth in becoming productive adults. We focus on strengthening the positive attributes that enable youth to be fully prepared for success in school, work and life. We value the perspective of youth. We are taking steps to enable members of our partnership to achieve a shared goal of supporting youth. Activities now and in the future will be aimed at helping partners be as effective as possible in achieving positive results with youth.

The purpose of this guide is to assist traditional and non-traditional organizations and individuals who want to improve their programs, places, and policies related to youth development. This guide was developed from existing research-based quality standards.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework for how a community can support all youth so they can grow up fully prepared, fully engaged, healthy, and develop to their full potential.

Policies and Practices

- All spaces provide physical and psychological safety for all the youth they serve.
- All adults receive orientation as well as ongoing training and support in working with youth using a PYD perspective.
- PYD practices are written into policies and procedures.
- All levels of youth-serving organizations (Board, Management, and Direct Care Workers) understand and apply the purposeful nature of PYD and can articulate the philosophy and the integration of practices within programs.
- Youth and adults are active and equal partners in any youth development initiative.
- Focus of opportunities and supports are on PYD rather than the prevention of negative outcomes.
- Youth-serving organizations' missions include language around youth development.
- Evidence of PYD practices occurs at all levels of programs, places, and policies.
- Measurable objectives are included in employee evaluations to assess their understanding and implementation of PYD practices, if applicable.

High Expectations

- There are clear expectations for quality youth/adult interactions within opportunities and supports.
- Opportunities and supports promote positive experiences, values, and norms for youth.

Skill Building

- Opportunities and supports are focused on plans that promote action, responsibility, and accountability from youth.
- Skill-building activities should begin from a perspective of youth strength, interests, and preferences.

Engagement

- Opportunities and supports encourage and teach youth to embrace and contribute to their community and likewise serve as an advocate for the community to engage and support all youth.
- Opportunities and supports provide meaningful recognition of youths' achievements.
- Youth develop the 5 C's (competence, connection, character, confidence, and caring/compassion) through programs and community efforts.
- Opportunities and supports work with youth on personal development goals outside of referred concerns, if applicable.
- Opportunities and supports help youth achieve their fullest potential by providing access to tools that break down barriers to opportunities.
- Opportunities and supports empower youth to assume leadership roles, providing youth opportunities to consider themselves as resources.
- Youth have the opportunity for skill building and intentional learning experiences through program activities and community involvement.

Routine and Structure

- Adults serve as positive role models to youth through consistent support, empowerment, expectations, and constructive uses of time.
- Opportunities and supports for youth are developmentally appropriate.
- Opportunities and supports expose youth to protective factors, or factors that buffer youth from involvement in risky behaviors and mediate the impact of risk factors.
- All programs and places have a clear daily structure.
- All programs and places have an appropriate adult/youth ratio.
- Adults clearly communicate expectations.

Relationships

- Youth satisfaction surveys are provided to all youth in a program or place AND the suggestions are implemented.
- Meaningful youth-adult partnerships are visible throughout programs, places, and policies.
- Youth and adults are mutually equipped to have healthy and positive relationships.
- Youth have opportunities for long-term organizational involvement with adults, even after referred concerns have been achieved.

Strategic Support and Collaboration

- Individuals and organizations work together to promote youth development through collaboration, linking resources, sharing expertise, and connecting people.
- Individuals and organizations work together to encourage engagement and support of youth.

Sources:

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