


Algoma Public Health's Youth Engagement and Development Model: 5 KEY COMPONENTS

1. YOUTH FRIENDLY, EMPOWERING PHYSICAL/SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT




A key element for successful YED is the provision of a youth friendly, empowering physical/social environment, which requires:

- APH Organizational Leadership committed to YED principles and practices;
- APH Staff have a shared understanding of YED and apply the principles and practices;
- Youth Engagement Coordinator dedicated to building organizational capacity, cultivating community partnerships, increasing opportunities for meaningful youth participation;
- Opportunities for APH staff to consult with Youth Engagement Coordinator to discuss, review and reflect on YED in respective disciplines to identify or enhance opportunities for young people, as well as obtain the appropriate resources and support.


Youth friendly, empowering environments create the foundation from which meaningful YED opportunities can be identified to maximize positive youth outcomes.

2. YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS



Authentic YED involves building equitable relationships with youth based on mutual respect as well as ensuring opportunities for youth to take on meaningful roles with shared decision making and responsibility. Youth and adults work in a mutually beneficial partnership by teaching and learning from each other.¹ To this partnership, adults and youth alike bring their respective personalities, needs, assets and social networks. Adults play a pivotal role between young people and organizations. Positive relationships between youth and adults can expand social networks and increase social capital to meet goals and objectives more efficiently.² Conversely, ineffective YED practices can lead to frustration and disengagement.³ Establishing caring relationships between young people and APH staff with clearly defined expectations, roles and responsibilities are the fundamental building blocks to successful YED experiences.

3. MEANINGFUL YED OPPORTUNITIES (COMMITTEES, INITIATIVES, ETC.)



YED experiences vary widely in scope, value and outcome. Roger Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation highlights different levels of youth participation and decision making power. It is a useful tool that challenges us to reflect on the level of participation that is wanted, needed, and possible, as well as to identify barriers to meaningful participation and how they can be overcome.⁴

Algoma Public Health strives to provide opportunities with high levels of participation and decision making power so youth can make change, direct their own activities, and assume shared responsibility with appropriate levels of support. ***When working with young people, it is important to involve them as partners as early as possible in the decision making process for an issue, activity or initiative.***

¹ "Adult Allies in Action," Centers of Excellence for Children's Wellbeing, 2007, p.2

² "Adult Allies in Action," Centers of Excellence for Children's Wellbeing, 2007, p.3


³ "Youth Engagement a Conceptual Model," Centers of Excellence for Children's Wellbeing, 2007, p.23

⁴ "Youth Voices: A Guide for Youth Expression And Action," Ridgley, Lombardo, Poland & Skinner, 2004, p. 28

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4. ★POSITIVE YOUTH OUTCOMES

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- **Problem Free/Prevention Outcomes** refer to the mitigation/prevention of harmful behaviours (e.g., smoking, drug use, school related problems, violence, teen pregnancy, etc.).
 - **Achievement Outcomes** refer to accomplishments we want young people to attain (e.g., graduate from high school, get a job, go to post secondary, etc.).
 - ★**Developmental Outcomes** refer to the degree to which youth are confident and connected to others with a positive attitude and identity, and have competencies in community settings.

★The value of developmental outcomes tends to be underestimated compared to achievement and prevention outcomes, but research shows developmental outcomes are what allow a young person to succeed and avoid negative behaviours. Developmental outcomes are the strongest predictors of adolescent well being.⁵ By moving beyond problem solving and prevention toward helping young people become fully prepared for adolescence and adulthood, YED serves to enhance the overall health, wellness and resilience of young people as they go through life stages.⁶

5. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Community Partnerships that are designed to foster a collaborative approach to YED can increase opportunities for young people and enhance capacity within respective organizations to maximize positive youth outcomes in Algoma. Sharing initiatives and resources with community, regional, and provincial partners can serve to promote sustainability and positive youth outcomes on a greater scale.

A community of practice (CoP) is an informal networking group with a shared interest. A local YED CoP has been established to foster a synergistic approach for YED in Algoma. This CoP helps build organizational and community capacity, and assist in the development of partnerships amongst the diverse disciplines of members on local YED initiatives. It is also a means by which the Youth Engagement Coordinator can meet with other organizations in various stages of YED to identify appropriate opportunities for different Algoma Public Health programs and initiatives.

⁵ "BEST Initiative," Medical Foundation, 2004, pp. 12-13

⁶ Preventing Problems, Promotion Development, Encouraging Engagement: Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber, 2003, pp. 25-26