

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

1. Adolescence offers a limited window of opportunity to maximize the capacity for positive youth outcomes through YED practices.¹
2. Fostering youth friendly, empowering environments requires all adults (whether working directly with young people or not) to be aware and responsive to adolescent development, youth culture, and barriers that youth may experience.
3. Young people are more than the sum of their problems and their status achievements. Prevention and achievement outcomes in of themselves are not enough to ensure young people are fully prepared for adolescence and adulthood. Youth need to “fully develop social skills, civic and cultural competencies, positive attitudes toward community and a strong sense of identity.”²
4. Young people are valued community stakeholders who need to be actively involved in processes and decisions that affect them and/or their community.
5. Youth involvement in the identification of priority issues, emerging trends and delivery of messaging can have the much desired impact on positive health outcomes.
6. When involving young people in a YED opportunity, it is most effective to involve youth from the onset of discussions and early planning stages of an initiative.
7. The relationship between youth and adult support(s) is critical for positive YED experiences. Adult staff are the connecting force between young people and our organization and as such have a significant role to play in fostering collaborative relationships. To develop successful partnerships, adults must:
 - Be self aware³
 - Identify and challenge adultism⁴
 - Understand adolescent development in conjunction with the personal needs and assets of the young people with whom they are working⁵
 - Maintain high expectations with the appropriate level of support⁶
 - Foster development opportunities ensuring open communication, mutual respect, and clear boundaries with clearly defined high expectations, meaningful roles and responsibilities⁷

¹ “Adolescent Cognitive Development Workshop,” Gini-Newman, G., September 2008

² “BEST Initiative,” Medical Foundation, 2004, p 12

³ “Adult Allies in Action,” Centers of Excellence for Children’s Wellbeing, 2007, p.2

⁴ “Adult Allies in Action,” Centers of Excellence for Children’s Wellbeing, 2007, p.6

⁵ “BEST Initiative,” Medical Foundation, 2004, p. 43.

⁶ “BEST Initiative,” Medical Foundation, 2004, p. 42.

⁷ “Adult Allies in Action,” Centers of Excellence for Children’s Wellbeing, 2007, p5