

Engaging Youth (Checklist)



“Satisfaction studies show that decisions are made about a place in the first 15 minutes... thus it’s important that the staff person most skilled at creating relationships be the first contact with the client.” (*Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities, 2001*)

Intake and Assessment

Imagine yourself as the client using your services:

- Why did you come?
- Who did you meet first?
- How were you treated?
- What was expected of you?

- Ensure written materials don’t intimidate or overwhelm youth
- Make sure youth understand why paperwork is needed
- Make sure the questions are necessary
- Have one set of paperwork for all programs
- Have someone go through the paperwork with youth
- Consider using story-telling methods to gather intake information
- Be aware of “Priming”
 - Youth can feel negative about their potential success in your organization if the first thing they must do is tell you about their failures
- Arrange for youth to talk to a person when first connecting with your agency
- Have a system in place to respond promptly to inquiries
- Use Plain Language in your conversations with youth
 - Make sure organizational language and written materials fit the skill level of your clients
- Use texting as an option for youth to connect and communicate with your organization



“It’s like I’m being enlisted in the army just to get a job.”

“I have kids and usually don’t have the time.” (*Youth focus group participants*)

Programming Design

- Include job-specific training; training for available jobs
- Make sure the outcomes and purpose of the programs are clear
- Tie programming directly to youth’s immediate goals
- Make sure the program has a clear end goal
- Include food/snacks
- Offer transportation options and support
- Offer a subsidy if there’s a program fee
- Include opportunities to reflect and to build self-esteem
- Include self-assessment tools so youth can determine their strengths and identify areas for improvement
- Sequence activities from lower risk to higher risk (example - speaking in pairs, then to a small group, then to the group as a whole)
- Consider offering online help during hours when the program is not offered
- Be flexible (example - allow cell phones)
- Consider when youth are available to attend programs when setting the time of your program (example - can youth look for work and still attend your program?)
- Create a positive setting with rules for respect and confidentiality



“Present is most important. Decisions are made in the moment based on feelings of survival.” (*Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities, 2001*)

Workshop Delivery

- Use varied methods of presentation (example - group activities, online tools, lecture)
- Deliver programs in small interactive groups
- Allow for hands-on learning
- Provide structure
- Be organized

Program Location

- Make the program geographically accessible - on a transportation route, easy to get to, easy to find
- Partner with places where youth already go
- Avoid offering programs in geographical areas where youth have a high chance of running into negative influences



“There is recognition that youth-specific programming is important, but that it must be delivered effectively. Having a good instructor is key to engaging youth and promoting word-of-mouth.” *(Project Report: Results of in-year youth focussed programming, Literacy Link Niagara 2014)*

Facilitators

- Youth feedback urges us to use facilitators who
- Are personable, supportive and understanding
- Take time to explain things; “treats you like an adult, not a child”
- Talk to you; hear you
- Genuinely care for your well being
- Don’t take themselves too seriously
- Recognize they can learn from clients as well
- Don’t make you feel bad for not knowing something
- Generate trust while maintaining professionalism
- Are in control of a room
- Allow time to hear personal opinions
- Allow students to get to know each other

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