



Tips for Working with Youth

- ◆ Always invite more than one youth to serve on any committee or group. A single youth may feel intimidated and not speak up and it could be viewed as tokenism.
- ◆ Conduct meetings at accessible meeting sites (make sure bathrooms and parking are also accessible).
- ◆ Ask in advance if accommodations or accessible transportation are needed. The project would coordinate and pay for it.
- ◆ Assist in arranging or paying for transportation, if necessary.
- ◆ Consider youth-only focus and advisory groups, where youth feel freer to express their opinions.
- ◆ Offer compensation for their time. Professionals are paid for their time; paying youth signifies that their contribution is valued.
- ◆ Assure diversity of culture, gender, health issues, regional representation and race and ethnicity. Groups should be representative of the population in the state.

OVER



- ◆ Keep meeting times short: under two hours. Mix up discussion time with presentation time to keep everyone's attention.
- ◆ Meet in a youth friendly, non-institutional setting, such as a restaurant, sports club, library or youth center.
- ◆ Ask youth ahead of time what kind of food they like. Many youth have dietary restrictions, so don't assume pizza and soda always work. This is a good opportunity for adults to model healthy choices.
- ◆ Give youth opportunities to assume leadership roles after providing training on leadership (i.e. adopt a co-facilitation model for advisory groups).
- ◆ Support youth who have cognitive challenges and/or who use assistive technology for communication so that they are able to actively participate in whatever way works for them. Be prepared to listen and understand during several conversations over time. Staff should seek training to understand a variety of supports youth may need and should be responsible for identifying strategies for providing ongoing support.
- ◆ Send draft agenda items before the meeting to allow youth time to think about what they want to say and how they want to say it.
- ◆ Be aware that some youth may require audiotape, Braille, or color-coded outlines.
- ◆ Orient new youth members as they join. Ideally, orientation is led by peers, but with a co-facilitation model it's usually both. For example, youth could give an overview and adults could add any additional information necessary.
- ◆ Provide alternative activities for families because the more family members involved, the less youth tend to contribute and there may be less opportunity for growth in independence. This is a safe opportunity to encourage separation between youth and parents.
- ◆ Ask youth their preferred method of communication. Don't assume e-mail will be the best way to get a hold of them. Youth also tend to only pay attention to e-mail from people they know well.

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