

Developing an Effective Youth Leadership Team

A GUIDE FOR HEALTH CENTERS
AND YOUTH SERVING AGENCIES

Credits & Acknowledgements

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About Advocates for Youth

Advocates for Youth (Advocates) envisions a society in which all young people are valued, respected and treated with dignity; sexuality is accepted as a healthy part of being human; and youth sexual development is normalized and embraced. In such a world, all youth and young adults are celebrated for who they are and afforded honest, affirming, inclusive sex education; access to confidential, universal sexual health services; and the economic, educational, and social power to exercise their bodily autonomy and make informed decisions regarding their health and well-being.

www.advocatesforyouth.org

Advocates' *Rights, Respect, Responsibility* philosophy underpins all of the organization's work:

Rights: Youth have the inalienable right to honest, inclusive sex education; confidential, universal sexual health services; and the economic, political and social power that supports their agency, bodily autonomy, and self-determination.

Respect: Youth are due respect. They are leading the fight for equity and justice. Young people must be meaningfully involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of systems, policies and programs that affect their health and well-being.

Responsibility: Society has the responsibility to examine and dismantle systems of oppression that drive sexual health disparities and other inequities and to instead champion community initiatives, programs, policies, and systems that ensure equity and justice for all young people, their families and communities.

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Purpose

Advocates for Youth partnered with El Rio Health Center (El Rio) in Tucson, Arizona, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Atlanta, Georgia, and Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, DC. to engage teams of young people to work alongside adult staff in community health centers and youth-serving organizations to improve the quality of, ensure access to, and expand the reach of SRH programming. The **Developing an Effective Youth Leadership Team: A Guide for Health Centers and Youth Serving Agencies (Guide)** describes some of the policies and procedures used in these projects to engage youth leaders in equitable, meaningful, and effective ways. **The Guide** is grounded in Advocates’ **Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAP) framework** and offers recommendations for organizations seeking to create and support a Youth Leadership Team (YLT) by engaging young people as partners.

Rationale

Young people, especially those who live at the margins, often face significant obstacles in accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care. Organizations, structures, and systems, not simply personal choices, impact young people’s ability to lead healthy lives. When organizations, the staff, and the projects they implement utilize a (YAP) framework to develop multi-sector interventions aimed at improving young people’s ability to access SRH information and services, the outcomes can be impactful.

Young people can transform existing SRH programs and practices in their communities. As one of the largest, most diverse, and technologically savvy generations, young people can contribute to SRH and adolescent health prevention initiatives in many ways, playing a powerful role in all phases of program design, implementation, and evaluation at local, state, and federal levels.

YOUNG PEOPLE CAN:

- ✓ Document SRH-related needs of young people and translate these needs to key decision-makers;
- ✓ Work alongside health care centers to institutionalize evidence-based interventions and encourage medical providers and others who have not traditionally provided health services to provide youth-friendly, trauma-informed SRH care;
- ✓ Develop messaging and outreach that resonates with young people and act as spokespeople for community efforts; and
- ✓ Provide medically accurate SRH education to their peers through social media, in health centers, and community outreach.

While there is growing recognition that involving young people in the design and delivery of SRH interventions is an important strategy to increase acceptability, expand access, and improve health outcomes, many adult program planners lack a systematic process for engaging youth in meaningful, equitable, and effective ways.^{1,2} Adults often do not fully recognize the challenges and barriers that young people frequently experience when trying to navigate health care systems.

1. ETR Environmental Scan: Youth Engagement in Sexual Health Programs and Services: https://pages.etr.org/hubfs/YEN/ETR_YEN%20Environmental%20Scan%20Full%20Report_2020.pdf

2. OPA Meaningful Youth Engagement page: <https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/positive-youth-development/meaningful-youth-engagement>

Background

In 2017, Advocates launched a three-year initiative, *Increasing Awareness about and Access to Contraception among Highly Vulnerable Teens and Young Adults*, designed to test new strategies for providing reproductive and sexual health services, especially contraceptive care, to marginalized youth. Historically, sexual risk reduction and prevention programs have focused on changing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of individual young people who are “at risk.” Advocates’ project, grounded in a YAP approach, sought to move away from frameworks that focus on risk and vulnerability and towards an approach that centers the systems and structures that impede young people’s ability to access care.

EL RIO HEALTH CENTER’S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACCESS PROGRAM

Utilizing a six-step process, youth and adult teams collaborated to develop a shared vision for the project, conduct needs assessment activities, design action plans, monitor and evaluate outcomes, and create sustainability plans.

For more information on The El Rio Initiative, [please see Appendix A.](#)

We hope this resource will serve as a guide for other organizations, particularly health clinics and youth-serving organizations, that wish to authentically engage with young people to improve SRH services in their communities.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

The essence of youth engagement is a partnership between adults and young people – one in which each party has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions and in which the contribution of each is recognized and valued.

Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAP):

- Integrate young people’s lived experience with adults’ experience;
- Offer each party the opportunity to suggest and make decisions;
- Recognize and value the contribution of each; and
- Allow youth and adults to work in full partnership, envisioning, developing, implementing, and evaluating programs and/or policies that impact youth.

Integrating the YAP framework in health centers and youth-serving organizations can center the autonomy of young people to make meaningful and informed decisions about their own bodies and lives. This approach also positions youth as partners, leaders, change-makers, and providers of care, not simply as consumers or recipients of care.

Working with young people is different from working with adults. Managing a YLT comes with opportunities and challenges that your organization should understand before implementing.

The Guide is designed to help YLT program coordinators engage young people as leaders and collaborators in a YAP; work with youth leaders to foster an inclusive, safe, supportive, and responsive team environment; and provide training and ongoing mentorship to the YLT.

**FOUR KEY ACTIONS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR ORGANIZATIONS
TO CONSIDER FOR A SUCCESSFUL YLT:**

– COLLABORATION WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

Ensure the right people are at the table as you envision, design, implement, and evaluate your YLT.

– ORGANIZATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Develop policies and procedures that foster a safe, supportive, and responsive environment for youth leaders and provide the foundation for an authentic youth-adult partnership.

– YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM DEVELOPMENT:

Recruit, train, mentor, and support a team of young leaders. Work with the YLT to develop group agreements, expectations, and goals.

– PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Participate in training, workshops, stakeholder dialogue, and policy/procedural changes.

Within these four key actions, the Guide considers the following:

- Institute the structure you will need in place **before** you begin to recruit youth leaders
- Provide strategies to engage young people **during** recruitment and implementation of your YLT
- Consider what is needed for the **future** to continue effective partnerships with young people on SRH activities and sustain the YLT over time.

To assist you with developing your YLT, we have provided an outline of best practices and recommendations for organizing, recruiting, training, supporting, and sustaining a YLT. The Appendices at the end of the document provide supplementary resources and sample documents.

SECTION I

Collaborate with Internal and External Stakeholders

Identify a Program Coordinator for the Youth Leadership Team (YLT)

The Program Coordinator (PC) serves as the primary adult ally of the YLT, supporting the youth leaders with the institutional expertise needed to achieve their goals. Their most important job is to ensure that youth leaders are empowered to partner authentically with adults on the organization's initiatives. As such, this person should have experience working with young people and have the capacity to facilitate conversations about potential practice changes within the organization.

Recommendations for a Program Coordinator position:

- Values align with the principles of youth-adult partnerships and reproductive justice.
- Background in SRH and/or advocacy work.
- Capacity to support the YLT. We recommend that agencies invest in a full-time staff member.
- Commit to 25 hours per week on YLT activities.

For more information about Program Coordinator job description responsibilities, [please see Appendix C.](#)

Obtain Internal Buy-In

As with any project, working with a YLT will be most effective if staff have secured buy-in from the organization's leadership. Buy-in refers to the extent to which senior leadership, relevant department directors, and finance staff are invested in the project's success and to which they believe in the project's worth and resonance for the organization.

The first step in facilitating buy-in is identifying key staff and leadership members. All members of the executive team should be considered relevant, as their support can help secure investment from other staff. Executive leadership may also be able to help identify other members of your organization whose investment is crucial to the success of your project. Once these key members have been identified, project staff can meet with them to articulate the goals of the project and conduct training on youth-adult partnerships.

LOOKING FOR TRAINING ON HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE AND WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE? CONTACT ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH OR VIEW OUR [TRAINING FLYER](#) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YAP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

Assess Organization Readiness

It is important to reflect on your organization's readiness to establish a YLT. Partnering with young people requires a significant investment of time, personnel, and resources; while the outcomes are well worth it, your organization should be prepared to commit substantial resources to this initiative. Here are some questions to consider as you foster support for a YLT. Even if the answer to some of these questions is "not yet," you can still make strides towards building a YLT:

1. **Is your organization ready to take on a new program initiative?** Are project staff prepared to support improving the youth-centered culture of your organization? To what extent does the organization provide or link to SRH services, outreach, and/or education? Does your organization have the capacity to invest in a new project??

2. **Does your organization's leadership support the formation of a YLT?** Will leadership work to cultivate buy-in among staff? Is leadership committed to improving SRH services and/or access for young people through a YAP framework?
3. **To what extent does your organization already collaborate with young people?** Do young people already hold some sort of leadership position within your organization (e.g., as members of a Youth Advisory Council; as peer leaders; etc.)? Are organization staff amenable to working with youth on program initiatives?
4. **Is your organization prepared for a long-term collaboration with youth leaders?** Are leadership and staff ready to invest time, resources, and energy into a youth-adult partnership? How might you plan your initiative to minimize additional work for staff members? Does your organization have the capacity to sustain a YLT?

Increase Staff Awareness

Once you have secured buy-in from key staff and leadership, it's important to ensure that the rest of the organization's staff are aware of the YLT. You can set up time to meet with staff, send an email, or secure time at an all-staff meeting to provide additional information about the YLT, including what the project is, how it fits into the larger work of the organization, and how staff will be interacting with the YLT.

Once established, members of the YLT should be involved in the conversations with staff who will be working alongside them.

Engage External Stakeholders

Working together with organizations doing similar work is vital for everyone's success. While the YLT will be integrated into your organization, there may be times when external stakeholder support can be helpful. It is possible that an external stakeholder can play a larger role in the YLT that can include:

- Provision of training to adults and young leaders involved in the YLT;
- Knowledge of, or direct experience working with, young people that can aid organization staff;
- Provision of expertise and knowledge on SRH;
- Support with mini-grants, assisting with monetary and non-monetary incentives.

Take the time to identify external stakeholders: those who have a vested interest or will be directly affected by the project. Consider the unique skills and expertise they can bring to support the development, implementation, and future of the YLT. Invite them to a meeting, share about the YLT, and engage in conversation on how they can support. Examples of external stakeholders include local youth serving organizations and social service agencies who are working with young people with backgrounds that may experience greater barriers to accessing SRH care.

Set Expectations with Management and Staff

It is important to set clear expectations with management and staff regarding the importance of viewing young people as full programmatic partners. Too often, adults view young people simply as tokens. The PC should share information about the purpose of the YLT and clarify roles and responsibilities of both youth and adults. Young people should be included in the project from the very beginning to ensure their needs and perspectives are integrated into the very fabric of the project at the outset and to ensure that the project will be responsive to the young people you wish to reach.

At the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Atlanta, members of both management and project staff were highly supportive of engaging youth in the project; however, often had very different expectations about the roles and responsibilities of young people, leading to frequent challenges in implementing youth-friendly policies. Project staff recommend ensuring that all stakeholders have the same clear expectations about working with young people and are trained on youth-adult partnership.



Set Expectations for Staff Working with YLT Members

Working with young people is a rewarding experience that can empower both adult and youth leaders to learn and grow. However, collaborating with young people is not the same as working with adult colleagues. There is an inherent power imbalance between young people and adult staff. Staff must exercise extreme care in order to maintain a high standard of professionalism, serve as leaders and role models, and ensure that they never take advantage of this power imbalance. It is helpful to have a **Code of Conduct for staff members** to guide their interactions with young people. Subjects that you might want to cover include interactions outside of official YLT work; the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal drugs; personal or sexual relationships; providing young people with money; and serving as chaperones, particularly for young people under the age of 18.

For more information on Staff Interaction with Young People, *please see [Appendix D](#)*.

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF MAY CONVEY SOME OF THE FOLLOWING KEY MESSAGES:

- ✓ Sharing alcohol, cigarettes, or illegal drugs with young people or encouraging young people to use these substances is not allowed.
- ✓ Ensuring that all interactions with young people are non-sexual; no messages are given to young people that imply sexual interest.
- ✓ Providing guidance on staff member/ young person relationships beyond normal, appropriate interactions.
- ✓ Providing guidance on staff member responsibilities as a chaperone for under-18-year-olds when attending conferences, workshops, or meetings. For example:
 - Adults must accompany youth at all times.
 - Young people should use their stipends to cover the cost of food; the organization will cover the cost of hotel and transportation

Set Group Agreements

The PC should work with YLT members to develop shared expectations that set the tone for collaboration. The youth leaders will likely have diverse backgrounds and experiences; for this reason, it is critical that youth leaders and adult staff develop a common set of expectations for group functioning.

Engaging in an open dialogue to create group agreements can help foster a safe, inclusive, and uplifting environment for all participants. At minimum, the youth leaders and adult partners should work together to ensure that bullying, racism and other forms of discrimination, stereotyping, derogatory statements/comments, disrespect, judgment, harassment, and other harmful behaviors are not tolerated within the YLT space. Your organization will likely have other standards outlined in its Code of Conduct, which will serve as a good starting point.

There are other group agreements that your team can explore to create the optimal environment for partnership. For example, youth leaders may elect to collect anonymous feedback about group decisions, so even members who are nervous about speaking up have the chance to offer input.

HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE GROUP AGREEMENTS TO EXPLORE WITH YLT MEMBERS:

- ✓ We treat every member with respect. We communicate regularly to develop a shared understanding of what respect feels like within our group.
- ✓ We encourage every YLT member to be honest. We practice sharing our perspectives in a way that honors the safety and dignity of our colleagues.
- ✓ We embrace differing opinions. When disagreement arises, we have a process for discussing issues constructively and respectfully.
- ✓ We assume good faith.
- ✓ We do not engage in activity that involves physical contact that could be deemed inappropriate; such as patting, touching, pinching, punching, and any other physical assault.
- ✓ We do not engage in physical, verbal, visual, and/or behavioral mannerisms that show hostility, disrespect, or dislike toward an individual or group.
- ✓ We do not engage in demeaning and exploitive behavior of either a sexual or nonsexual nature, including threats of such behavior.
- ✓ We are not in possession of illegal substances during YLT activities.

Develop a procedure for creating group agreements and review them regularly with the YLT to maintain an environment in which every member can thrive. The most important part of this process is engaging youth leaders to develop agreements that resonate with every participant's needs and goals.

Set Group and Individual Responsibilities for YLT Members

YLT members and the PC can collaborate to establish both individual and collective responsibilities for group functioning. Before recruiting youth leaders, your organization might outline some basic responsibilities such as requiring that YLT members complete training before beginning their work. Youth leaders should also have the opportunity to identify their roles and responsibilities within the YLT. After all, this is an essential component of the visioning process.

HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE GROUP AGREEMENTS TO EXPLORE WITH YLT MEMBERS:

- ✓ Complete orientation and training.
- ✓ Arrive on time to meetings and events. If you experience a delay, make sure to inform the PC or a designated team member.
- ✓ Be present for all regular meetings of the YLT (barring extenuating circumstances).
- ✓ Fulfill your commitments. Complete assigned tasks and activities within a reasonable time frame. If you experience any delays or challenges, reach out to another team member for help.
- ✓ Actively participate in group discussions, event/project planning, and trainings (this requires that all YLT members have access to a communication medium that makes them feel comfortable, such as polls, written feedback, etc. Not everyone feels safe speaking up in a group, and that's OK).
- ✓ Attend a specified number of YLT events during the school year / summer.
- ✓ Facilitate a specified number of YLT events during the school year / summer.
- ✓ Communicate any issues to the YLT PC as soon as possible.

Additionally, the youth leaders may suggest responsibilities for the PC, such as facilitating communication between the YLT and the organization's leadership. The PC should be open to these suggestions. It could take several sessions for this open discussion; however, ideally, the YLT will come away from the collaborative process with a clear set of youth leader and adult responsibilities within the partnership.

Create an Accountability Process

When developing shared responsibilities, you should also work with the YLT to determine a fair and reasonable accountability process. It is important to recognize that marginalized youth may face greater challenges in fulfilling the expectations of their YLT role. For instance, a young person may not be able to consistently attend meetings if they do not have regular access to transportation. Exercise empathy and compassion when working with youth leaders to outline group expectations and accountability measures. Instead of thinking about the ways that young people must *behave* to retain membership in the YLT, consider how you might work with your organization to develop a *system* that best supports youth participation.

Young people have many responsibilities within their lives, including school, work, and family obligations. It is your organization's responsibility to create an accountability process that communicates your gratitude for the engagement of the youth leaders. Of course, some issues are more serious than others; for instance, if a youth leader is harassing another member, this constitutes a serious violation of group safety and likely, your organization's Code of Conduct. However, many issues that seem like a violation of YLT "responsibilities"—such as missing meetings, arriving late to events, not completing projects on time, etc.—are often the product of the structural inequities that shape many young people's lives.

HERE ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENCOURAGING CONSISTENT PARTICIPATION WITH THE YLT:

- ✓ Adjust meeting and event times to accommodate the youth leaders' schedules, even if this means operating outside of your organization's standard working hours.
- ✓ Provide or identify transportation options to and from YLT meetings and events.
- ✓ Provide food or meal stipends during all YLT meetings and events.
- ✓ Compensate youth leaders *competitively* for their time with the YLT.

Here are some questions you might consider as you work with your youth leaders to develop an accountability process:

- What is our accountability process for a youth leader who has not fulfilled their YLT obligations (attending meetings, completing project activities, etc.)?
- What is our procedure for addressing harmful or otherwise unacceptable behavior, such as harassment or bullying?
- Does our accountability process align with the organization's Code of Conduct? How do we adhere to the Code of Conduct while also honoring the distinct values and expectations of our youth-adult-partnership (e.g., we suggest that you do not require YLT members to wear professional attire to every meeting, even if this is a requirement of your greater organization).
- Where can we be flexible with each other? Where must we hold firm in order to maintain a safe and productive environment for all?

Group expectations for the YLT will likely need to evolve over time. For this reason, we suggest that you also create a procedure for regularly reviewing and revising group agreements, roles and responsibilities, and your shared accountability process. Every quarter, you might consider blocking off time to revisit group expectations during a regularly scheduled YLT meeting. Another possibility is distributing an online survey that enables youth leaders to provide feedback anonymously. Collaborate with YLT members to develop a structured review process that empowers every participant to contribute feedback.

It will take some time to establish group agreements, roles and responsibilities, and accountability measures in partnership with youth leaders. However, by working with the youth leaders to outline these expectations up-front, you will develop an enduring foundation for your YLT, grounded in the values of a youth-adult partnership.

SECTION II

Organizational Policies and Procedures

Prime Your Organization

It is important that you have taken steps to ensure that your organization is a youth-friendly workplace. Staff should research the organization's policies regarding distributing stipends, hiring interns, and arranging transportation.

If your organization has not worked with young people in an official capacity before and does not yet have policies on compensation (e.g., stipends) and/or employing youth as interns or staff, we recommend that you work with human resource and finance staff to adopt or change these policies to accommodate working with a YLT before you begin recruitment so that you do not face delays or obstacles in the future.

TIP FROM THE FIELD

In El Rio Health Center's Reproductive Health Access Project (RHAP), staff originally paid stipends and provided incentives for youth leaders. Over time, project staff successfully advocated for two changes to the clinic's hiring requirements—that employees be over 18 years old and have a high school diploma or equivalent—which enabled YLT members who are under 18 to be compensated directly through the organization's payroll.



Create Attendance Requirements

Regular attendance is vital to ensure that each member of the YLT receives proper training and fulfills their duties, but it is also vital for the group to get to know each other and gel as a team. For this reason, many organizations create attendance requirements that outline the number of events the youth leaders will be required to attend, when these events typically take place, under what circumstances it is acceptable to miss an event, and the steps YLT members need to take in an emergency or if they do plan to be absent.

We encourage you to work with your youth leaders to develop an attendance policy and accountability process that aligns with the YLT's mission and goals. Importantly, adult staff should also be prepared to honor attendance expectations as a key responsibility of their role in the YAP. The more specific you can be when outlining attendance expectations, the more likely YLT members will be able to keep their commitments. Consistent meeting schedules, planned far enough in advance, will likely lead to fewer scheduling conflicts for young people, who often juggle multiple priorities related to school, work, family, and extra-curricular events.

Provide Incentives

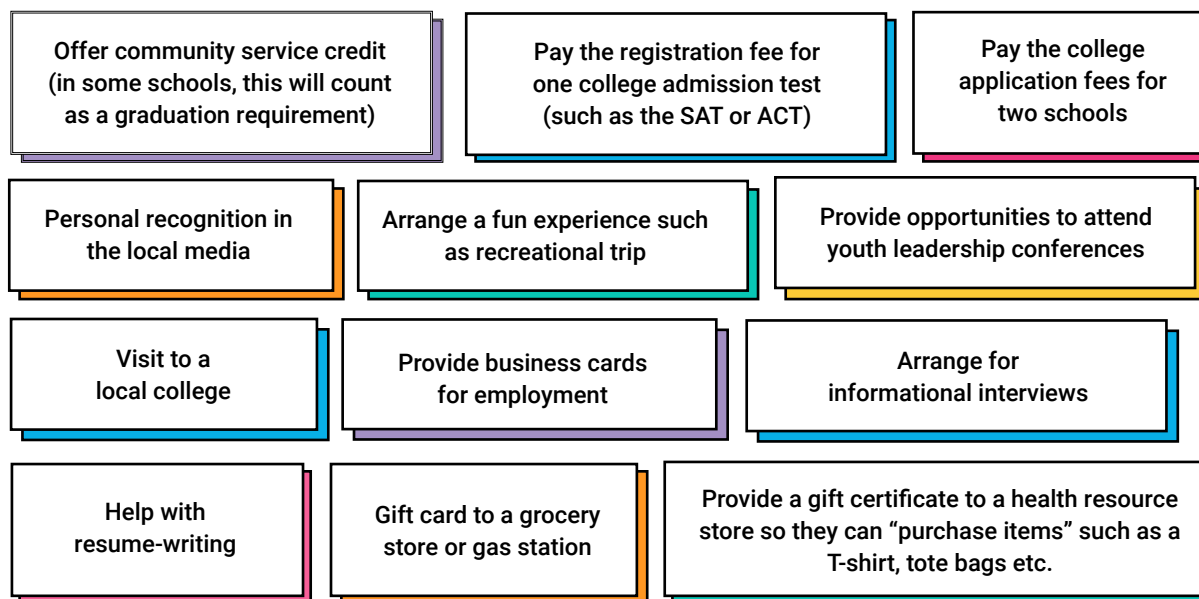
As part of an authentic youth-adult partnership, it is critical to compensate youth leaders with incentives, a stipend, or actual payment for their services. Some organizations pay hourly, while others provide monthly or quarterly stipends. If your organization chooses to provide a monetary stipend for participation, it is important to clearly articulate the requirements for getting paid. If you are unable to provide direct compensation, consider incentives which can come in many different forms.

SAMPLE INCENTIVE OPTIONS

1. PAYROLL/ STIPEND

- a.) Hourly payment. Hire the youth leaders as hourly staff with a competitive pay.
- b.) Provide monthly stipends dependent on participation that are one-time payments or based on participation. For example, YLT members who attend at least 75 percent of meetings and events will receive \$125 each month, and those who attend between 75 percent and half of the meetings will receive \$75 each month. Members who attend fewer than XX% of all meetings without an excused absence will not receive a stipend that month.
- c.) One-time stipend. For example, the YLT member signs an agreement to participate and receives a one-time stipend of \$300

2. NON-PAYROLL/STIPEND



Create Organizational and Program-Related Policies and Procedures

In addition to providing guidance to staff to promote safe and equitable interactions with young people, special consideration should be given and additional policy steps taken to support the involvement of young people who are under the age of 18. Policies related to the following topics are recommended: confidentiality, reporting incidents, travel and overnight stays, substance use and medical emergencies. If your organization does not have policies related to these topics, it is recommended that they be created.

Confidentiality Policy

During the application process and throughout training, members of the YLT will share personal information with staff and peers. The organization must have policies to ensure the confidentiality of personal disclosures and the safekeeping of written materials. These policies should include the following:

- The expectation that both staff and YLT members will maintain confidentiality where appropriate;
- Guidelines on how records will be kept, any limits on confidentiality (including use of photos); and
- Explanation of what will happen in the event that confidentiality is breached.

While the YLT member should always sign the confidentiality agreement, these agreements, including photo release forms, need to be signed also by a parent or guardian if a member is under 18.

Sample Confidentiality Policies:

YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	
<p>I understand that as a YLT member, I may have access to confidential information about other YLT members and/or information proprietary to the organization. I hereby agree not to share or release any confidential or proprietary information. I further understand that violating this confidentiality agreement may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or termination.</p>	
_____ Name	_____ Signature

For policies guiding interactions between staff and young people and for a sample photo release form, **please see [Appendix D](#) and [Appendix E](#).**

TIP FROM THE FIELD

At the International Rescue Committee, special considerations had to be made for the YLT members because, despite being over age 18, most of the young people continued to live with their parents. Staff made a concerted effort to communicate with parents about meetings and events, and set clear policies of confidentiality with young people.



Mandatory Reporting Policy

It is common for YLT members to confide in the staff with whom they interact. Staff should respect and preserve the privacy and confidentiality of their youth leaders who share sensitive personal information. At times, staff may learn that the YLT member is experiencing abuse or neglect or is planning to harm themselves or another person. Ensure that your organization has in place a standardized protocol for handling such situations. All staff should be prepared to address such issues and be trained on the reporting requirements based on the organization's policy and state law. To find out more information on your state, visit [here](#).

To review a sample mandatory reporting language, **please see [Appendix D](#).**

Alcohol, Drugs, and Firearms Policy

In addition to standard rules of behaviors, many organizations have policies about the use of alcohol, drugs, and/or firearms. These policies should recognize that many YLT members are not legally allowed to drink alcohol based on age. These policies should include the following:

- Procedures for reporting suspected violations.
- Consequences, including immediate suspension and/or termination from the YLT program if a violation occurs.
- Procedures for notification to legal authorities, if necessary, that may result in arrest or legal action, including punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.

Sample Drug, Alcohol, and Firearms Policies may include:

- The staff's responsibility is to discourage the use of drugs, alcohol, and firearms.
- The prohibition of using drugs or alcohol or possessing firearms while engaging in any YLT activities.
- The mandatory reporting of any suspected violations to the YLT Program Coordinator.
- Consequences of any violation of this policy.

Transportation Policy

Youth leaders will need to get to and from meetings and events. While some communities have mass transit systems that are safe and effective for young people to use, transportation can be a logistical struggle for those in other areas. Some organizations may take responsibility for transporting their youth leaders, while others leave this responsibility to the young people and their parents/caregivers. Other organizations say young people must be able to transport themselves to local meetings but take responsibility for arranging transportation for out-of-town travel or special events. Your organization should develop a transportation policy that covers all likely scenarios. Organizations should consider organizational liability before developing a transportation policy. The policy should address the circumstances (if any) under which staff members are allowed to transport young people in their own vehicles.

While transportation does provide additional challenges to participation, we encourage you to develop policies that maximize the inclusion of diverse youth populations. Only offering positions to youth who have consistent and reliable transportation immediately disqualifies many young people who have valuable perspectives for the YLT. Keep in mind the youth leaders who have parents/guardians who work outside of 9am-5pm, those who do not have a car or cannot drive, cannot afford gas, or are experiencing homelessness. These are all valuable lived experiences and perspectives that YLTs should not leave out due to transportation issues.

THESE POLICIES MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE:

- ✓ How to access free transportation paid for through the organization and what that means for YLT members under 18.
- ✓ Expectations of YLT members who have their own transportation to YLT meetings and events.
- ✓ Available methods of transportation the organization has available for YLT members for events outside a specific radius.
- ✓ Conditions for staff and YLT members carpooling to events for this to be appropriate.
- ✓ Reporting accidents if a young person and staff are carpooling.

Overnight Travel Policy

YLT members may attend out-of-town conferences or events. As your organization will be responsible for the young people (often minors) on these trips, it is important to create policies that keep the young people safe and their parents/guardians well-informed. Such policies should cover who can and cannot share a room, what happens if YLT members want to switch rooms, and when YLT members are/are not allowed to leave the hotel.

SAMPLE OVERNIGHT TRAVEL POLICIES CAN INCLUDE:

- ✓ Guidance on YLT membership requirements prior to being able to attend overnight events (i.e., membership and good participation for at least three months).
- ✓ A permission slip that includes the mode of transportation, the length of the trip, and information about the hotel.
- ✓ Guidance, and possible additional paperwork, for traveling with YLT members under 18, including parents/caregivers consent and method of communication for long trips.

For staff interactions and transportation policy with young people on trips, **please see [Appendix D](#)**.

Emergency Medication Policy

Whether out-of-town or at your normal meeting place, it is important that your organization has a standardized procedure for dealing with emergencies that involve YLT members. Staff should have basic medical information (such as allergies and health conditions) and be able to contact a parent/caregiver as soon as possible, should an emergency arise. Even when there is no emergency, staff may be required to administer medicine and should have a medical release form from each YLT member's parent/caregiver in place.

SAMPLE EMERGENCY POLICIES MAY INCLUDE:

- ✓ YLT PCs are required to be trained in First Aid and CPR.
- ✓ If a medical situation arises during a YLT meeting or event, the YLT PC will administer First Aid or CPR if necessary and/or call 911 for assistance.
- ✓ Staff must notify the YLT member's parent/caregiver immediately.
- ✓ When the medical emergency has passed, the YLT PC will fill out an Emergency Report form, so there is a record of the incident on file.

For a sample emergency contact and medical information form, **please see [Appendix F](#)**.

Emergency Response Protocols for Meetings and Events

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated there could be times when additional health and safety measures need to be put in place when coordinating events. This will require extra planning, funding, and safety considerations. As part of your planning process for an event that will bring young people and staff together, protocols should include language that address emergency preparedness and resources for a healthy and successful event.

SECTION III

Youth Leadership Team Development

Develop Membership and Eligibility Requirements

Before establishing the YLT, it is important to think about the criteria you will use to select youth leaders and create a standardized set of membership requirements. As with any job requirement, you may consider residency; age or other demographic characteristics; commitment level, skills, and experience; and leadership ability; among others.

While standard membership requirements are essential to a fair and organized recruitment process, it is recommended to consider criteria that will maximize the inclusion of diverse youth populations. Ideally, you will be recruiting young people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences; more than likely, many will face challenges that may prevent them from performing optimally in school or otherwise demonstrating the typical characteristics of a “leader.” However, these metrics have little to do with a young person’s potential to succeed in the YLT or serve as a role model for their peers.

Once the YLT is launched, you should collaborate with youth leaders to review and, if necessary, revise the requirements.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

- What is the goal of your organization’s YLT?
- What valuable lived expertise might a young person bring to the YLT that may not be reflected on a resume?
- What other characteristics, besides school and work experience, may be valuable to the YLT?
- What populations will we exclude if we mandate certain metrics, such as school performance?

Sample eligibility requirements:

- Live or attend school in the town, county, or state in which your organization is focused;
- Be between 14 and 24 years of age;
- Be dedicated to increasing youth access to SRH education and services;
- Commit to at least one year as a YLT member; and
- Dedicate a set amount of time each month to the YLT, including training, meetings, and events.

Recruit Youth Members

Consider how you will recruit YLT members. It’s important to have a diverse group of youth that represents your community and includes younger and older teens as well as youth from a variety of backgrounds, races, etc.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES:

- **SIGN-UP SHEET:** Post a sign-up sheet on a common bulletin board in schools or community locations like coffee shops, barber shops, or libraries. Use an online form and post the opportunity on a local school’s website. Sign-up sheets should include email addresses and phone numbers so you can stay in touch with anyone interested
- **EXISTING GROUPS:** Look for existing clubs and groups at schools and in your community where youth are likely to have an interest in increasing youth access to SRH services.
- **ACTIVITIES FAIR SIGN-UP:** Get permission to set up a table during a school activities fair or before athletic events. Hand out flyers, answer questions, and get interested students’ contact information.

Establish a Standard Application Process

Consider how you will select YLT members. Some communities require young people to complete an application and submit a written or videotaped statement describing their interest in the YLT before participating in an interview. Young people should interview with at least one staff member, preferably the PC. If possible, potential YLT members should interview with current members as well. If the group is just starting, consider having a group of potential members sit down together to get a sense of group dynamics and rapport before making your final selections.

DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE YLT APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Standard application form to collect information.
- Consent form indicating their consent to participate and agreement with the rules the organization has set out.
 - For members who are under 18, a parent/guardian consent form should be considered.
- Emergency contact form
 - Some organizations like to use this form to collect medical information (such as allergies), insurance information, contact information for the YLT member's doctor, and the preferred hospital to use in case of emergency.
- If your organization plans to compensate YLT members, they may be required to complete a W-9 form.

For a Sample Application Package, **please see [Appendices G, H, I, J, K, L and E](#)**.

Articulate the Youth Leadership Team's Purpose

It is important that the youth leaders and adults involved in your project have a shared understanding of the issues the YLT has come together to address and the impact it hopes to have on your community. A statement of purpose or a mission statement clearly and succinctly explains why the YLT exists. Be sure to collaborate with young people in naming the YLT and determining its mission.

SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT:

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) is part of a community-wide effort to promote sexual and reproductive health in our area. The YLT raises awareness of the barriers that young people experience when they seek information or services related to sexual health and advocates for comprehensive sex education and youth-friendly health services. The YLT empowers its members to be leaders in our community and educate their peers about autonomy and sexuality.

Establish Clear Goals and Objectives for the Youth Leadership Team

It is important to work with YLT members to develop a clear set of goals and objectives prior to the start of the project. In developing goals, some organizations focus on how the YLT will benefit its members, while others concentrate on how the YLT will benefit the community.

A goal represents a long-term planned accomplishment for a project.

SAMPLE STATEMENTS OF GOALS:

- ✓ To promote improved sexual health outcomes and greater sexual health equity among teens and young adults ages 14-24
- ✓ To develop a multi-year sexual health initiative that centers the voices and perspectives of youth and harnesses the power of youth-adult partnerships
- ✓ To improve the quality of, ensure access to, and expand the reach of SRH education and services for youth

Objectives are the short-term results or effects which a program intends to accomplish.

Objectives should be written as SMART objectives. SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time specific. For more assistance with writing objectives, consider the tool from the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program [Writing Effective Objectives](#)

SAMPLE OBJECTIVES:

One example of an objective that is NOT a SMART objective would be:

"Find off-campus clinics."

This objective is not specific, measurable, or time-specific (even if it is relevant to your project).



Instead, try something like this SMART objective:

"Create and adopt a resource list of off-campus clinics that are in the area in collaboration with the clinic manager by month 3 of the project."

For a sample Strategy Chart for capturing your YLT's goals and objectives, please see [Appendix M](#).

Provide and Receive Ongoing Feedback

As with any job, it is important to understand whether someone is meeting the expectations the organization has for them and whether there is room for improvement. Evaluation of the PC can provide important information about where the youth leaders feel most supported, where they need more support, their work style, organizational skills, and interpersonal communication.

Evaluation of the youth leaders can provide important information about their work style, performance team contributions, skills, and interpersonal commitment. Understanding what they are doing well and being praised for exceeding expectations can motivate young people to do even better. Understanding how they can improve is also important.

Consider establishing a regular schedule for PC and YLT member evaluations.

SAMPLE EVALUATION PROCESS AND EXPECTATIONS MAY INCLUDE:

- Identify the number of times a year PCs and YLT members will be evaluated and when.
- PC and YLT members should complete a self-evaluation.
- PC completes an evaluation for each YLT member.
- Each YLT member will complete an evaluation of the PC
- YLT members and PC meet to discuss the assessment of self, by the PC, and to the PC.
- Participation in the review process is required. If a YLT member does not participate, the organization may withhold the member's stipend.

Create Tiered Levels of Engagement

Each young person within the YLT has a vital role to play. For some, presentation and public speaking will come naturally. Others may take on equally important roles behind the scenes. YLT members may want to improve or expand upon the skills they know or engage in roles that they want to learn more about. YLT members should be encouraged to find their own authentic means of participation.

SAMPLE LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT:

PRESENTERS	lead presentations and workshops or speak in videos.
VIDEO/EDITING	video production and editing for the filming of workshops and promotional materials.
DESIGN	design and produce materials for events, displays, and workshops.
CONTENT PRODUCTION	write social media posts, video scripts, or provide talking points for presenters.
ORGANIZATION	plan and lead meetings, book event spaces, and manage the logistics for YLT activities.

Establish Communication Protocols

For the YLT to function efficiently, there needs to be regular communication. Ensuring all YLT members have a working phone number and email address is a good first step. Both adults and youth leaders need to understand whose responsibility it is to reach out in case of questions, absences, schedule changes, or emergencies.

TIP FROM THE FIELD

Working with young people often requires deviation from standard modes of communication. Staff should supplement emails and phone calls with text messages and social media communication. Engage your YLT members in conversation to find out how they want to keep up communication. This could change from group to group and year to year.

- At the International Rescue Committee, many young people shared phones with their family members. Staff moved communication entirely to social media platforms, as text messages and calls could compromise the confidentiality between young people and staff.
- In the Reproductive Health Access Program at El Rio Health Center, project staff used the group messaging feature on Snapchat to allow members to communicate instantly and confidentially.



Train YLT Members

The YLT members should have the opportunity to be trained on relevant sexual health topics and skills related to their work. Training topics may differ for various YLT members based on their roles and responsibilities. At minimum, consider training all youth members on the following topics:

- Youth-adult partnerships
- Professional and leadership development
- Storytelling as a change-making tool
- Peer-to-peer education techniques
- Social media
- Working effectively with adults
- Crisis management
- Trauma informed care
- Contraceptive justice
- Sexual health topics such as contraceptive options, healthy relationships, including consent, and STIs, including HIV

SECTION IV

Professional Development for Organizations and Adults

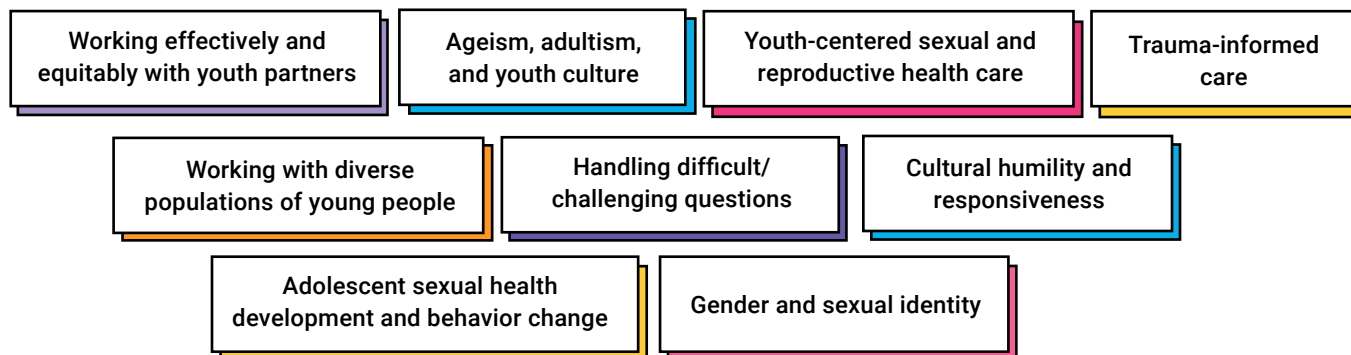
Train Staff on Youth-Adult Partnerships

Working directly with a YLT requires all program staff to be trained in the special considerations of working with young people. The [YAP framework](#) centers young people's voices and lived experiences and supports the adult allies who work in collaboration with them to identify the problems and barriers young people face. Together, they can advocate for equitable and just opportunities and resources due them. Here are tips for [adults](#) and [young people](#) when working with each other.

Train Staff on Professional Development Topics

Professional development (PD) opportunities are encouraged to be available to the organization and program staff to support knowledge and skills development to address SRH care and working with young people. Consider conducting a needs assessment; this can be a Google Form or email for feedback to identify other topics that may be of interest/need for program and organization staff.

POSSIBLE TOPICS MAY INCLUDE:



SECTION V

Moving Forward

We hope this Guide serves as a starting point for your organization to build a thriving Youth Leadership Team grounded in the principles of authentic collaboration. Youth-adult partnerships improve the accessibility, quality, and reach of SRH services by creating space for young people to collaborate equitably and authentically with adults. By establishing a Youth Leadership Team, your organization will be participating in a movement to empower young people as leaders and advocates and transform how healthcare is delivered.

FOUR STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM

COLLABORATE WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Hire or identify a Program Coordinator and assess your organization's readiness.
- Obtain internal buy-in from your organization's leadership to fully support the addition of a youth leadership team.
- Raise staff awareness about a Youth Leadership Team and how it impacts the organization.
- Engage external stakeholders to provide additional support for YLT and the organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Set expectations with management regarding the purpose of the YLT.
- Set expectations for staff working with young people by explaining clear goals of the YLT and the expectations.
- Set expectations of roles and responsibilities for young people.
- Provide tangible or intangible incentives for participation in the YLT by young people.
- Analyze the policies and procedures in your organizations and make adjustments that reflect the involvement of young people.

RECRUITING, TRAINING, AND PROTOCOL FOR BUILDING A YLT

- Develop membership and eligibility requirements for young people.
- Create a method of recruitment for young people.
- Establish a standard application process.
- Establish clear goals and objectives for the YLT that are communicated to all adults and young people.
- Establish clear communication protocols between young people and adults.
- Provide proper training to YLT members on relevant topics and skills.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ORGANIZATION AND ADULTS.

- Train staff on the importance of youth-adult partnerships and why it is being introduced to the organization.
- Train staff on professional development topics to increase their ability to handle difficult situations

APPENDIX A

The El Rio Health Center Initiative (Tucson, AZ)

3Rs Reproductive Health Access Project

The *3Rs Reproductive Health Access Project (3Rs RHAP)* is an innovative clinic-based approach to promoting sexual health and addressing high rates of unintended pregnancy among teens and young adults through youth engagement and youth-adult partnerships. Conceived in 2017 through a collaboration between Advocates for Youth and El Rio Health Center (El Rio), a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Tucson, Arizona, *3Rs RHAP* is grounded in Advocates' philosophy of *Rights, Respect, Responsibility*, and El Rio's commitment to providing affordable, accessible, and comprehensive primary care services to underserved populations. RHAP engages teams of young people to work alongside adult staff in community health centers to improve the quality of, ensure access to, and expand the reach of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programming.

Since its inception, El Rio Health Center's RHAP youth leaders have: promoted systems-level changes such as confidentiality protections, a teen-only health hotline, stand-alone teen clinics, extended hours of operation and free or low-cost contraception; instituted transportation services for teen clients, and conducted extensive peer outreach and education through community events, on-site clinic workshops, and via social media. In addition, the youth leaders have collaborated with adult staff at local social service agencies to institute sexual health screenings and provide education and referrals. An external evaluation conducted by ICF Macro from 2017-19 demonstrated that the initiative contributed to a significant increase in the number of youth who received health care at El Rio. In 2019, El Rio provided health services to 11,883 youth ages 14-24, an increase of 60% (n=4,444) since baseline (2015/16). In addition, 3,543 teens received family planning services in 2019, an increase of 49% (n=1,165) since baseline.

The keys to RHAP's success lie both in its approach to youth engagement as well as in its implementation process. At its core, the RHAP philosophy asserts that young people can play a powerful role in transforming community-based SRH programs and services when given the right opportunities, sufficient support, and adequate resources. The *3Rs RHAP* methodology is a structured process that involves building the project infrastructure; engaging youth and adult leadership teams; training youth as partners and collaborators; creating a shared vision; conducting extensive needs and assets assessments in the community and determining clinical capacity; and instituting new strategies and practices that will ultimately lead to greater utilization of sexual and reproductive health services among teens and young adults. This approach is summarized in **six key strategies**:

STRATEGY 1: Create an effective project infrastructure to foster adult and youth leadership and staff buy-in; establish communication mechanisms and decision-making processes; and craft a shared vision.

STRATEGY 2: Engage young people as leaders and collaborators in a youth-adult partnership; work with youth leaders to foster a safe, supportive, and responsive team environment; and provide training and ongoing mentorship to a Youth Leadership Team.

STRATEGY 3: Conduct a needs and assets assessment designed to assess the SRH needs of youth in the community; determine the quality, accessibility, and reach of SRH care; and identify evidence-based, feasible, and sustainable strategies for change.

STRATEGY 4: Develop and implement an Action Plan with mutually-reinforcing strategies designed to improve the quality of SRH services, ensure access to SRH services, and expand the reach of SRH services and a Capacity-Building Plan to ensure that youth leaders and adult staff have the requisite information, skills, and resources to carry out the Action Plan.

STRATEGY 5: Design and conduct a multi-component evaluation with a standard set of measures to monitor performance, track progress, determine outcomes, and promote sustainability.

STRATEGY 6: Promote long-term sustainability of the RHAP approach by formalizing the employment of youth staff; standardizing RHAP policies and procedures; requiring all health center staff to meet minimum professional competencies related to youth-centered care; raising visibility of the program through local media and community outreach events; and seeking additional public and private funding sources.

The Power of Youth Leaders

Comprised of 15-20 young people, the RHAP Youth Leadership Team receives extensive training, mentorship, and oversight to serve as health advocates, researchers, community organizers, and educators. To prepare for these roles, youth leaders participate in a highly structured orientation, the **3Rs RHAP** Youth Leadership Academy. The Academy consists of an initial training (up to 45 hours) covering topics related to leadership skills, youth-adult partnerships, sexual and reproductive health, program planning and development, community outreach, and more. Orientation is followed by booster workshops, training sessions and weekend retreats that focus on specific health topics, strategies, and interventions.

3RS RHAP BENEFITS YOUNG PEOPLE, HEALTH CARE CENTERS, AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES IN NUMEROUS WAYS:

1. Peer leaders have increased knowledge about their own sexual health including where to access culturally and linguistically appropriate sexual health services in their communities;
2. Peer leaders are introduced to the health care professions and improve career readiness through engagement in peer-led outreach, education and advocacy efforts related to sexual and reproductive health;
3. Participating community health centers have the opportunity to equitably collaborate with trained peer health leaders to address barriers to sexual health care such as lack of youth-friendly clinical protocols; long wait times; lack of confidentiality protections, and lack of transportation and child care, among other issues;
4. Participating social service agencies have the opportunity to equitably collaborate with trained youth leaders to:
 - a) offer on-site sexuality education
 - b) provide case management, care coordination, referrals, and follow up, and
 - c) provide services such as transportation, child care, and interpretation to facilitate access to health centers;
5. Youth in the community have improved access to youth-friendly, medically accurate, culturally responsive sexual health education and services.

Building Effective Youth Adult Partnerships

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

At the core of Advocates for Youths' (Advocates) mission and vision is centering young people and working alongside them to fight for sexual health, rights, and justice. To do this, Advocates uses a youth-adult partnership (YAP) framework to guide everything we do. The following definition and purpose (what, why, outcomes) have been taken from the following Advocates' documents: [Engaging Young Parents: A Toolkit for Youth-Serving Organizations and Agencies](#) and [Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships](#).

YAP Definition:

Youth-Adult Partnerships entail the:

- Integration of young people's lived experiences and expertise with adults' experiences and expertise;
- Opportunity for each party to suggest and make decisions; and
- Recognition and valuing of the contributions of adults and young people

In short, the YAP framework empowers young people and adults to work in full partnership envisioning, developing, implementing, and evaluating programs and/or policies that impact young people.

Purpose

What - Youth-adult partnerships is a framework that centers young people's voices and lived experiences. Adult allies work in collaboration with young people to identify the problems and barriers young people face and together advocate for the equitable and just opportunities and resources due them.

The essence of **youth involvement** is a **full partnership** between adults and young people. Full partnership means that each party has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions and in which the contribution of each is recognized and valued.

TRANSPARENCY IN YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

The "gold standard" of youth-adult partnerships is young people and adults working in *full partnership*. This often requires organizations to make a conscious shift in how their systems, projects, and staff function to make a concerted effort to involve young people. It takes a commitment from adults and young people to make this possible. We recognize that it takes effort for this shift to the "gold standard" to occur, and it might not always be possible due to constraints such as time and funding. It is important to recognize the constraints in which an organization, and its projects, are operating and work to address these barriers through leadership buy-in, training, and shifting mindsets. **Our goal is for young people to continuously move from being objects of a project (not involved or tokenized) towards being recipients (involved but only surface-level) and further towards being full partners initiating projects and making decisions with adults.**

Youth-Adult
Partnerships

**Advocates
for Youth**
Rights, Respect, Responsibility.

Why - Youth-serving organizations that actively involve young people in their work are often more relevant and sustainable than organizations that develop programs designed, implemented, and evaluated only by adults. Indeed, organizations that build young people's skills as activists and spokespeople have the added impact of helping them to develop skills that will serve them long into adulthood, while also creating a pipeline of emerging young leaders for the organization and the field.

Sharing with young people the **power** to make decisions means adults respect and have confidence in young people's judgment. It means adults recognize youth's assets. They understand what young people will bring to the partnership, and are willing to provide additional training, funding, and support when needed (just as organizations would do for adults). Both young people and adults may need to embrace change for the partnership to work.

YOUTH, ADULTS, POWER, & OPPRESSION

Historically, young people have been understood as "problems to be solved." Entities in power fail to recognize or acknowledge how contributing factors such as structural racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and education inequities perpetuate this idea. Instead of valuing and elevating young people as resources and assets, organizational policies and practices often lead to the continued oppression of young people. Through misguided research questions/priorities and adult-centered policies and programs, young people are frequently blamed for high infection rates, vulnerabilities, and risk factors. By focusing on the need to solve the "problems" of "high risk" youth, organizations fail to recognize the myriad ways that young people can contribute.

Over the last twenty years, there has been a gradual shift by entities in power in the sexual and reproductive health field from viewing young people as problems to valuing and engaging young people as partners with shared decision-making power, and as competent members of a community able to address societal issues that impact them. This paradigm shift of working with young people has strengthened organizations and their approach to program and policy development, implementation, and evaluation.



Youth-Adult
Partnerships

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Outcomes:

Outcomes for young people

The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (a division of the US-based National 4-H Council) conducted one of the few existing studies on the effect of youth-adult partnerships. The study showed that “involving young people in decision making provides them with the essential opportunities and supports (i.e., challenge, relevancy, voice, cause based action, skill building, adult structure, and affirmation) that are consistently shown to help young people achieve mastery, compassion, and health.”¹

Research identifies an internal locus of control, or the feeling of being able to have an impact on one’s environment and others, as a key protective factor possessed by resilient youth. In this regard, opportunities for meaningful involvement and participation—such as in youth-adult partnerships—may provide the young person with opportunities to develop and/or strengthen their internal locus of control.²

Outcomes for adults

- Experience the competence of youth firsthand and begin to perceive young people as legitimate, crucial contributors
- Find their commitment and energy enhanced by working with youth
- Feel more effective and more confident in working with and relating to youth
- Understand the needs and concerns of youth, become more attuned to programming issues, and gain a stronger sense of connection to the community
- Receive fresh ideas from different perspectives
- Reach a broader spectrum of people
- Develop more relevant and responsive programming and services
- Share knowledge

Outcomes for organizations

Programs are more **sustainable** and **effective** when youth are partners in their design, development, and implementation. Evaluation results are more honest and realistic when youth assist in gathering and providing the data on which evaluation is based.

- Young people help clarify and bring focus to the organization’s mission.
- The adults and the organization, as a whole, become more connected and responsive to youth in the community, leading to programming improvements.
- Organizations place a greater value on inclusion and representation and see programs benefiting when multiple and diverse voices participate in making decisions.
- Youth decision-making helps convince foundations and other funding agencies that the organization is committed to meaningful youth development and youth involvement.¹

1. Shepherd Z, et al. Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations. Madison, WI: National 4-H Council, 2000.

2. Blum R. Healthy youth development as a model for youth health promotion. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 1998; 22: 368-375.

3. Shepherd Z, et al. Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations. Madison, WI: National 4-H Council, 2000.

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APPENDIX C

YLT Program Coordinator Job Description Responsibilities

This person should have experience working with young people and have the capacity to facilitate conversations about potential practice changes within the organization.

YLT PROGRAM COORDINATOR

- Oversee administrative, logistical, and budgetary tasks
- Serve as the bridge between the organization's adult staff members and the YLT
- Recruit, train, and supervise youth leaders
- Collaborate with youth leaders to develop a vision and mission for their work and help define the YLT goals and assist with creating an implementation plan
- Support the personal and professional growth of the YLT
- Act as a liaison between youth leaders and the community
- Facilitate introductions between youth leaders and youth-serving organizations (YSOs)
- Review educational and outreach materials created by the YLT (e.g., presentations, social media posts, etc.)
- Promote the work of the YLT

Staff Interaction with Young People

SAMPLE POLICY FROM ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

**Young.
Powerful.
Taking Over.**

**Advocates
for Youth**
Rights. Respect. Responsibility.

Staff Interaction with Young People

Advocates for Youth recognizes that most staff, as a part of their job duties, will work with young people employed by the organization as interns or supported by the organization as youth activists. Staff also may encounter young people as participants of workshop sessions, trainings, or via the Internet. Young people are defined as anyone 25 years old and younger. For the purposes of this policy, interns are treated as Advocates staff.

Advocates recognizes the inherent power imbalance between young people and staff and the need to exercise extreme care so as not to take advantage of this imbalance. The following guidelines are intended to assist staff in maintaining a high standard of professionalism and responsibility in leadership when working with young people.

In general, Advocates staff should limit interactions with our young people currently engaged in Advocates for Youth's programs outside of the conduct of their regular job duties to informal contacts in public places. In addition, the following standards should be followed:

1. Staff cannot share with or encourage the use of alcohol, cigarettes, or illegal drugs by any young people.
2. Staff is responsible for assuring that all interactions with young people are non-sexual and that no messages are given to young people that imply a sexual interest.
3. Staff that is approached by young people seeking to establish a relationship beyond those normally provided by staff, should inform the young person of the limitations on interactions between young people and staff. In addition the staff member must communicate with a member of the Management Team within 24 hours (or the next business day) to discuss the interaction.
4. Staff that is approached by young people seeking to obtain services beyond those normally provided by Advocates, should inform the young person that while Advocates supports the health and well-being of young people, the organization is not a direct service provider. Occasionally, staff may provide young people referrals to services and resources outside of those that Advocates offers. In addition the staff member must communicate with a member of the Management Team within 24 hours (or the next business day) to discuss the interaction.

5. Staff must inform their supervisor of work-related activities taking place outside of the Advocates' offices between staff and young people, at least 24 hours prior to their taking place.
6. Staff must secure, and keep on file for at least two years, written parental consent for activities involving youth under the age of 18.
7. Staff should always accompany youth under age 18 when they are conducting Advocates business. This includes, but is not limited to, youth participation at conferences, workshops, and meetings where they are representing Advocates for Youth or the work they are doing with Advocates.
8. When traveling with young people, staff should work with them to ensure a positive and safe experience. Young people and staff should discuss and agree to expected levels of participation and behavior prior to traveling to the event. Each is responsible for meeting the level of commitment agreed upon.
9. Staff is not permitted to provide young people with money outside of the per diems/stipends and travel support Advocates provides to cover their costs of participating in events. Staff should contact their supervisor within 24 hours of the request.
10. When traveling, staff is not permitted to room with young people. In addition, staff should refrain from entering young people's rooms unless they are accompanied by another staff member.
11. In the case that staff are engaging with young people, who they do not supervise directly in one of Advocates' programs (such as Youth Resource or Student Organizers), they should coordinate directly with the appropriate staff person that oversees that young person's program.
12. On occasion, young people may disclose personal information to staff members (i.e., about their sexual and reproductive health, immigration status, etc). Staff shall respect and preserve the privacy and confidentiality of young people who share sensitive personal information. If a young person discloses that they are a risk to themselves or someone else, then staff are required to notify a member of the Management Team immediately, but no later than 24 hours after disclosure. Follow agency protocol for engaging emergency services (911) as appropriate.
13. Staff should inform a member of the Management Team if they have a preexisting relationship with a young person or youth activist upon hire or when the young person begins working with or on behalf of Advocates.

APPENDIX E

Sample Photo Release Forms

PHOTO RELEASE FORM

I, _____, understand and agree that all pictures, audio, web-developed material, and videotaped footage of me, my child, and/or my property shot by [Organization name], and/or their crews. I authorize the use of this material and/or my child's name, likeness, and photograph for the purpose of producing, advertising, and promoting the program.

I agree that [Organization's Name] owns the production in which said material is used and owns all results and proceeds of the use of my/ my child's name, likeness, and photograph. I also agree that [Organization's Name] has unlimited rights to record, license, distribute, broadcast, and exhibit this material or portions of this material and its results and proceeds or to cause others to do the same through any type of technology, either known or not yet known, in all territories without compensation to me.

Concerning the use of the materials described above, I do not hold [Organization's Name] liable for any legal action that may result from my/my child's appearance in any production.

In signing, I confirm that I am either over 18 or am the child's parent or legal guardian. I understand and agree that all the provisions of this document apply to me/the minor named below.

Signature of Parent/Guardian or Youth Older than 18

Date

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian or Youth Older than 18

Date

Emergency Contact/Medical Information Forms

EMERGENCY CONTACT/MEDICAL INFORMATION FORMS

Please provide us with basic information about your health in case of an emergency during a Youth Leadership Team event or trip. All YLT members must sign this form. YLT members under 18 must have a parent or legal guardian sign this form. In addition, YLT members under 18 are not allowed to administer medication to themselves. Parents or guardians must complete the medical release section of this form indicating that staff members may administer over-the-counter or prescription medication.

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please list:

- Any allergies to medicines (such as penicillin, aspirin, tetanus).
- Any food allergies you may have (such as fresh fruit, nuts, or gluten). Do you need/carry an epi-pen?
- Any other dietary restrictions you have (such as vegetarian, vegan, kosher).

Do you need accessibility assistance? If so, please explain.

PHYSICIAN AND HEALTH INSURANCE

Name and phone number of primary physician:

Do you have health insurance?

If yes, please provide the name of the carrier and member ID number.

What is your preferred hospital?

MEDICAL RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

Please list any medications (including prescription, over-the-counter, or vitamins) you are currently taking (list names, doses, and schedule).

If a participant is under 18, a parent or guardian must give permission for staff to dispense medication.

I _____ am the parent/legal guardian of _____,
I hereby give permission for you to dispense the following medications to my child as needed.

List Medications

Signature _____ Date _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Please provide the name, phone number, and relationship of at least two contacts who we can call in case of emergency.

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Relationship _____

SIGNATURE

All participants regardless of age must sign this document.

I understand that if a serious illness/injury develops, medical or hospital care will be given. I further understand that in case of serious illness/injury, I give my permission for emergency treatment to be carried out, as recommended by an attending physician.

Printed name of participant Signature of participant Date

FOR PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18

I _____ parent or legal guardian of _____. I understand that if a serious illness/injury develops, medical or hospital care will be given. I further understand that in case of serious illness/injury, I give my permission for emergency treatment to be carried out, as recommended by an attending physician.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G

YLT Application

SAMPLE YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM APPLICATION

The ____ [insert org name] ____ Youth Leadership Team (YLT) is made up of young leaders and activists who seek to improve access to sexual and reproductive health care for young people in the local community.

As a member of ____ [Organization's YLT] ____, you will join us in working with local health centers and youth serving organizations to improve the quality of, increase access to, and expand the reach of sexual and reproductive health care. Importantly, you will provide young people with the information they need to make meaningful and informed decisions about their own bodies and lives. If selected as a member, you would do the following:

- Dedicate a minimum of [xx] hours per week to work with the [insert YLT name]
- Participate in twice-monthly [Organization's YLT] General Meetings
- Participate in weekly specialized YLT meetings
- Participate in quarterly (once every three months) fun team-building and social activities
- Attend ongoing youth activist trainings, where you will learn information on sexual health /social issues, skills for educating your peers, and ways to be an advocate in your community
- Organize and facilitate peer-to-peer Reproductive Health Clinic Education sessions that take place onsite at clinic locations, with the goal of providing young people with inclusive sexual health information (including STI/HIV prevention, birth control, emergency contraception, healthy relationships, consent, etc.)
- Be open to opportunities to travel, speak publicly, and/or present workshops on topics related to sexual health
- Update "[Organizations] social media sites, including Instagram and Twitter, with pre-approved educational content about sexual and reproductive health-related topics important to you and/or your community (e.g., where and how to access teen-friendly reproductive health services).

No previous experience or knowledge in sexual and reproductive health is necessary to be eligible to apply and become a member.

After we receive your completed application, we will contact you to schedule a virtual interview.

Note: All [Organizations name] meetings will be [virtual, in-person or hybrid].

ELIGIBILITY & ONBOARDING PROCESS

Before applying, please be sure to see the minimum requirement necessary to become a [Organization's YLT] member below:

Eligibility:

- Must be between the ages of "insert age range" years old

Once the member application/interviewing process is complete and you are chosen as a "organizations YLT" member, the following items are required:

- Background check
- Badge approval
- Create an Organizational Email (hired members only)
- 16-20 hours of initial training

BASIC INFORMATION

Tell us more about yourself and why you are interested in joining our team.

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Preferred Name _____ Pronouns (optional) _____

Email _____ Phone Number _____

What is the best way to contact you? (Please check all that apply)

☐ Email ☐ Text ☐ Phone call

Current Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Date of Birth _____

(You must be "insert age range" years old to be a [Organization's YLT] member)

Why do you want to join [Organization's YLT] ?

ELIGIBILITY & ONBOARDING PROCESS (CONT.)

Tell us what you know about "Organization's name"

Commitments

While "[Organization's name]" values flexibility, we want to make sure that our program priorities align with yours. Please tell us more about your existing responsibilities and time commitments.

Please list your commitments for the upcoming semester/months and think about how much time you would be able to dedicate to "organizations name". When listing your commitments, make sure to include your school, work, extracurricular, community, and personal responsibilities. The minimum time commitment for "organizations name" is "insert" hours per week.

Please list your current and/or expected commitments for the "xxxx/xxxx" school year:

Availability

"Organization Name" values work/life balance, flexibility, and accountability. While we are committed to meeting the needs of each member, we also require dedication to the timelines and deadlines established to achieve our program goals. Please share with us what you can commit to.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure _____

How many hours are you able to work weekly? _____

Questions?

If you have any questions about this application or the "[Organizations YLT]" program, feel free to contact our team:

"Provide email address for contact"

Thank you for applying!

Acceptance Letter

Dear [Applicant Name],

We want to thank you for applying to be a volunteer with the [Organization's Name] YLT program. We are happy to inform you that YOU have been selected to join our team! We feel you will be a great addition to our group of diverse youth leaders.

As a member of our Youth Leadership Team, you will work closely with your peers and support staff to serve the youth community as we encourage and embrace each individual's autonomy over their sexual and reproductive health. Our team strives to value and nurture youth-adult partnerships that help us achieve our goal of increasing access to comprehensive, youth-centered sexual health services and education. We are very excited to welcome you to all we do and hope you will accept this offer.

Training will begin in [insert date] and as of right now, will be facilitated online via Zoom over several sessions.

Next week, I will send out an email with more information about the next steps, including volunteer orientation and training details. In the meantime, I would like to get a couple pieces of information from you. Please send me an email with the following:

- Your intent to join the YLT program. Please let us know if you will be accept our volunteer position offer
- Your full name.
- Your contact information, including the best email and phone number to reach you.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you!

Best Regards,

APPENDIX I

Rejection Letter

Dear [Applicant Name],

Thank you so much for applying to become part of [Organization's YLT Name]. We were overwhelmed by the number of applicants, and unfortunately, cannot offer you a spot this year. I can't stress enough how impressed I was by your application, and this is not at all any reflection of your strengths and capabilities.

That being said, I would love for you to stay involved in our campaign and network. We're here to build a movement together; you are an essential part of that. I've added you to our network where you'll have access to opportunities (resources, campaigns, training, conferences) throughout the year.

Thank you for taking the time to apply. Your passion and commitment to the community is far from unnoticed.

In solidarity,

Participant Contract

YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM PARTICIPANT CONTRACT

Your [Organization's Name] Youth Leadership Team is composed of young people ages [Age Range] who have come together to increase awareness about teen/youth sexual and reproductive health in our community.

The goals of the Youth Leadership Team are to:

- help create the vision and goals of our community mobilization project;
- raise awareness about teen sexual health topics;
- educate young people about where to obtain local sexual and reproductive health services, such as pregnancy and STI/HIV testing, emergency contraception, and sexual assault counseling; and
- empower other young people to get involved in their local communities.

As a member of the YLT, you will work with staff at [Organization name] from [insert time frame]. Over the course of the year, YLT members may be asked to:

- create educational materials, including brochures, wallet cards, and a clinic directory hand card with information about where to access health services;
- promote the project's text messaging line designed to provide young people with sexual and reproductive health information, including how to access services;
- work with local businesses, clinics, and organizations to launch a campaigns
- disseminate materials to interested organizations, clinics, and businesses in [city]
- organize and facilitate workshops for peers;
- educate peers about teen pregnancy, STI/HIV prevention, contraception, and where they can obtain confidential services in their community; and
- update the project's social media sites, including Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, with relevant, pre-approved content.

In signing this contract, you agree to (please initial next to each bullet): [Edit the contract to reflect the expectation set for young people]

_____ Attend and fully participate in initial two-day training

_____ Participate in monthly meetings

_____ Inform staff if you will be late or unable to attend any YLT meetings or events

_____ Follow up with staff or other YLT members to get any information you may have missed by missing a meeting or event

_____ Finish any assignments given to you in a timely manner

CONTINUED →

- _____ Submit a monthly activity report
- _____ Support and promote the activities of other YLT members
- _____ Respond in a timely manner to requests from staff or other YLT member
- _____ Learn with an open mind and respect the ideas of others, even if they are different from my own.
- _____ Discuss my concerns, suggestions, or questions about the YLT with the Project Coordinator.

Please indicate if you accept or decline to be a member [Organization YLT Name] [insert time frame]
Youth Leadership Team

- _____ Yes, I will be a member of Youth Leadership Team
- _____ No, I will not be a member Youth Leadership Team

Signature _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

For Members Under 18:

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

APPENDIX K

Consent Form (For Participants 18 & Over)

CONSENT FORM

Please Print:

Participant's Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

I, _____ assume the risks of personal injury and/or property damage that I may incur while participating in [name of event]. I further agree to indemnify [Organization's Name] for any personal injury or property damage I may cause. I understand that any violation of the rules may result in the termination of my attendance in the program and/or judicial charges.

I understand that the event will occur at [specific location] and that transportation will be provided. I further understand that I travel at my own risk and that [Organization's Name] has no liability regarding my transportation to or from [event].

I hereby release any and all rights for claims and damages I may have against [Organization's Name] or its trustees, officers, employees, and agents, including staff members and supervisors, in any manner due to any personal injury or property loss sustained by me as a result of my participation in the [event]. I will not hold [Organization's Name] responsible for liability for injury or damages arising from the result of my participation in this [event] unless it is due to willful or intentional misconduct or negligence on the part of [Organization's Name]

I have read the above statement and agree to its terms.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's Name _____

Parent's Telephone Numbers

(h) _____ (w) _____ (c) _____

Parent's Address _____

Parent's Email Address _____

APPENDIX L

Sample Permission Forms (For Participants Under 18)

PERMISSION FORM

Please Print:

Participant's Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

I, _____, the parent and/or guardian of _____, assume the risks of personal injury and/or property damage that is incurred by my child in participating in [name of event]. I further agree to indemnify [Organization's Name] for any personal injury or property damage caused by my child. I understand that any violation of the rules may result in the termination of my child's attendance in the program and/or judicial charges.

I understand that the event will take place at [specific location] and that transportation will be provided. I further understand that my child travels at their own risk and that [Organization's Name] has no liability regarding the transportation of my child to or from [event].

I hereby release any and all rights for claims and damages I may have against [Organization's Name] or its trustees, officers, employees, and agents, including staff members and supervisors, in any manner due to any personal injury or property loss sustained by my child or me as a result of their participation in the [event]. I will not hold [Organization's Name] responsible for liability for injury or damages arising from the result of my child's participation in this [event] unless it is due to willful or intentional misconduct or negligence on the part of [Organization's Name]

My child is not yet 18 years of age. I have read the above statement and agree to its terms.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's Name _____

Parent's Telephone Numbers

(h) _____ (w) _____ (c) _____

Parent's Address _____

Parent's Email Address _____

APPENDIX M

Strategy Chart

OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	GROUPS	AUDIENCES	ACTIVITIES
Short-Term (3 weeks)	Strengths: # of people, schools, and organizations contacted (Be specific and concrete.)	Audience: allies, people you will work with (Be Specific.)	Who will receive your messaging, campaign. (Be specific) Principal, Superintendent; Commissioner at Dept. of Health; Members of the City Council; Mayor; Board of Education members; School trustees	Short-term: Medium: (Means of using that activity.)
1.				
2.				
3.				
Intermediate (3-4 months)	Challenges:	Supporters:		
1.				
2.				
3.		Opponents:		
Long Term Goal				

**Advocates
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