

Core Values of Positive Youth Development for Youth-Serving Agencies

1. Young people, like all people, prosper best in the context of caring, non-judgmental, and respectful peer and adult relationships.

Action: Actively promote, value, and model relationships with young people that are caring, non-judgmental, and respectful. Listening to youth needs to be primary.

2. In order to function optimally, young people need to feel psychologically and physically safe.

Action: All efforts should be made to promote a physically safe and psychologically supportive and trusting atmosphere and environment. The environment in which activities and programs are offered should reflect the spirit and tone of the young people served. Rules and policies should, in the eyes of youth, be fair, just, and consistently applied.

3. Recognize that all young people have talents and interests that motivate them to grow and develop and that when engaged in activities that reflect these interests and talents, they will strive to overcome academic and social barriers that obstruct or impede their growth in such activities.

Action: Agencies should select activities and programs that build upon the strengths, interests, competencies of the youth they serve.

4. Acknowledge that young people are experts in the lives that they lead, the neighborhoods in which they reside, and the schools in which they attend and that this expertise should help shape the activities and programs adopted by youth-serving agencies.

Action: Young people should be given active roles in planning, creating, selecting, and implementing agency programs, policies, and activities.

5. Healthy development among youth derives from developing competencies; confidence; positive relationships; positive and pro-social values; empathy; contributing in positive ways to their families, schools, and neighborhoods; and from engaging in cooperative endeavors with family, peers, teachers, and adults in their communities.

Action: Agencies should create policies, opportunities, and programs that promote these basic elements of healthy development.

6. Respect and build upon the capacity of youth to positively and actively affect and address injustices and inequity in their neighborhoods and schools.

Action: Agencies should actively engage youth in identifying, analyzing, and responding to social and economic inequities and injustices in their neighborhoods and schools and provide the guidance to do so.