Engaging Youth in Organizations and Systems: Small Steps to Successful Implementation
Meet Your Presenters

Lacy Kendrick Burk, BA, Founder/Executive Director, Youth Engagement Solutions LLC, Consultant

Matthew Hudson, Consultant, Director of Operations, Juris Doctorate Candidate 2012

Clay Finck, MSEd., Program Supervisor, National Resource Center for Youth Development

Thomas Chapmond, Consultant, former Commissioner of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Overview

Positive Youth Development / Principles of Youth Engagement

- Individual/practice
- Youth perspective
- Systems/Administration
- Organizational

How you can increase youth involvement in your system or organization
From a Youth’s Perspective
Matthew Z. Hudson
Youth Board Work

- My experience with the Kansas Youth Advisory Council
- The National Resource Center for Youth Development
- Youth Engagement Solutions LLC
Youth Involvement

- Engaging youth
- Utilizing their opinions at various levels
  - CFSR success
  - Maine – Sibling visits
  - Kansas – Tuition waiver
Be better prepared to take advantage of what youth can do to improve our child welfare systems

“Nothing about us without us”

Supporting youth so they can assist (Stipends, hotels, transportation, etc)
As the first Independent Living Coordinator for Texas, I was keenly aware how valuable it was to listen to youth and involve them in policy development.
Statewide Youth Advisory Committee

- One youth representative from each of 10 administrative regions
- Met four times a year to develop policy recommendations
- Presented recommendations to the agency board each year
Lessons Learned

- Smartest thing we ever did
- Recommendations never seemed self-serving, very mature input
- A number of recommendations made it into policy
- Recommendations from youth seemed to have more credibility
In the early stages of the program, we hired a young woman who had just transitioned from foster care. This Youth Specialist position was established to: help with staff training, train other youth to participate in staff training, provide policy review from a youth perspective, speak at conferences, provide consultation to foster parents and residential care providers, etc.
Lessons Learned

- Staff became much more aware of issues from the youth perspective
- Staff became much more aware of the impact of their behavior
- Young people had an advocate in state office and they became more confident in advocating for themselves
- The Youth Specialist became the “face” of youth in care. Before that, it seemed that everyone just talked about youth in care, but few policy makers ever interacted with a youth face to face
- We were proud of ourselves for “walking the walk”
Lessons Learned (cont.)

- We did not define the job well enough, it was too vague.
- We injected a young person fresh out of care into a professional state office environment and we expected her just to fit in.
- The position was more “self-directed” than it should of been – that was unfair to her.
- We should have time limited the position.
- We should have done a much better job of defining specific tasks.
- We should have realized that the Youth Specialist would need more supervision and support than the typical professional adult who had been working in the field for years.
Recommendations

- Look for Any Opportunity to Interact with Youth When you visit local offices, arrange to have a group of youth available for you to visit with
- Have a list of specific questions you want input on, then open the discussion for their recommendations and questions
- Implement a practice for yourself that you take a youth to lunch regularly
- Be a role model
Organizational Level Perspective

Clay Finck
A Service of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Children’s Bureau
Member of the Children’s Bureau’s Network of T/TA providers
Located in Tulsa, Oklahoma
5 year competitive award
Children’s Bureau T/TA Network

- 9 National Resource Centers (NRC’s)
- 5 Child Welfare Implementation Centers (IC’s)
- 7 Additional Information and T/TA Organizations
- 2 Co-Sponsored Centers
- 2 Resource Centers that provide services to specific grantees
- 5 Quality Improvement Centers (QIC’s)
NRCYD Assists to Implement:

- Chafee Program 1999
- Education and Training Voucher Program 2001
- Fostering Connections 2008
- National Youth in Transition Database 2010
T/TA based on Four Core Principles:

- Permanent Connections,
- Collaboration,
- Cultural Competence,
- Youth Development.
Young Adult TTA Network

Prepared to Provide Training and Technical Assistance to States and Tribes
100-200 Young Adults (ages 16-25) with Current and Former Foster Care Experience

- Facilitated and managed by FC
- Trained by FC and NRCYD
- Funded by NRCYD
- Available to the entire TTA Network

Off-site flexible work

On-site work, more structured time commitment & more training required

- Develop & Test Curricula
- Provide youth perspective
- Serve on Workgroups
- React to proposed policies, practices, & programs
- Share knowledge & Experience
- Provide on-site TTA

- Respond to Polling Questions
- Present at Conferences, Webinars
- Review and comment on Documents
- Contribute to creation of new resources

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NRCYD’S Three-Tiered Service Delivery System

Training and Technical Assistance based on your needs

Opportunities to dialogue with your peers on topics of concern to you

Information that can help you provide quality services for your youth
Program Development

- Facilitated the older youth provisions of Fostering Connections
- Reviewed Chafee and ETV policies, programs and services,
- Recommend ways to maximize resources and improve outcomes for youth
- Facilitate stakeholder discussions and planning
Youth/Adult Partnership Development

- Emphasize the importance of permanency for older youth
- Create and implement positive youth development strategies
- Develop and strengthen youth leadership groups
- Coach youth/adult partners working on projects
- Improve life skills assessment and instruction
- Strengthen the transition planning process
- Support LGBTQ youth
States, Tribes and Territories can provide high quality services to their youth.

If youth are involved, we can help.
Incorporating Youth into NRCYD

- Consultants
- Interns
- YATTA NET
- Employees
Lessons Learned/Recommendations for Organizations
Make sure to prep youth, both emotionally and professionally

Provide them with info for what they are going to be there for, what the purpose of the group/meeting is, and what their role is in the process

Provide travel stipends for transportation and food up front in a way the youth can have accessibility to funds (i.e. cash vs. check, or take them to the bank prior to the event)

Debrief with the youth after the event, and keep an open line of communication as youth may have “aha” moments later.
  - As a youth – Lacy
  - As an adult – Clay and Thomas
And how...

- Identify areas that are working well (incorporating youth opinions)
  - Assessment, Evaluation, Continuous Quality Improvement processes
- Identify areas where youth could be more participative
- Connect with other places/resources where systems or organizations have successfully utilized youth expertise
Changing your workplace culture
  ◦ Larger policies and guidelines
  ◦ *Kaizen* – “Continuous improvement”

What has worked for **sustainable change** in states
  • Thomas – Youth at planning meetings
    • In policy, but didn’t happen in practice – realistic, needed to involve others in policy change, educate youth on their right, prepare youth to attend and have support
  • Clay – NEYC
    • Stabilized, hold standing meetings with Commissioners, Involve young people in training staff

CQI and evaluation of youth participation
Questions?
Contact Info

- www.YESolutions.org
- info@yesolutions.org

- www.nrcyd.ou.edu
- Nrcyd@ou.edu