

# The YouthBuild Manual for Counseling, Case Management, and Program Culture



YouthBuild

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## Preface

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) seeks to provide new strategies and improve service delivery to create successful employment and education outcomes for disconnected youth, including older out-of-school youth and youth with disabilities.

The YouthBuild program offers young people an opportunity to obtain their diploma or GED, receive accreditation in an occupational skill—construction—and give back to their community through the construction of housing for low-income families. In 2006, the YouthBuild Transfer Act (Public Law 109-281) was signed into law, thus transferring the YouthBuild program from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to DOL.

Under the YouthBuild Transfer Act, the YouthBuild program places greater emphasis on post-secondary transitions for participants and stronger linkages with the One Stop Career Center System, community colleges, and apprenticeship programs. YouthBuild is an important part of ETA's youth vision, particularly its focus on high quality, innovative alternative educational learning opportunities that prepare youth for post-secondary education and employment. YouthBuild retains its emphasis on internalizing the ethic of service and developing leadership responsibility and skills.

The primary target populations for YouthBuild programs are disadvantaged youth ages 16 to 24 who have left high school without a diploma, adjudicated youth, youth aging out of foster care, and other at-risk youth populations. The YouthBuild training model provides young men and women the opportunity for meaningful work and service to their communities while developing employment and leadership skills and preparing them for post-secondary education. Through their training, YouthBuild participants assist in the rehabilitation or construction of housing for low-income or disadvantaged families, many of whom may be facing homelessness.

*The YouthBuild Manual for Counseling, Case Management, and Program Culture (the Manual)* seeks to provide guidance for YouthBuild staff on how to engage youth who are disconnected from mainstream institutions and systems, and to help the staff create a context in which the students can define positive goals for themselves and their families. This Manual focuses on how to offer the personal supports students need to overcome obstacles to achieving their goals, how to assist them in linking with the resources they need, and to document outcomes associated with the delivery of these services and opportunities to YouthBuild participants.

The Manual is divided into two parts: Counseling and Program Culture (Part A) and Case Management in Practice (Part B).

## Acknowledgements

This Manual represents the wisdom and experience of numerous YouthBuild professionals and includes best practices from YouthBuild programs all over the country. Directors, teachers, and program advisors assisted in the development of the Manual by sharing their experiences, expertise, and resource materials. This Manual was created under a contract with YouthBuild USA with input from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) staff and private consultants.

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## **Electronic access to publication**

This Manual can be accessed through the Internet at the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

## Introduction

*The YouthBuild Manual for Counseling, Case Management, and Program Culture* is designed to assist staff and youth professionals working within a YouthBuild program with the development and enhancement of the various components of counseling and case management. Case management is defined in this Manual as the total process a youth experiences from the moment he or she enters a YouthBuild program until well after completion when he or she is benefiting from post-program follow-up services and opportunities. This entire process is driven by the individual YouthBuild participant. Individual and group counseling is a significant part of comprehensive case management as is immersion in the YouthBuild program culture.



Participants (students) in a YouthBuild program are low-income youth ages 16 to 24 working toward a GED or high school diploma while learning occupational construction skills. There is a strong emphasis on leadership development and civic engagement and the creation of a strong peer culture informed by positive values and mutual support. Engaging youth for a specific time period and holding them accountable for certain skill attainment are challenging endeavors for the most experienced case manager or counselor. This Manual will be useful to all YouthBuild staff, provided they have some experience and background in working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and a basic understanding of the physical and social development of youth.

It is important to recognize that each YouthBuild program operates differently: some are quite large, others are small, some are charter schools, others are operated by community-based organizations. Programs can be rural or serve large metropolitan areas. The program may have distinct characteristics that reflect the youth being served, such as Hispanic or Latino youth or youth residing on a Native American reservation. Programs also differ in their staffing patterns: some have counselors, some have case managers, and some carry the title of both. It is understood that within each YouthBuild program the titles and responsibilities staff members may and do overlap. Case managers may also serve as job developers or follow-up counselors. To that end, this Manual recognizes that counseling and case management falls under the purview of different staff members, hence this Manual will prove useful to every member of the organization, including the administrators responsible and accountable for the operation of the YouthBuild program.

During the course of a successful YouthBuild program, young people are typically going through a process of personal transformation during which their aspirations, self-esteem, values, skills, lifestyle, and methods for handling their feelings, relationships with their families, relationships with their communities, and future plans may change. The Manual will provide YouthBuild staff with information that will help them understand, support, and guide this process.



This Manual is divided into two parts.

- **Part A, Counseling and Program Culture**, discusses systematically planning and organizing the counseling component of a YouthBuild program, developing a strong positive organizational culture, and addressing challenges faced by students and by counselors in a YouthBuild program.
- **Part B, Case Management in Practice**, discusses recruitment, enrollment, and assessment; development of an individual development plan (IDP) or life plan; implementing the IDP and monitoring outcomes; follow-up; documentation (record keeping and case notes); evaluation and measuring outcomes; labor market information; and engaging employers.

## Use of Pronouns

Throughout the Manual, the pronouns *he* and *she* are used alternately by chapter. If individual YouthBuild staff or students in one chapter are referred to as *he*, in the following chapter the pronoun *she* is used.

## Sources

The materials referenced throughout this Manual and within the appendices are suggested resources that readers may find useful in conducting YouthBuild programs and activities. However, the suggested resources are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all resources, nor is it intended that these resources are specifically recommended by the U. S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration.

Most of the materials you see referenced here can be found on the **YouthBuild Community of Practice (CoP)**, an online interactive electronic space where YouthBuild grantees can share and review documents, exchange ideas and resources, plan events, and much more. If you have not joined the CoP, please contact [www.youthbuild@dol.gov](mailto:www.youthbuild@dol.gov) for log-in information.

**Note: Techniques related to clinical counseling and group therapy described in this handbook are presented for informational purposes only. Proper and effective use of these techniques requires training and, for the most part, certification, which is beyond the scope of this Manual. YouthBuild staff are encouraged to use this information to heighten their understanding of case management, counseling, and therapeutic intervention, and to pay close attention to the chapter that speaks to the need to connect YouthBuild students to qualified mental health professionals when circumstances require their assistance.**

# **Part A:**

## **Counseling and Program Culture**



**YouthBuild**

# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Counseling and Program Culture Component



YouthBuild

## Overview

YouthBuild programs seek to support students in transforming their lives and acquiring the skills they need to succeed in work, school, family, and community involvement. The goal of the counseling and program culture component is to facilitate this transformation process by teaching students how to overcome obstacles to their success. These obstacles can be both internal and external. They may be:

- Personal, resulting from the ideas, attitudes, feelings, behavior, or lack of skills and information of the young people themselves,
- Interpersonal, flowing from troubling relationships with family and friends, or
- System-related, connected to the justice, welfare, health care, mental health, education, or other systems.



The role of the counseling and program culture component is to figure out what support, information, skills, or resources each student needs, and to assist students in:

- Understanding themselves and their environment,
  - Learning to set and achieve goals and objectives reflecting their highest aspirations,
  - Facing and overcoming personal issues that get in their way,
  - Working out relationships with others, and
  - Negotiating external systems.
- To plan and organize this component, the program needs to establish clear goals.

This chapter focuses on information that will influence the goals set for the counseling and program culture component—understanding the needs presented by incoming students and understanding the process of youth transformation as it has been observed in YouthBuild programs. Also included is a summary of the key elements that might comprise the full counseling component and that will contribute to a strong, positive program culture.

The YouthBuild program culture is one in which young people quickly feel safe, respected, and cared about. They understand that the adult staff are committed to giving them the tools, skills, support systems, and opportunities that will enable them to define and achieve their highest aspirations. The concrete assistance given through skillful case management toward achieving these goals, and the caring assistance with personal obstacles offered by counselors, case managers, and other staff, are essential to creating and building this program culture. When asked why YouthBuild worked for them, YouthBuild students and graduates invariably say, “Because they cared about me, they cared enough to ask me what I wanted to become and help me make the right choices and follow the right path to my own goals.”

Another important aspect of the program culture that counselors reinforce is the emphasis on leadership development and continuing education and training. Young people entering YouthBuild are not accustomed to being seen and treated as potential leaders with the ideas and potential to improve their communities. When the program includes them in important decision making, it elicits and respects their ideas about how to improve the program and the community in regular and systematic ways. This expression of respect surprises them and brings out the best in them. Some students will eventually become permanent leaders for the program and the community, determined to give back and to help others as they have been helped. This respect for the intelligence of the students expressed by staff and directors increases the feeling of mutual respect among the students, and assists in creating a positive organizational culture. The ideas of the young people about the program and the community often turn out to be extremely valuable since youth are in touch with present-day realities that may be outside the staff's awareness. This, in turn, may improve the quality of the program's policies. In addition, program staff can encourage and support continuing education and training for young adults who may not have thought they were capable of entering and succeeding in higher education. Through career counseling and assistance with exploring various training options, students can understand the potential career ladders available to them. Staff can assist them in determining available financial assistance, and in helping with the application process to colleges, apprenticeship programs, or technical schools. The YouthBuild program culture stresses overall career and academic advancement for young adults, not just within the program itself, but across the future of each individual.

## Basic Questions Related to Setting Goals for the Counseling Component

As programs plan how to help students achieve their goals, a series of questions arise regarding the scope and emphasis of the counseling component. The scope and emphases of YouthBuild programs can vary a great deal, depending on how the following questions are answered:

- Will the program primarily emphasize academic counseling and job preparation?
- Will the program expand the information-giving process to include a broad array of life skills, such as management of personal finances, parenting, family planning, preventing sexually transmitted infections, and building permanent and respectful relationships?
- Will the program directly tackle the issues of racial and cultural identity as they interface with personal development and the power to achieve in our society?
- Will the program aim to produce drug-free graduates, or merely graduates who can manage their use of mood-altering substances so as not to wreck their own and others' lives in a way that is directly caused by substance abuse?
- Will the program build a mutual support system in which the young people learn peer counseling and have the option of helping each other work through personal issues during the program and thereafter?
- Will the program offer a full range of social services such as childcare, birth control, legal advice, and access to affordable health and dental care?
- Will the program make available individual or group therapeutic counseling to all or some of the students, either on-site with qualified staff or through linkages with other resources?
- Will the program structure the component to support the young people's involvement in community leadership?
- Will the program provide follow-up counseling or case management for its graduates for the full length of time (one year) or longer, with other funds, in order to help graduates succeed in college and career?
- Will the program want to do all of the above?

The answers to these questions will reflect the program's assessment of what the students need, what resources allow, and what the goals for the graduates are in terms of organizational priority.

These answers will also affect the selection of counselors and case managers, their job descriptions, the ongoing structure and emphasis of the component, and the zeal with which collaborations are developed with outside resources.

## **Issues Students Typically Bring to YouthBuild**

YouthBuild students come with a broad range of personalities and backgrounds. They come from a variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, and family origins. The common factor among them is that most have been raised in poverty and have suffered resulting gaps in opportunity, education, and confidence. Most also have enormous strengths that are revealed by their intelligence and resilience and are reflective of their cultural backgrounds.

Some YouthBuild students thrive with relatively little personal counseling or case management once in YouthBuild. They only need appropriate opportunities within a supportive peer group that is guided by adults who care and are competent. Most students require steady attention to the process of planning their future, overcoming their bad habits, and building the behavior patterns, relationships, values, and attitudes that will sustain a positive future path. A subset of students will present virtually every past hurt, current crisis, external obstacle, and self-defeating behavior conceivable. YouthBuild programs must be prepared to handle extremely difficult situations on a regular basis.

## **Issues Students Typically Present to Staff**

In considering the goals for the counseling component, it is important to keep in mind the issues that students bring to the program, as outlined below.

### **Previous hurts and mistakes**

Some students have been victims of childhood sexual and physical abuse; some have lost parents, family members, and friends through murder and accident; some have been abandoned by parents who were overwhelmed or ill; some have grown up in families with alcoholics or drug addicts; some have joined gangs and committed a variety of criminal acts; some have suffered physical illnesses or disabilities; some have borne children at a young age; some have witnessed tremendous violence; and some have already been in homeless shelters, battered women's shelters, or prisons. A great deal of personal counseling is related to processing and healing past hurts and past mistakes, and recovering from grief, anger, and guilt. Some of this process can take place most effectively within the program, but only if trained counselors are on the staff—counselors who are able to listen well and provide highly sensitive and skilled support to individuals and through group processes. If such staff are not present, the program should build partnerships with other agencies to which students can be connected for personal counseling if they are open to accepting assistance offered outside the YouthBuild program.

### **Crises during the program**

Some students will go through crises during the program itself—crises related to violence and crime, family illness and loss, drugs and alcohol, or gang or police harassment. These crises require intensive attention and follow-through as they are happening.

## **Substance abuse**

Many students will come with patterns of substance abuse that will have to be challenged programmatically and personally. The program will have to set policies regulating acceptable behavior, drug testing, termination, and referral to residential treatment centers. Providing information and counseling about drugs and alcohol will be essential to the group and the individuals.

## **Unaddressed health issues**

Various health issues may have gone without attention. Building a medical examination into orientation is a good idea; the examination should include attention to dental and eye problems. Finding free or inexpensive health care is part of the case manager's and the program's role.

## **Inadequate housing**

Inadequate housing is frequently an issue. Some programs have found that many students are homeless or living as transient guests in someone else's apartment. The case manager may need to assist students in finding adequate housing. Several programs have constructed transitional housing for homeless young adults as a result of discovering that so many of their students were homeless.

## **Responsibility for ill or dysfunctional family members**

Some students have responsibility for family members with very serious problems that drain the attention and energy of the student. The case manager often needs to assist in finding resources for these family members in order to free the student to succeed in his own life.

## **Criminal or gang activity**

Some students enter YouthBuild with a past history of criminal or gang activity. Some, at the outset, are still involved, and part of their transformation involves cutting or gradually dissolving these ties. Their process of extricating themselves from gang allegiances needs special attention.

Some students may have court cases pending. Court cases can take up a great deal of program attention, and can result in the individual going to prison for crimes committed prior to entering YouthBuild. Some programs have therefore made a policy against accepting students with pending court cases; others have chosen to work with promising students, hoping to get them started on a positive path and then welcoming them back if appropriate when they return from incarceration.

Some students commit crimes, or are accused of committing crimes, while in the program. Most programs terminate students convicted of any crime committed while in the program. Many will allow someone whose crime preceded the program but whose prison sentence began during the program, to return to the program after completing his sentence.



Some students do not admit that they have warrants out for their arrest and that they are actually in hiding, trying to build a new life before they get caught. In the past, students have received honors that brought them media attention resulting in their arrest for outstanding warrants. Staff might want to approach this sensitive topic firmly but with compassion and understanding.

## **Troubled romantic and family relationships, including violent relationships**

For many students the nature of their romantic and sexual relationships is a source of distress; various family relationships may also cause extreme stress. Students may have partners or family members who are abusive, or who tolerate abuse, and these students need help recognizing and ending this type of destructive relationship. Often the untangling of such relationships is the subject of counseling over a period of months. This may require leveraging specialized services outside the YouthBuild program, particularly when the violence within such relationships is the trigger for crisis intervention.

## **Difficulty handling strong emotions**

Violence within relationships is often an expression of a broader difficulty in handling strong emotions. Difficulty handling anger, depression, loneliness, and self-hate are common themes. This challenge may result in students acting inappropriately, for example, hitting someone, starting a fight, or exploding loudly in the classroom. Youth may have issues that will require more intensive counseling and should be recommended to outside community resources, if necessary.

## **Low self-esteem**

A pervasive lack of confidence is very common. Low self-esteem interferes with a student's ability to imagine himself succeeding or believing that he is worth anybody's attention, or acting on the faith that his best efforts will result in achieving his desired goals. The entire program should be geared toward establishing a new level of self-esteem and self-confidence, reinforced by the counselor's caring feedback and advice.

## **Anticipation of discrimination**

Sometimes the student has lack of faith not only in himself, but in "the system." Many students do not believe that they will ever get a fair shake, based on their skin color or national origin, or their cultural or class background. They believe they have received—and expect to continue receiving—profoundly unfair treatment. The program needs to help them discern and handle discrimination when it is present and realize when it is actually not present but is a response to inappropriate behavior on their own part. They need to notice when their own efforts will, in fact, be rewarded.

## Lack of trust

The students as a group demonstrate an enormous lack of trust at the outset. Most of them have had few trustful relationships with authorities or peers. Dr. Ronald Ferguson and Jason Snipes at the Kennedy School of Government conducted extensive interviews with 67 YouthBuild participants at five sites over a two-year period in an attempt to develop a framework that captures the transformation process of many YouthBuild participants. They describe the development of trust as the first essential developmental task for YouthBuild students, and the winning of trust as the first challenge for the staff.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The complete report for this study can be found at

<http://www.youthbuild.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=htlRI3PIKoG&b=4808023&ct=3559135>.

## Lack of a positive set of values

Most students do not possess a consistently positive set of values by which to guide their lives. Some have never even experienced a situation that is governed by a positive set of values. While the program as a whole grapples with this, the counselor is constantly communicating positive values and standards that the students tend to internalize when they trust that person. The whole staff communicates these not only through words but also through actions. The students watch all the staff very closely and are quick to notice both consistency and inconsistency with stated values.

## Fear of success

Many students will demonstrate a variety of self-defeating behaviors that surface when success seems imminent. This phenomenon has puzzled and frustrated YouthBuild staff a great deal. It appears that a widespread fear of success exists among young adults who have become used to failing. The challenge of maintaining success at an unfamiliar level and a level that separates one from friends and family is a central issue as students move through the program. Constant praise and acknowledgment of a young person's uniqueness and their personal ability to succeed can contribute to combating the fear of success.

## Fear of leaving the program

There is a panic that often arises near program completion. Students often become afraid that they will not be able to maintain their success outside the protective context of the YouthBuild program. Counselors need to anticipate this fear, articulate it, and help students deal with it. Some programs have structured program completion in such a way that no student leaves the program until he has obtained a job. This prevents even a temporary return to the streets. Students strongly endorse this approach.

## The Process of Personal Transformation at a YouthBuild Program

One of the striking things about successful YouthBuild programs is how consistently students proclaim that they have completely changed their lives, turning from negative to positive, wanting to be constructive instead of destructive, and being ready to “give back” and help their communities. YouthBuild students continually demonstrate how eager they are to seize the opportunity to change. In the words of one graduate, “I used to be a menace to my community. Now I am a minister to it.” This individual, incarcerated for violent assault prior to YouthBuild, was working as a medical assistant in a neighborhood clinic a year after graduating from YouthBuild; ten years after graduation he had become the executive director of a community job-training program.

This personal transformation is a developmental process that happens for each student at a different pace, and in a different way, depending on the unique experiences of each student. However, some common elements to this process have been observed through research. They are useful to recognize and helpful in planning the counseling component.

Ferguson and Snipes identified a series of developmental stages that successful YouthBuild participants seem to move through during their time at YouthBuild. Their theoretical framework is built on Erik Erikson’s model of the development of identity over the human life cycle.

Understanding this seminal research can be useful in the development of a counseling program because the research did a good job of:

- Capturing the ways that young people experience these developmental stages,
- Identifying the challenges that staff face in attempting to help young people through them, and
- Highlighting the key role that counselors, case managers, and other staff can play in supporting the process of personal transformation.

The research can be useful in training the entire YouthBuild staff about their role in youth development, ensuring that the full staff is working together as a team in the most effective way to support the students.

## Five stages of personal transformation

Below is a summary of the five stages in this model of personal transformation that commonly occur within a YouthBuild program. In reality, of course, students do not move through these stages in a clear sequence, or all at the same time. However, it is useful to recognize the stages they may go through in the typical transformation process.

### 1

#### **Stage 1: Trust versus mistrust**

During the first few weeks of the program, the student is grappling with the issue of trust. A student must become sufficiently comfortable (trustful) in the program environment to decide to stay and to become actively engaged as a member of the YouthBuild community.

During this period, beginning with student orientation, the program will need to consciously create an environment in which all students can develop that sense of trust and safety in the staff, in one another, and in the program.

### 2

#### **Stage 2: Autonomy versus shame and doubt**

In this stage, the student struggles to achieve a balance between his own autonomy and the external control—the rules and expectations—imposed by the program. The student will be continually assessing whether it is worth giving up some autonomy to become a part of this community called YouthBuild.

For students to move successfully through this phase, the staff and students will need to deepen the tentative feelings of trust they established at the outset of the program. Young people will begin testing the staff to discern which of their initial impressions are true. Staff have to prove that they deserve to be trusted on at least four levels from the perspective of the student:

- Can I trust you to have my best interests at heart?
- Can I trust you to be competent—to know what you’re talking about and set boundaries that will keep us safe and stick to those boundaries?
- Can I trust you to keep your promises to me? Will you have sufficient resources to perform your job?
- Can I trust you to treat me well? Will you be respectful, fair, and pleasant?

Right away, it is important that the program strike an appropriate balance between discipline and moral support. If disciplinary actions seem excessively harsh or arbitrary and unpredictable, students may surmise that staff members are on an “authority trip” or “just here for the money,” and not genuinely interested in helping young people. On the other hand, if disciplinary practices are too lax, students will assume that the management is incompetent or uncaring and therefore ripe for exploitation. Young people who want to learn may become disillusioned and leave.

If this developmental stage is resolved successfully, students will stop trying simply to “get over,” (that is, acknowledge the program’s authority through pretense) and will begin to trust the program and the staff.

### **3 Stage 3: Initiative versus guilt**

Once the student trusts his new social environment and has decided to relinquish some of his autonomy to it, he needs to decide what to do in a forward-looking way with the opportunity. The student asks, “What do I want from this opportunity? Am I selling out by wanting it?”

Frequently, loyalty to peers and family are the most significant threat to a student’s ability to set a new positive direction without feelings of guilt. Students may feel guilty because they believe they are abandoning their peers or family by seeking success in mainstream society, leaving others behind.

One of the important roles that YouthBuild counselors and case managers play is helping students to pursue success without being handicapped by feelings of guilt and ambivalence. Often this means discussing ethics and values and helping them understand the legitimacy of options that others among their friends may dismiss.

### **4 Stage 4: Industry versus inferiority**

When a student reaches stage four, he will demonstrate a new level of industriousness.

A student will be struggling to figure out which goals are truly feasible for him. He will also be evaluating whether particular goals are both feasible and more attractive than available alternatives. He may question whether jobs will really be available for him. He may question whether discriminatory attitudes will keep him from getting good jobs. He may be willing to consider college as an option, even if he had never considered it before.

One of the most important things that the counselor or case manager can do at this stage is to support the development and maintenance of beliefs in the attractiveness and feasibility of a range of program goals. Their job at this stage is to communicate information about options, strategies, skills, and rewards. They may need to convince the student that he is capable. In addition, the counselor or case manager should be available to help deal with crises that would threaten the student’s progress by distracting him from his goals.

## 5

### Stage 5: Identity versus identity confusion

A student who lasts all the way through the program experiences many changes in his skills, habits, attitudes, aspirations, and social affiliations. This can foster tension between old and new identities. The challenge for the young person at this stage is to achieve and sustain a coherent and positive synthesis of all aspects of his identity. Positive changes in identity may be among the most important results of the YouthBuild program.

As the young people develop, it is important for staff to begin treating them according to who they are now, rather than who they were when they entered the program. Counselors, case managers, and other staff members need to communicate their beliefs about who the student is becoming. They need to tell him what they think of him and how they think he has changed. In order to maintain progress during the program year, a student needs people both inside and outside the YouthBuild program to reflect back to him the most positive aspects of his changed identity.

Counselors and case managers can increase the likelihood that progress will continue after YouthBuild. They can do such things as:

- Plan for ways that students can be supportive of one another after the program,
- Communicate to people, particularly to fathers and mothers, that students have performed well in the program
- Be sure that students have jobs or reliable plans for continuing education after YouthBuild,
- Provide opportunities for youth to talk about identity-related tensions,
- Teach students the ways that particular behaviors can signal their new identities to others, even changing their reputation in the eyes of people who knew them before, and
- Help students develop ways to interpret and respond to unfriendly treatment in all of the various situations where such treatment is likely to occur, so that their responses will not damage their otherwise improving reputations.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For a more thorough discussion, we urge the reading of *“The Counselor’s Role in Helping Youth through Developmental Tasks and Stages in YouthBuild,”* by Ferguson and Snipes, which can be found at the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

## Program Culture That Supports a Strong Counseling Program

The counseling component occurs in a context and program culture that must be consistent with and supportive of the student's personal transformation process.

YouthBuild programs typically create a mini-community in which a group of adults with specific construction, education, counseling, case management, and management expertise are united in their focused caring about the development of a group of YouthBuild students. Because of this caring, students often begin to refer to YouthBuild as their second family.



In this context, all the adult staff become personal resources for the young people. Most will play an informal counseling role for some of the youth at the same time they fulfill their specific roles. The young people gradually sort out which adults can be looked to for which kinds of information and support.

All the staff will be engaged in communicating values as well as setting and enforcing standards. Messages regarding what type of behavior, attitudes, and relationships are rewarded and what types are not allowed will be communicated daily, minute to minute, by what occurs on the construction site and in the classroom, in the hallways, and in morning meetings, youth policy council meetings, and staff meetings.

The sum total of the YouthBuild community creates a context and a program culture in which young people develop and change. It is the aggregate of the skills taught, the standards set, the relationships with the caring adults, the positive values expressed and exemplified by staff, and the evolving positive peer group that determines the pace and the depth of this transformation. The students' aspirations, self-esteem, values, skills, lifestyle, methods for handling their feelings, relationships with their families, relationships with their community, and future plans all change.

Within the comprehensive whole, there is deliberate attention paid to the individual's process of change, and a variety of supports are made available. Usually the counselor is the one staff member whose entire job is focused on assisting the individuals and the group in handling their personal challenges and coming to understand themselves and their environment. The counselor, though he works closely with the rest of the staff, is the one who thinks through and orchestrates tackling and resolving these challenges, giving direct, personal, ongoing support to individual youth, making sure that every youth gets the personal attention he needs, and engaging other staff and outside resources as appropriate.

The counselor should be seen as someone who helps young people understand themselves, understand their impact upon others, and understand the realities of the outside world. In order to do this, he must have the trust of the entire staff, but not be the primary staff person who serves as enforcer of rules and regulations. The counselor must have the authority to convene case conferences, speak to construction and education staff concerning issues about the young people, and, in general, be respected as a key organizing force helping each young person journey his way successfully through the program.



Some programs deliberately engage all staff in the process of providing individualized support to students, by assigning a certain number of students as mentees to each staff member for them to provide individualized time and attention to their well-being. This process has worked well in many programs.

Not only do the staff provide personal attention and communicate positive values and attitudes to all students, and the counselor or case manager provides specific counseling support, but there are also typical programmatic structures that support a strong counseling and case-management component by creating the positive peer group and reinforcing the new set of values.

## Seven Core Elements

While YouthBuild programs vary widely in their methods of implementation, most strong programs include at least the following seven core elements:

- 1. A thorough orientation program**
- 2. A contract and infraction system, plus an incentive system**
- 3. An inspiring YouthBuild pledge recited by the group daily**
- 4. Rituals, recognition, and rites of passage**
- 5. Social, cultural, and community-building activities**
- 6. Systematic participation in program-related decision making**
- 7. Leadership development and service opportunities in the community**

Each of these is briefly described below.

### **1 A thorough orientation program**

An effective orientation of one to two weeks can jump-start the personal transformation process within a YouthBuild program by:

- Creating a physically and emotionally safe environment for participants,
- Building the new positive peer group that will create a feeling of belonging,
- Starting relationships with caring adults,
- Setting clear, high expectations for student behavior and performance,
- Beginning to define past obstacles to success (both internal and external), and
- Beginning to identify the students' personal goals and thereby start them on the path toward their own personal transformation.

Many YouthBuild programs use the “mental toughness” model for the orientation. This was developed by YouthBuild Boston in the early nineties and has served to be very useful in generating high standards of discipline and engagement at the outset of a program. More information on the mental toughness model is available on the DOL YouthBuild Community of Practice.



## 2 A contract and infraction system, plus an incentive system

A student contract that spells out expectations of students and the consequences of inappropriate behavior is fairly universal in YouthBuild programs. This contract needs to be enforced through a well-designed infraction system in which inappropriate behavior is documented and is dealt with quickly and consistently. It is even more important to have incentives and rewards for excellent performance as a positive basis for change.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

A sample contract is in the YouthBuild Program Manual; additional sample policies and manuals can be found at the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

## 3 An inspiring YouthBuild pledge recited by the group daily

At the first YouthBuild program in East Harlem, New York, a pledge was developed by the students and staff. This pledge reads as follows:

*We, the members of the Youth Action YouthBuild Program, pledge that we are working together:*

*To improve and rebuild our community,*

*To relate to each other in cooperative ways,*

*To achieve our personal and professional goals,*

*To develop our potential as leaders,*

*To educate and improve ourselves and help others along the way,*

*To respect our peers, neighbors, and all life; and*

*To be part of a great movement for justice, equality, and peace.*

*All this we do with love and dignity.*

Most YouthBuild programs have developed their own pledges around these themes. Few of them are precisely the same, but all of them include the themes of cooperation, leadership, self-improvement, respect, responsibility, knowledge, caring, justice, equality, . . . dignity, and rebuilding the community in one way or another.

Students memorize the pledge and recite it at morning meetings or other gatherings. When they go on speaking engagements they recite it as a group, making a powerful impression on listeners.

## **4 Rituals, recognition, and rites of passage**

Positive reinforcement through rituals and recognition is widespread as a means of supporting positive change in student behavior. YouthBuild programs have developed a range of methods and opportunities for celebrating the successful transition for young people from one phase of the program to the next. Some of the more commonly used opportunities for positive affirmation are:

- Ceremonies at the completion of orientation,
- Daily morning meetings,
- Regularly scheduled and frequent opportunities for awards, bonuses, raises, and incentives,
- Regularly scheduled YouthBuild community meetings,
- Graduation ceremonies, and
- Participation in national awards programs like AmeriCorps Education Awards.

## **5 Social, cultural, and community-building activities**

Opportunities for building bonds between members of the YouthBuild community are very important to the success of the counseling program because they provide informal ways for people to support one another and strengthen their relationships in a relaxed environment. Students can work with staff to help plan regularly scheduled social activities, cultural events, or other community-building activities such as retreats, Outward Bound adventures, carpentry challenge competitions with neighboring YouthBuild programs, community service days, even bowling parties and basketball games with staff. These activities provide opportunities to strengthen the relationships that support personal transformation.

## **6 Systematic participation in program-related decision making**

To get the best solutions based on the best information, it is essential to engage low-income youth in creating their own solutions to social problems and in developing policies and programs that affect them. Thus, one element of the YouthBuild program is to develop leadership skills in YouthBuild students. An effective way of achieving this is through the development of leadership councils. The most common approach toward the forming of these councils is to create a working policy committee through which students receive experience in program governance and participate in significant decision making that affects the program. Directors are asked to meet with the students weekly so they can get first-hand feedback on aspects of the program that are working and those that need improvement, as well as the students' recommendations on key issues. Many programs also create alumni clubs, or arrange for graduates to serve on the board of directors, in order to continue to benefit from their input, as well as to continue supporting their development as leaders.

## 7

### **Leadership development and service opportunities in the community**

Leadership development opportunities can be powerful tools in the personal transformation process because they allow students to step outside their old self-images and try on new roles that draw on talents and skills they might not know they have. It gives them a glimpse of who they might become and stimulates a positive change in identity and aspirations. The program culture that respects the capacity of young people to become leaders and make a difference for other people has a profound effect on the participants. Typically, if you ask a group of YouthBuild students how many of them came to get a GED, about half the hands will go up. If you ask how many came to get a job, about half will go up. But when you ask how many would like to join a program that would give them a chance to work for justice and opportunity for all, a huge majority of hands shoot up.

A variety of well-developed opportunities are typically offered at YouthBuild programs, such as participation in visible community and human service in the neighborhood in addition to providing affordable housing, and participation in policy forums and other community gatherings designed to develop solutions for problems facing the community. Students are routinely included in visits to legislative bodies to learn how decisions are made and how public resources are allocated, and to communicate their own reality. Many YouthBuild programs have become known for having effective youth speakers available who can describe the conditions that caused them to leave school early—or get off track in general—and the conditions that are needed to help themselves and other young people to get back on track. Other coalitions call on YouthBuild to provide these speakers, and it makes all the young people proud to see their peers in these roles. These activities motivate students to change their own lives because they realize that they can play a significant role in improving the lives of others.

## Three Key Elements of a Strong Counseling Component

Once the culture that supports it is created, the counseling-management component is created. It should have three basic elements:

1. **One-on-one personal counseling and mentoring scheduled on a regular basis**
2. **Small group discussions, support groups, and counseling**
3. **Case management (internal and external)**



These three elements, implemented in the context of a strong program culture combined with the strong academic, job training, and leadership development components of the YouthBuild program, create a total youth development system that allows young people to transform their lives.

All three elements—individual counseling, group support, and guided goal-setting and linkages with outside resources—are essential to the full counseling and case-management component. Programs may choose to call their staff person a "counselor" or a "case manager" depending on whether there are any specific qualifications for either of these titles, or if there is a programmatic focus on one or another element. Some YouthBuild programs have youth specialists or youth advocates, and may also have follow-up specialists, resource specialists, or "job placement specialists that will be called upon to perform some of the tasks previously described. If there are two or more such staff members, the program may choose to have each one integrate the three elements, or may provide more specialization for different roles. When funding is limited, there may not be staff for each of these roles and leadership development or job and college placement are rolled into the job description of a staff member who is also managing counseling or case management. But, whatever the title, if there is just one full-time counselor or case manager, that person will have to integrate the three basic elements into his approach.

Regardless of the titles of these staff members, there are certain types of problems that usually need to be addressed by experts outside the program context. Knowing how to decide when to link a student to another resource will be addressed later within this Manual.

### 1. One-on-one counseling

One-on-one counseling is the backbone of the counseling program. The counselor will ideally meet with every student at least once every two weeks, usually during the school week. These sessions focus on specific short-term problems that have come up at the program or at home, or take a longer-term approach of working on goals and objectives of the individual development plan (IDP) or life plan that the student and counselor develop together. The exact focus of these discussions will be guided by the student's stated needs and interests, and the counselor's assessment of the student's needs. The development of the IDP or life plan will be described in Part B of this Manual.

In communities where young people are facing serious personal obstacles including involvement with gangs, drugs, and violence, programs have found that a counselor-to-student ratio of about 1 to 18 is needed. Meetings should be held every two weeks and fulfill all the related follow-up, counseling, and case-management needs of the students. Some programs choose, or can only afford, to have one counselor for every 25 to 28 students. In this situation, the counselor will need to plan his time very carefully.

Many counselors build in weekly visits to the construction site, just to informally check in with all students during the week. This informal contact allows the counselor to learn if any emergencies have come up that require a special individual appointment.

## **2. Small groups**

Group dynamics is a powerful force in a YouthBuild program. The relationships among students become a primary force in pushing them forward or pulling them back. The program can deliberately and thoughtfully use the power of groups to build a sense of family, a commitment to common goals, a sense of trust, and an atmosphere of safety away from the unpredictable forces on the street. This is key to the development of a positive program culture.

The counseling component uses groups in a variety of structured forms, each with a different purpose. Groups can be used to:

- Communicate information and discuss topics such as drugs and sexually transmitted infections,
- Teach specific skills, such as conflict resolution, managing money, developing healthy relationships and parenting,
- Provide personal emotional support, including general support groups or specific male or female support groups, and
- Resolve day-to-day problems within the program and among participants.

YouthBuild programs offer various types of groups that meet from one to three times per week for those students who are at the program site. Some groups have outside presenters or facilitators. Some involve more than one staff member. Some are handled just by the counselor.

## **3. Case management**

YouthBuild students have a variety of personal needs that can often be addressed through one coordinated plan. Case management is a well-developed and widely practiced method for coordinating all the resources, services, and opportunities that an individual student may need. The case-management process mobilizes both external and internal resources for the students.

- **Resources external to the YouthBuild program.** Through collaborative relationships with other agencies, the case manager helps students gain access to legal, medical, housing, and social services beyond what the YouthBuild program can provide. Creating linkages and coordinating these services is the role of the case manager, who needs to be well-acquainted with the resources and able to advocate for their being responsive to the students' needs.

It should be understood that students don't really like to be referred elsewhere and that they are not skilled at navigating external agencies even when they have key resources not available in the program. So when a referral is necessary the case manager will have to shepherd the process carefully.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Part B of this Manual provides in-depth information on case management in practice within a YouthBuild program.

- **Resources internal to the YouthBuild program.** The counselor or case manager also gathers information and serves as the central information and communication point for staff regarding the development of each student. He ensures that staff share concerns regarding the students, and oversees one unified strategy within the staff for addressing those issues.

This internal case-management process can make the difference in the success or failure of young people in the program because it ensures that students do not fall through the cracks. To implement the internal case-management process, some programs have weekly or biweekly meetings, convened by the program manager, in which all counseling, education, and construction staff identify concerns and develop strategies regarding individual students. Other programs designate a case-management team (including counselor, teacher, and construction trainer) to coordinate the work with a subset of students. Some programs have also used a regular monthly survey of staff to describe the level of closeness of their relationships with students to ascertain whether any students were being overlooked.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For a sample survey that tracks the level of relationships staff have developed with students, visit the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

One common practice among YouthBuild programs is case conferencing. Regular weekly or biweekly meetings of all staff are held to discuss the individual development of each student. Case conferencing promotes alignment among the staff, allows each staff to share information about the student, and ensures that the program is maximizing its efforts to promote change. Whatever methods are selected, it is critical that the staff have ongoing, focused discussions on concerns regarding specific students. More information about case conferencing is available at the YouthBuild' Community of Practice.

## Chapter 2

# Hiring and Training the Counseling Staff



YouthBuild



## Overview

All staff come to YouthBuild with some assumptions and theories based on previous personal and professional experiences about human potential and development, about how people change, and about how to help other people (or how not to help other people). Many, particularly those in counseling or case-management positions, come with formal training; others come with limited formal training but an extensive amount of personal experience and work with young people. Regardless of these backgrounds, most share a common assumption:



People can and will change their lives for the better if given respect, opportunity, skills, a supportive peer group, caring teachers and mentors, and a vision of what their life could be.

Attentive adults find ways to show their respect and caring, teach the skills they possess, and point the way toward a positive future. The basis of success is being able to do this with such passion and commitment that the learned cynicism of the young adults is overcome. Once convinced of the staff's sincerity, the youth supply the energy and drive that make it work.

Some YouthBuild staff may bring to the program formal theory, methods, and techniques from specific schools of thought about counseling. It will be easier to succeed at the program's goals if staff at any given YouthBuild program use a reasonably consistent approach. While it may be possible to hire and train staff with different theories and methodologies, in reality it would be quite difficult to achieve unity among a staff consisting of counselors, case managers, teachers, and construction trainers.

As directors build staff and program, it may be helpful for them to understand whether staff bring a specific theoretical framework and methodology and how that framework and methodology will fit with the program's goals, philosophy, and other staff skills. It is also useful to know what frameworks are not present among the staff but may be available elsewhere to provide particular assistance or training.

Many counselors or case managers would describe their own approach as eclectic, meaning that they have drawn from many theories and practices and use what they have learned according to what they think is appropriate in the specific circumstance.



## The Roles of Other Staff in the Counseling Component

### Director or program manager

The director or program manager sets the tone of caring and respect that creates the foundation of the supportive YouthBuild mini-community. She often engages in personal mentoring of individual students. When directors go out of their way to demonstrate caring, everyone benefits through the deepened trust that is produced. Overall, it is extremely important that the students see that the directors are fair, competent, caring, respectful of their ideas, and hardworking on their behalf. When directors find the time to offer deeper, longer-term mentoring for individuals, including graduates, the positive results are often quite striking.



In their management roles, the directors select the counselor and oversee the planning and implementation of the counseling and case management component, making sure that it is integrated with the rest of the program. They ensure that the overall structure that supports the component is implemented, and that communication takes place among staff to coordinate follow-up on behalf of specific students.

The director often needs to participate in building relationships with organizations that offer external resources—just as they need to build relationships with potential employers—in order to create a sound institutional relationship that is not dependent on the particular relationship between the counselor and the staff of the other organization. Occasionally the director or program manager may need to get personally involved in advocating for students with other agencies or with the courts. Using good judgment about when he needs to use her position or personal relationships to produce desirable results is part of any director's role. It is also the counselor's role to know when to ask for the director's intervention.

The director or program manager also sets the basic positive tone of the program culture, demonstrated in the way she treats staff as well as students, the values that she embraces and communicates, the initiatives that she actively supports, the language she uses, and the commitment that she personifies.

### Teachers, construction trainers, and other staff

The Ferguson and Snipes research on YouthBuild programs showed that three or more strong, positive relationships with staff correlated with a high likelihood that the individual students would remain for the duration of the program. It is the role of all staff to see to it that they create such relationships with as many students as possible. This is done partly by attending sensitively and effectively to the teaching of construction and academic skills, and by building positive peer dynamics in the classroom and on the construction site. It is additionally done by developing warm personal relationships and responding to the personal needs of students as they arise.

Some programs have espoused the idea that construction supervisors are in a particularly good position to become counselors and mentors, in that they are working side by side with the students every day, and have a chance to get to know them very well, both individually and within the group. In this case the important aspect is being explicit about expectations for staff and selecting construction supervisors with this interest and capacity.

Teachers and construction trainers participate in staff meetings or case conferencing, in which the progress of individual students is discussed and plans are made for helping them get through difficulties. They also contact the counselor or case manager when they see that an individual needs extra attention.

Programs that have leadership development coordinators or job developers understand that these positions are intimately involved in aspects of the counseling and case-management process. Helping students define and move toward their goals as role models and leaders in the leadership development process is an integral part of the personal transformation process, as is the process of preparing individuals to apply for and succeed in unsubsidized jobs and in their entry into continuing education.

Smaller YouthBuild programs may have a limited number of specialized counselors or case managers, hence some functions are spread among the rest of the staff, and students are divided up among all the staff, assigning each staff member six or seven students to mentor.

## **The Many Roles of a YouthBuild Counselor**

To address all aspects of a student's needs, counselors have to assume most of the following roles:

### **Personal counselor**

The personal counselor role includes individual, group, and sometimes even family counseling sessions. This aspect of a counselor's role requires special sensitivity and care because it often deals with areas that the student is not at first comfortable discussing. Counselors need to be able to make decisions about which subjects are to be addressed in groups, which are better left to one-on-one sessions, and which should trigger the use of an outside resource.

Developing relationships is important to all youth work, but it is particularly vital here. The nature of issues and feelings discussed in counseling sessions leads to a level of intimacy that makes the relationship very special. Counselors have to be aware of the need to develop that intimacy while maintaining certain boundaries.

As mentioned earlier, the extent to which a student feels a firm and surprising commitment to his success demonstrated by the counselor, or any other staff member, will counteract their commonly held belief that nobody cares. Discovering that someone else does care is an essential condition for an individual to awaken to his own caring for himself and for others. Demonstration of such caring is also essential to creating the transformative program culture that YouthBuild students describe as having allowed them to change their own lives. Demonstrating this caring sometimes means doing things that are outside the expectations of the students, such as calling them or knocking on their doors when they don't show up, accompanying them to court cases, visiting their ill parents in the hospital, or finding resources for them to buy proper attire for a job interview or to bury a parent who has passed away.

## **Workshop facilitator or trainer**

Counselors accomplish some of their tasks through workshops that can be educational, therapeutic, or both. They will also provide training to their colleagues about the many issues students are dealing with, such as how to mediate a sudden conflict or deal with grief and loss when someone of significance to the program discovers that she has a life-threatening illness or someone dies.

Training and workshop facilitation require special skills and understanding. The primary requirements for good workshop facilitation include knowledge of the subject matter, respect and positive regard for the participants, skilled attention to group process and individual dynamics, being consistent without being rigid, and demonstrating a sense of humor.

## **Advocate**

Counselors or case managers are likely to know participants in a different, sometimes deeper, way than do other staff members. The responsibility that comes with this knowledge is to advocate for the student. The counselor is the person who can mediate between a student who may be experiencing a very difficult family situation and a site supervisor who is concerned about a worker's inability to concentrate. She is also the person who can mobilize resources outside of the program when a problem arises for a student.

## **Case manager**

Case management requires assuming a holistic view of each student. It means that the case manager must attend to every aspect of a student's progress through the YouthBuild program, a process that cannot be handled alone. Counselors and case managers must establish regular meeting times with other staff to discuss each student's progress. These meetings can also be used to distribute tasks that need to be accomplished.

## **Liaison with outside agencies**

The number and types of obstacles faced by most students are often too great to be managed within the program. The case manager will need to gather information about outside resources, inform other staff about resources available, establish working relationships with other agencies, and facilitate interagency agreements that the director can initiate or complete.

Participating in service-provider networks helps keep case managers up-to-date about changes that can help or hinder YouthBuild students' progress. It also helps develop relationships that will facilitate rapid responses from other agencies. The role of liaison with other agencies is a facilitative one in relation to the other agency; it is a mentoring role in relation to the student. Young people need mentoring from a well-known and trusted adult to help them connect with another agency and get through its bureaucracy.

Some service systems, like the justice system, may be perceived by the students as adversarial. Counselors must know how these systems work and develop allies who can help them advocate for YouthBuild students. Even service organizations such as mental health centers, housing authorities, clinics, and welfare agencies are sometimes very difficult to understand and may in fact be less than sympathetic. Young people need the support and

advocacy of their YouthBuild program staff to make sure that these agencies meet their needs. If an agency's policies or practices are not responsive, and normal channels do not correct the situation, the director, with the help of staff, may need to strategize additional measures.

### **Coordinator or teacher of the life-skills curriculum**

While the teacher or job developer may teach all or part of the life-skills curriculum, at some programs the counselor or case manager will be the primary teacher or coordinator of it. Bringing in outside resources to teach aspects of the curriculum—such as financial management, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, conflict resolution, job search strategies, and noncustodial fathers' legal responsibility for child support—is often the best way to teach parts of it. The counselor is often the one who develops these resources and coordinates their participation.

For those parts of the curriculum that will be taught in-house, the counselor may also be the coordinator, seeing to it that staff members with appropriate expertise are scheduled in the appropriate sequence to do their part.

### **Counselor as disciplinarian?**

It is inevitable that problems will arise that require disciplinary consequences, and programs have to decide whether counselors and case managers should assume the role of deciding what disciplinary action is appropriate. Since it is very important for the counselor to help the young people understand themselves, their impact on others, and how to navigate the outside world, it is essential for her to help deepen that understanding and help the young people understand the origins and consequences of their behavior. If the counselor is responsible for setting the consequences for negative behavior, it can negatively affect the nonjudgmental bond that is so essential for a creative and trusting counseling relationship.

Counselors can advise other staff about how they think a particular consequence may be perceived by a student. They can also be present when decisions are made or when they are communicated to students since they may see the counselor as their safety net to the program during such times. This will enable them to meet with the counselor and express their feelings. Counselors must not allow their empathy with the student's feelings to be confused with disagreement with the program staff's decision. If a counselor does not agree with a program decision, it must be addressed in a separate appropriate manner. The program's decision-making process or credibility should not be undermined.

The counselor can help a student process the feelings associated with a particular incident or set of events, both helping her share and release feelings of anger, grief, or shame and helping her understand why she acted in the way that required disciplinary action as well as understanding why the discipline was needed within the total program context. Counselors should be prepared to allow students to vent in counseling sessions. This is an important phase in the process of learning from one's mistakes. The counselor needs to guide the student to understand that angry or hurt feelings do not justify misconduct and that whatever her feelings about the disciplinary action, she needs to take responsibility for correcting her conduct in the future.

# Recruiting and Hiring Counselors

## Desirable characteristics

YouthBuild counselors have generally been individuals with substantial hands-on counseling experience who share some of the life experience of the students, have deep compassion and commitment, and exercise very good judgment. Ideally, they have a bachelor's degree or graduate training with some emphasis on counseling and case management. In some cases programs have hired professional social workers who also share some of the background of the students or have had enough experience with similar students to make them credible communicators. The following are some of the personal characteristics to look for in selecting a counselor or case manager:



- Patient, honest, objective, warm, committed, reliable, and kind
- Excellent listening and communication skills
- Genuinely likes young people and the YouthBuild population
- Well-organized, with good time management skills coupled with strong and reliable follow-through
- Personable
- Perceptive, intuitive, and attentive, with an ability to notice and respond to what is being communicated verbally and nonverbally
- Comfortable with display of feelings and able to allow and encourage expression of feelings when necessary
- Experienced in working with disadvantaged youth
- Comfortable with the racial and cultural diversity of YouthBuild youth and able to value and respect various racial and cultural traditions
- Willing to “go beyond the call of duty” due to deep commitment to helping every individual reach his or her potential

## Modeling

There is no conclusive evidence that the counselor being of the same race, ethnicity, or gender as the person being counseled is critical in a counseling relationship. The nature of a counseling relationship goes beyond appearance or similarities in experience. The willingness to expose one's vulnerability is not based ultimately on likeness, but rather on the sense of trust and confidence that develops in a relationship between two individuals who have gotten to know each other.

It is clear, however, that having a number of people on the staff from a similar background as the students will enable the students to see them as role models and know that they understand firsthand the types of feelings and experiences the students will be having in the course of the program. This increases the students' sense of trust, the belief in the competence of the staff, and the actual ability of the staff to empathize and respond appropriately to situations presented. It is essential to a healthy program culture. Since the counselor or case manager is the person relating most consistently on the personal level with the students, there is logic in trying to assure that she has a similar background or knowledge that allows her to relate to the majority of students.

## Interviewing

Schools of social work and counseling programs in community colleges and universities are good sources of potential candidates for counselor or case manager positions at YouthBuild programs. Advertisements and outreach through community newspapers and youth workers' journals can bring good candidates.

The interview process should focus heavily on the candidates' ability to listen, understand, and provide guidance. The candidate should not be invested in changing the young person in order to fulfill his own needs for success. Beware of the applicant who wants to preach to young people about the right way to do things, or the one who seems so identified with the students that he might collude with negative behavior or be almost desperate to "save" them. However, deep commitment to doing everything in his power to support the young people's efforts to succeed in life is essential.

A hiring process that includes the director pre-screening candidates and checking references in depth, and then inclusion of young people in final interviews of those candidates found acceptable by the director, will result in the selection of staff with a strong ability to relate to the young people. An interview of a candidate by students, with the director present, gives a different insight into the strengths and weaknesses of that candidate than does an interview by the director alone.

The addition of a series of one or two role plays to that interview has proven very effective at illuminating the candidate's skills and attitudes. The role plays should be typical situations—both group and individual—that a counselor might be expected to address in the normal course of a week at YouthBuild.

## Training and Supervising Counselors

It is important during the hiring of staff to look at the entire counseling and case management unit. If the program is able to have a few people in the counseling unit, a well-trained professional as its supervisor with a less-trained counseling or case management staff is appropriate. On the other hand, if your funds are only sufficient to hire a single person, it is important to find someone who will not require a lot of supervision and has an appropriate mixture of both experience and education.



If a YouthBuild program has a small staff, much of the supervisory responsibility will rest with the program manager or director. Some important things to keep in mind in relation to the supervision of counselor or case managers are as follows:

- **Counselors need resources**

Counselors need resources to hone their skills. They need to attend workshops, meet with other counselors and case managers from other programs, and have a confidential context in which to discuss the cases of their students. Sometimes such discussion can take place among peers, that is, other staff members and the program manager or director. If the program cannot provide supervision or a good peer context internally for discussing how to handle complex individual situations, supervision should be provided through an outside professional consultant.

- **Counselors must be prepared for feelings from students**

Counselors are often the recipients of strong negative or positive feelings from students that are actually based more on the students' past relationships with someone else, usually some other authority figure, than on the actual relationship with the counselor or case manager. The intensity of these feelings may be unsettling. The supervisor will need to help make sure he does not take it personally, and that he understands its origins may be elsewhere. Similarly, the counselor sometimes has intense emotions toward the student that need to be understood as rooted in prior relationships. In all cases, the counselor needs to respond in a measured and thoughtful way, not a reactive way.

- **Feeling overwhelmed**

Counselors will often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems the young people face. If their caseloads are too large, and additional administrative duties are loaded onto their plate, this will compound the difficulties. In any case, counselors need to spend time with a supervisor discussing some of the difficult issues they face. Counselors often feel responsible when a young person fails to succeed in the program, or makes some terrible mistake, just as they will feel proud when a young person is successful. It is important to help them understand that ultimately the young people are responsible for their own actions and that the counselor's role is to be a guide—to be accessible and caring—but that he can't solve every problem for every student.

- **Increasing skills**

The work of training and supervising counselors and case managers combines offering support and increasing their skills. It will be important to use the case conference and the weekly or biweekly meetings with the counselor to offer support and guidance. Whenever possible, the director should arrange for the counselor to receive professional supervision from a more experienced professional. It will also be important to arrange for outside speakers and experts in particularly vexing areas such as substance abuse, family relationships, adolescent development, and group process, for the benefit of both the counselor and the rest of the staff.

- **Stress and burnout**

It is expected that staff that care about the students and handle many pressing issues will experience a great deal of stress. If this process is not monitored by colleagues and supervisors, burnout may occur. Burnout is a general feeling of exhaustion that leaves staff feeling tired and frustrated due to an inability to succeed. The nature of helpful people tends to make it difficult for them to say “No” to cries for help. The result can be that they find themselves stretched too thin. There are many things that need to be done to avoid and help deal with this problem.

Directors and program managers need to help the counselors stay attuned to their own feelings and workload capacity. Special attention needs to be given to the limits of their professional capabilities. For example, a serious psychiatric breakdown is too much for the counselor to handle, and should be referred to a professional who is specifically trained to deal with such problems.

Counselors should use their peers and supervisors to check their own stress levels and performance. If they find themselves getting short with students or colleagues, or have to deal with stressful matters in their personal lives, it can be very useful to discuss this in supervisory sessions, or find a venue outside of YouthBuild in which they can vent their own feelings.

Counselors need to rest and “regenerate their batteries,” and need to spend time with their own families and friends outside the YouthBuild community. Counselors who feel fit and alert with balance in their lives are better able to deal with the stresses that they face at work.

- **Conference and training attendance**

The importance of attendance at YouthBuild staff conferences and trainings cannot be overemphasized. The support of peers in the same role, coupled with new information and inspiration, gives perspective on the job and can be tremendously rejuvenating.



# Chapter 3

## Specific Considerations Preceding Orientation



YouthBuild

## Overview

The program will be enhanced if certain organizational procedures and relationships are in place prior to orientation. This chapter describes these items, including:

- Case-management record-keeping systems,
- Collaborative relationships with service agencies,
- Orientation plans,
- Rough schedules for the counseling program,
- Life planning tools and curricula,
- Confidentiality policies, and
- Policies on the rights of participants.



Some of these items will be developed by the director or the program manager, some by the counselor, and some through collaboration of several staff members.

*This chapter assumes that the recruitment and selection of students will have followed DOL guidelines (see *Eligibility Guidelines on the Community of Practice*), as well as information provided in the basic *YouthBuild Program Manual*. Income, age, and school status will have been verified, and demographic information collected on an application form. A contract as well as attendance policies will have been developed. (See *Sample Policies on the Community of Practice*).*

Contract and attendance policies are especially relevant to the counseling component, since the counselor will play a key role in helping students overcome obstacles to high attendance and positive performance.

## Preparation for Keeping Records

YouthBuild requires documentation of eligibility. It does not require extensive records of individual students' lives. There should be no records kept that the counselor would not be happy to have the students read. The files should be set up to include certain records for each student:

Survey form of background information, if one is used

- The overall goals and objectives of the student, the plans made for reaching them, and progress against these plans
- A record of each counseling meeting with a student: the dates, times, issues presented, actions agreed upon by student and counselor, and follow-up
- Home, hospital, or court visits
- Institutional issues that required follow-up, and a record of the follow-up
- Contacts with other organizations made on behalf of the student
- Descriptions of disciplinary issues and outcomes
- Regular evaluations of student performance from the school and construction site

The director or other reviewer should be able to open a student's counseling file and find a clear, concise record of steady goal-oriented contact between the student and the counselor or case manager, as well as an ongoing record of the student's performance.

Thus, prior to orientation, the staff should collect and prepare various forms that will be useful during program implementation, including forms for the following purposes:

- Initial assessment interview
- Referral to other agencies
- Excused absences
- Life planning
- Reporting on counseling meetings and necessary follow-up
- Recording infractions
- Assessing ongoing performance and progress in school and on construction site

## Identification of external resources

Depending on what service the program itself will provide, there is likely to be a need to identify and build relationships with external providers of certain resources. The case manager needs to determine in advance what these might be, so that he can identify organizations that provide such services and work with the director to build relationships and cooperative arrangements with them. These services should include the following:

- Substance abuse treatment centers
- Childcare
- Housing for homeless students
- Health and dental care
- Mental health care, including professional counseling
- Parenting and family planning counseling
- Legal assistance



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please see Part B of this Manual for more information on record keeping.

## Orientation plan

Programs may have developed their own student orientations or they may have adapted orientations already developed by other YouthBuild programs. The entire staff will be involved in planning and implementing the orientation. The quality of the orientation will set the stage for the entire year and is worthy of very careful planning.

“Mental toughness” is one approach to preparing the students for the rigors of the YouthBuild program. For additional information, see the mental toughness orientation available on the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

## Organization of schedule for counseling activities

Counselors and directors need to decide what type of personal development activities will take place and develop a schedule with the rest of the program staff that ensures that this component will not be shortchanged by the needs of academic education and construction training. The schedule should allow time for whatever activities the counseling component requires, which are likely to include the following:

- **One-on-one counseling sessions.** These sessions, usually held once every two weeks, provide the opportunity for the counselor to focus on specific, short-term problems that the students may have or develop. These sessions can also be used to work on goals and objectives that the counselor and student define together through the life-planning process.

- **Group sessions.** Various types of group sessions are typically held on a variety of issues for those students who are at the school or program site. Group sessions take place in a safe atmosphere that builds a sense of family, a commitment to common goals, and a sense of trust.
- **Life-skills workshops and seminars.** YouthBuild programs typically hold regular weekly classes on life skills such as healthful living, positive relationships, or career preparation. These are usually taught by staff. Sometimes, programs conduct one-of-a-kind life-skills seminars or workshops on topics such as conflict management or improving communication. Staff may decide to invite someone to the program to conduct one of these life-skills seminars or workshops.
- **Excused time for students for court hearings or probation meetings.** Programs build into their expectations that students must fulfill any court-related obligations and that doing this is part of their fulfillment of the YouthBuild program. The time they spend fulfilling these obligations may be counted as program time. Often staff need to support students in these activities, even attending court hearings with them to demonstrate community involvement to the judge, and to demonstrate to the students how much they care.
- **Community celebrations.** YouthBuild programs hold celebrations regularly. Celebrations are held to acknowledge high attendance, raises, completion of parts of the academic program, GED achievement, construction completion, and other milestones. Celebrations may be held to recognize engagements, marriages, and births. These celebrations foster a sense of closeness within the group and also make individuals feel special.

## Life-skills curriculum and tools

Life-skills curricula are a key part of the students' development. Sessions should be scheduled at regular times. Programs may select, adapt, or develop a curriculum to cover a wide array of life-skills issues. There are several comprehensive curricula that have been developed for youth development and workforce training programs and may prove useful to YouthBuild programs. DOL does not specifically endorse any particular curricula but leaves it to local programs to select what would be most appropriate for their students. For information on Life Skills curricula please see the Resources listing at the end of this manual.

## Confidentiality policies

A major concern of students as they begin to open up is to determine the degree of confidentiality that they will be afforded. Violations of confidentiality are naturally very damaging to trust. Students are extremely sensitive to any feeling that staff are talking about them casually, spreading from one person to another what they shared in confidence. They are equally sensitive to any perception that other students have somehow learned confidential information from staff. Staff should be extremely careful to respect confidentiality and never carelessly reveal students' personal information.

On the other hand, students need to be informed that there are certain types of issues that counselors will discuss with their supervisors in order to get guidance on how to handle them. There are certain issues that counselors will discuss with other staff as part of pooling their resources on behalf of the student's reaching her goals, and there are certain issues that state laws often require staff to report, such as certain crimes, indications of child abuse, and sexual harassment of minors. Programs need to review and follow these state laws.

There is no common confidentiality policy being used across programs at this time. However, programs will be more successful in building the necessary trust with students if there is predictability for the students about how their information will be treated, and clarity for the staff about how to handle the confidential information they are given. It is therefore strongly recommended that each program develop its own policy, taking into account the type of supervision given to counselors and the laws of the state (for an example of a confidentiality policy, please see Sample Forms in the YouthBuild Community of Practice).

## **Rights of participants**

Having a policy that outlines participants' rights in relation to the counseling and program requirements may also contribute to trust between students and the program. Possible elements of such a policy are:

- Every participant's personal dignity will be recognized and respected
- Participants will be afforded counseling and case management regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, physical challenge, or sexual orientation
- Participants' privacy will be maintained within the constraints of all applicable laws and program policies, and they will be notified of these laws and policies
- Counseling and case management will occur in an environment conducive to privacy
- Participants may ask for clarification on any matter pertaining to their counseling and case management—or the records kept of their interactions—and are entitled to a clear and truthful response
- Participants will be asked their permission before they are included in any research, and participants know that they are allowed to refuse such inclusion

# Chapter 4

## Initial Contacts and Orientation



YouthBuild

## Overview

Initial impressions shape relationships. It is often surprising how quickly YouthBuild students gain the feeling of safety and unity that is established during the very first weeks of YouthBuild.

The counselor has a role in producing this result, through establishing respectful and warm initial interviews, influencing the tone and content of the orientation, introducing unifying group processes during orientation, and carrying out initial assessment interviews that build strong relationships.



## Orientation: Tone and Group Process

Regardless of the specific content of the orientation, there are details of group process in orientation that send a message of respect and build unity quickly. Following are a few of these.

- **Name tags and food**

Treat young people like adults attending an important meeting and set a respectful tone for the orientation by offering food and supplying everyone with name tags. Although the purchase of food is not an allowable cost under DOL funding, a YouthBuild program can tap into leveraged resources within the community or utilize other funding sources to purchase food.

- **Room arrangement**

Chairs arranged in a circle or chairs at round tables are more conducive to building community than chairs arranged in rows facing the front.

- **Introductions**

Left to themselves, young people might spend many days—even weeks—in a program without learning each other's names. This prevents them from actually relating to each other. Within an hour of starting orientation, a name game can be played through which students learn each other's names, immediately establishing a sense of connection with the other members of the group.

One of the most reliable and enjoyable name games is one in which members throw a ball, pillow, or bean bag to each other, in random order, saying the name of the person to whom they are throwing the object. This goes on until everyone has had many turns and the group has had a lot of laughs and is beginning to remember each other's names. Then individuals who think they can do it are given a chance to see if they can name everybody in sequence around the room. If the group has more than 20 people, break into smaller groups for the game so members can actually learn all the names in about 20 minutes. Learning each other's names right at the beginning will help build a group that supports each other's success.



The impact of the process of learning names was highlighted by a new student at one YouthBuild program who described his first day:



“We came in without trust. We didn’t eat the food. We looked around and saw people who had been on the other side in the streets. We were all nervous. After a while we played the YouthBuild name game. At first I thought it was silly, but then I realized we were all there for the same reason. I threw the bean bag to someone from a different gang, and he threw it back. That was when I knew it would be okay. After the name game, we all ate the food.”

- **Facilitated small groups**

During the orientation there should be lots of opportunities for forming small groups in which everyone gets a turn to speak without interruptions. Groups that are not guided usually result in a few people dominating and the rest fading into the background. A context in which everyone’s input is invited and respected creates a sense of engagement and safety right away. The content might be sharing life stories, planning, discussing ideas, responding to presentations, or several of these at different times. The point is that respect for each person’s input and a high quality of attention should be part of the tone set by the group facilitator.

- **Appreciations**

A technique that has worked to set a very positive and safe tone is one of facilitated appreciations among students. Mutual appreciation doesn’t happen spontaneously. But when the group facilitator structures it in, there is a remarkable result. Young people begin to relax, feel comfortable with each other, and enjoy listening to the unfamiliar process of complimenting each other. At the end of a small group discussion or support group the facilitator simply says to the group something like: “We think that most people have had too much criticism and not enough appreciation in their lives. In YouthBuild we make a point of appreciating each other. So to finish this group we’re going to take turns telling the person sitting on our right what we like about them so far in the short time we’ve known them, based on our first impressions. I’ll start.” A few individuals will need encouragement but this process normally takes hold very quickly. Students benefit immediately from getting positive feedback from their peers.

- **Participation of entire staff**

Ideally, orientation should include all members of the staff and management in such a way that a sense of community is created. All staff should be present for each other’s parts of the orientation and should participate in whatever small group discussions take place. The director should be there most of the time also, and the executive director and other key individuals such as board members should at least be introduced in a way that gives a real glimpse of who they are and what they do. The presence of a united and warmly supportive group of adults who are engaged in the whole process rather than a series of individuals passing through to make a series of presentations is the impression that will build cohesion in the program.

- **A sense of the whole YouthBuild effort**

The students should get a feel for the entire YouthBuild effort, not only locally, but nationally. Rather than thinking they are just joining another program with certain rules and regulations, it lifts their horizons to understand the role, history, and mission of the local sponsoring organization(s), of the funding agencies including the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), of other national players like YouthBuild USA and the YouthBuild Coalition, and, if their program is a YouthBuild AmeriCorps program, the Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps. Understanding that they are joining something that has been created partly through the efforts of many adults and young people across the country, that elected officials have championed on their behalf, that there are alumni activities and leadership groups that they can belong to, and if appropriate, that they are AmeriCorps members—all these things affect their sense of belonging, direction, and hope.

Materials are available that can give a glimpse of the history and the breadth of the YouthBuild movement (more information is available on the YouthBuild Community of Practice). These materials can be very effective in bringing the students into a larger sense of belonging to something important that individuals value.

## Initial Individual Assessment

Soon after enrollment into the program, the counselor or case manager should meet individually with each incoming student for an initial assessment. This should be treated as a relationship-building opportunity as well as an information-gathering process.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please see Part B of this Manual for more in-depth information about individual student assessment.

This assessment process should not be confused with the program's need to collect demographic data. While the counselor may be involved in helping to fill out basic information forms that allow the program to answer questions about who is benefiting from the program in terms of age, family income, ethnicity, criminal justice and foster care experience, parenting situation, level of education, and the like, this data-gathering process should neither substitute for nor interfere with the process of a counselor and a student getting well-acquainted. The assessment begins the process of figuring out together where the student comes from, where she is going, and how to get there.



Key elements of the assessment facilitated through mentor-mentee dialogue include:

- **Personal life history**
- **Future goals**
- **Basic skills**
- **Institutional relationships**
- **Parenting responsibilities and needs**
- **Housing**
- **Substance abuse or mental illness**

The importance of each of these elements is detailed below.

- **Personal life history**

A full life history provides an important guide for the counselor. Every student has a very rich and complex life story to tell about what has brought her to YouthBuild, what has happened prior, and what she hopes to get out of the program. This should be told without the interference of record-keeping objectives. It is not important whether the counselor gets all the details; it is important that she understands the essence and can use it to build on a student's strengths, and that the student feels that her life has been taken seriously and listened to by a caring staff member who has a commitment to helping her overcome the obstacles to fulfilling his goals.

- **Future goals**

With every student, the assessment process should end with a focus on the future. The counselor and student should write down specific goals, objectives, and aspirations as a starting point for the case management relationship, with the understanding that these may change and will certainly develop as the program progresses. The student should identify specific obstacles—to the extent the student is aware of them—and write them down. The student should be assured that the purpose of the counseling or case management process is to help her achieve her goals by developing strategies to overcome the specific obstacles identified at the outset, or other ones that come up during the year.

- **Basic skills**

A basic-skills assessment should be reviewed as part of this process. (*Part B of this Manual provides information on the approved academic tests.*) Other staff may administer the math and literacy assessment, however, the counselor and the student may discuss its relevance for reaching the desired goals.

- **Institutional relationships**

One part of the basic assessment is a systematic review of institutional relationships. Many students arrive with unresolved issues: citizenship, court cases, warrants, welfare eligibility, child custody issues, child support obligations, status as a dependent or an emancipated minor, and the like. The program does not want to discover, after a student is featured in the newspaper that the student was a fugitive with warrants out for his arrest.

- **Parenting responsibilities and needs**

Another important area in which information should be systematically gathered is regarding the students' children. Many students have children of their own. Assisting the students in achieving goals for their parenting and their children is part of the counseling process.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

For more information, we urge the reading of "*The Counselor's Role in Helping Youth through Developmental Tasks and Stages in YouthBuild*," by Ferguson and Snipes, which can be found at the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

The research done by Ferguson and Snipes on five YouthBuild demonstration sites showed a positive correlation between students' success in the program and the average time per week they spent with young children just prior to entrance. The hypothesis here is that young people already demonstrating responsibility for young children are more ready to take advantage of the opportunities in YouthBuild. They are also eager to be better parents or guardians.

One program uses a child-care assessment form that asks the questions: What school does your child attend? Who are your children's teachers? What are her childhood diseases? Whom can you rely on to help with childcare? How much time do you spend with your child(ren)? How much time would you like to spend?

Helping students find childcare may be one of the most important ways a counselor can ensure the students' success in the program.

- **Housing**

Counselors should ask about living arrangements. In some programs as many as a third of incoming students have been found to be living in shelters or under untenable circumstances. One of the first tasks may be helping the student find appropriate housing.

- **Substance abuse or mental illness**

The counselor should be alert to issues of current substance abuse or mental illness. If it is possible to screen out students who are addicted to hard drugs or not able to function due to mental illness, this should be done during the pre-screening process because these students will not be able to benefit from the program. However, these issues are not always detected in advance, and a few individuals may be admitted who later reveal these problems. These individuals should be referred to outside resources, sometimes to residential programs.

## **Surveys Versus Interviews**

Some of the above issues may be touched on by a survey form that the counselor can use as a basis for an interview or give the student to fill out. This ensures that there is a systematic approach and that the staff member is remembering to ask all the questions the program has decided should be asked at the outset. But a survey should not be a substitute for a one-on-one interview.

# Chapter 5

## The Core Elements of the Counseling Component



YouthBuild

## Overview

The core elements of the counseling component are the ongoing one-on-one counseling interactions, the life-planning process, the linkages and navigation of outside resources to overcome obstacles, and the variety of ongoing group sessions. These elements are reinforced by program-wide activities that reflect the new positive values.

This chapter describes these elements.



## One-on-one Counseling

One-on-one counseling is a major component of the counseling program and will ideally occur at least once every two weeks with each student. If the counselor's caseload is as high as 28 students, he will need to plan his time carefully in order to maintain steady contact with all students while also being open to the spontaneous opportunities to assist students at the moment they are ready.

It is difficult for counselors to maintain the discipline of a regular schedule of one-on-one sessions because crises are likely to occur that will interfere with the schedule. However, even when the contact must be abbreviated, it is essential to maintain it.

Many counselors build in a weekly visit to the construction site just to touch base informally for a few minutes with each student to keep the contact steady and make sure nothing critical has come up, or to see who wants to schedule a longer appointment for the following week.

Many subjects can be covered in individual counseling sessions. These sessions can focus on short-term specific problems that have occurred in the program or at home or take a longer-term approach of building toward the goals and objectives laid out at the beginning and that are being revised as the student progresses. This is the opportunity to work closely with a student in developing and monitoring his personal goals and life plan.

The exact material to be covered in these sessions should be guided by the student's interests and needs and the counselor's assessment of his readiness.

Counselors may use a variety of techniques and approaches such as those described below.

## Life planning

The life planning process (or individual development plan) is an essential and straightforward approach to helping students set goals and objectives and systematically work to achieve them. It should serve as the core of the counseling process. The document should include all the important categories of life—not just career or education objectives—since many of these goals frequently depend on one another.

During each one-on-one session, the student and counselor review, note, and record progress toward each objective, or whichever objective is their current focus. New or different objectives may be added. Obstacles are discussed and plans are made for overcoming them. The result is a running record of changes in what the student had planned to do and constant support for keeping focused and purposeful. As the year progresses, more long-term goals are likely to be added.

Setting the goals and objectives is the first step. Talking through strategies for achieving them, and laying out step-by-step plans for doing so, is the next and necessary focus of the counseling and case management process.

## Active listening

Active listening is a process that allows counselors to show students that they are listening to what's being said and really hearing it. This process is sometimes also called reflective listening. It consists of a variety of techniques in which the counselor demonstrates a high quality of supportive attention and encourages the student to continue talking, either to share feelings in preparation for solving a problem or to think through options for solution of a problem. The attitude and techniques of the counselor include:

- Maintaining sympathetic facial expression and attentive body language
- Offering an affirmative nod of the head while eye contact is maintained
- Vocalizing an affirmative sound like “mmhmm”
- Repeating the main points stated by the student in a reflective way
- Clarifying the student's statement, for example, “Am I hearing you say . . .?”
- Reflecting a student's feelings, for example, “You sound upset about this . . .”
- Offering physical reassurance in the form of a hug or a pat, if appropriate

The key to active listening is maintaining a nonjudgmental attitude and showing a genuine concern for what is being said in a way that is natural and real. The point is that the counselor is really tuned in, interested, sympathetic, nonintrusive, and nonjudgmental. The student who is not yet comfortable with a counselor may need some questions to prompt him, in addition to the above encouragement, to keep speaking.

The counselor should strongly resist the impulse to tell related stories of her own experience. This would pull attention away from the student's own situation, although an occasional acknowledgement of similar experiences can be reassuring.

This kind of supportive listening may on occasion result in the release of emotions that have been stored up for lack of a safe place to communicate them. Students may talk about things they have never shared before; sometimes they will cry about losses or hurts, or express pent up anger. When this occurs it should simply be taken in stride and welcomed by the counselor as part of the process of students emerging from the past and moving into a new future. Many students have enormous pent up grief that it is a relief to let go of through talking and crying if someone is listening calmly and well. It is not a sign that the student is moving into dangerous territory; it is normally a sign that the student feels safe enough with the other person to share things that are long overdue to see the light of day and be left behind.

Having a nonjudgmental mentor with whom one can share difficult feelings is one element of building a healthy life. Part of the counseling process may be to help students identify others in their lives with whom they can share in this way.

Supportive listening may also simply result in a person thinking through a situation in greater depth and clarity than she could have done alone without a supportive listener.

Of course, if such listening brings forth threats to any other person's safety, or suicidal expressions, these need to be dealt with differently, with guidance from the senior most professional available to the program or the appropriate outside resource.

## **Managing silence**

Managing silence is a difficult task in most conversations, and counseling sessions are no different. Counselors should usually avoid giving in to the temptation to say something during a brief silence. Allowing the individual to experience a period of silence can have positive effects. Sometimes it can serve as a "time out" during a stressful session or simply an opportunity to collect one's thoughts. In other situations it can create just enough discomfort to allow a breakthrough in an area that had been avoided before.

## **Expressive techniques**

Expressive techniques include the use of humor, writings, songs, games, and many other "artistic" expressions. Many YouthBuild students have shown a penchant for expressing their innermost feelings through poetry or music that they share with their peers and the staff. Sometimes it is appropriate to use their poems as a starting point for a counseling session.



## Presenting reality and giving advice

There are times when a student is completely off the mark in an interpretation of someone else's behavior or is proposing or defending completely inappropriate behavior on his own part. Holding a student to high standards of responsibility and integrity, challenging attitudes that are evasions and smokescreens, warning students of possible consequences of poor judgments, and discussing legal consequences of wrong behavior—are all appropriate and common roles for the counselor. They imply that a fair amount of trust has already been established. The counselor frequently has to use the credibility he has built up to challenge mistaken plans or reactions. Permissive acceptance of destructive or self-destructive behavior would undermine both the goals of the program and the student.

Caring enough to challenge such behavior or attitudes can actually build trust. It is often effective to offer challenges in a tentative manner: "Have you ever considered . . . ?" or "I'm not sure, but is it possible that . . . ?" This approach works well to diminish defensiveness and keeps the focus on the issue itself, not on whether the counselor is becoming too intrusive.

There are, however, some situations when both the relationship and the reality presented by the student's behavior or attitudes can sustain and require a more directive approach in which the counselor is trying to break through resistance to addressing an issue, or making sure a student refrains from self-destructive behavior.

## Internal and External Case Management

Case management is a student-centered and outcome-focused approach to helping the student obtain and manage the resources and services she needs.

Case management will occur both within the YouthBuild program, ensuring that all members of the staff are pursuing the same goals for an individual student as well as beyond the confines of the program, seeking and obtaining additional resources and services as necessary.

### Internal case management

Once a set of goals and objectives are established, the staff team needs to be aware of those that are not confidential. They should try to make sure that the student's classroom and job-site experiences help in accomplishing his goals, and that the demands of the moment are appropriate for the student.

The job of the case manager is to ensure that routine internal case conferences occur on a regular basis, not just when students are experiencing difficulties. These meetings provide staff an opportunity to discuss the student's progress or lack of progress from a variety of perspectives. These meetings also help the case manager understand how the student is relating to the environment outside the confines of their one-on-one conversations. The results might be that a student would get additional help in academics or be asked to perform some new tasks on the construction site, or other members of the staff might learn something about the student that they had not observed in their interactions with him and would respond appropriately.

## External case management

A young person in YouthBuild is likely to be dealing with a wide variety of issues at the same time. He may be juggling problems with the justice system, family economics, parenting, and substance abuse. In such cases, case managers need to help students sort out their priorities and figure out how to work them through by utilizing other resources and service providers.

Case managers sometimes find the demands of accessing external resources so time consuming that they feel they have no time left for personal one-on-one meetings. It is useful to remember that helping the students with concrete problem solving builds a deep sense of trust that the counselor or case manager cares enough and is competent enough to help. In this process there are many “teachable moments” when the subject at hand opens up a deeper conversation with the student about the underlying issues that have caused the problem he is trying to solve. For example, helping a student find a lawyer to help with a DWI arrest may open the moment for addressing the drinking problem that resulted in the need for a lawyer. Remaining alert to these opportunities will integrate case management with the personal counseling process.

External case management requires becoming well-acquainted with the services and resources available in the community and their strengths and limitations. Case managers are strongly encouraged to develop collaborative arrangements with other agencies. Being able to pick up the phone and talk to the key person at another agency about the needs of a student is a critical asset that the case manager must develop through being connected in the community with the key players. In some cases the personal contacts of the director will need to be tapped to access resources for the students. Sometimes the external links may not be focused on solving problems, but on expressing interests and accessing broader community engagement that will enhance the student’s life and give him additional community-based supports once he has left the program. Finding wonderful opportunities for students is as important as solving problems or finding needed services.

Be aware that once a link with the external resource is made, the counselor must orchestrate the effective connection between the student and the resource, sometimes personally accompanying him to the other organization. It is often difficult to get a student to use an external resource. Teaching them how to do this is a key life skill, and should not be short-changed.

External case management can require an advocacy component that works to make services and resources appropriately responsive to recipients’ needs rather than to the needs of the service organization. This type of advocacy will often require the director’s involvement. However, even when the YouthBuild case manager or director is advocating for change in the policies or practices of another agency, she is likely to be much more successful if a collaborative relationship has been established.

### The concept of linkage versus referral

The concept of linkage replaces that of referral in this case-management approach. The counselor or case manager links the individual to various opportunities and services for specific purposes that will assist the student in overcoming obstacles or achieving his or her goals, and maintains a coordinative role. That role includes monitoring the usage and effectiveness of services and opportunities, and periodic documentation of progress.

In effecting a linkage, the YouthBuild student, as a partner, must understand the specific reasons why a particular service will be beneficial, as much as possible about the service organization and its processes, what is to be gained from the services received, and what initiative and responsibility the student needs to take for the linkage to be successful.

Together the student and the case manager should decide how the initial contact is to be carried out (for example, the student alone, a joint appointment, a phone call or letter of introduction, or an orientation appointment with follow-up decision making). Once the linkage has been successful, the staff member and the student should agree on a systematic process of monitoring (for example, periodic attendance records, student reporting, periodic service summaries, or achievement certificates).

### **Benchmarks of an effective linkage system**

- Particularly with large organizations such as health or mental health and educational systems, formal inter-institutional agreements (MOUs) have been established to replace ad-hoc brokering, which tends to be between workers rather than organizations.
- Liaisons have been established to develop smooth processes between the organizations.
- Liaisons are familiar with the receiving organization's service approach, in particular its documentation and orientation requirements. This helps prepare the students to develop realistic expectations that help "transfer" their trust to the new system. Liaisons also serve as effective resources to their coworkers, by, for example, assisting them in determining if the organization is a good resource for a particular student.
- There is a firm and specific commitment to coordinated service delivery. Partnering agencies understand each other's missions and cultures sufficiently to serve as efficient extensions of services for a specific purpose, as opposed to the mere inclusion of another individual in the service role.
- Commitment by the receiving organization to do its specific part in a manner that is coordinated with the YouthBuild student's life plan and its goals.
- The degree of burden on the receiving service organization is reasonable and functional.
- Case managers have developed respectful, collegial relationships with the staff of other institutions without compromising their own advocacy roles.
- External resources are not limited to providing services to overcome obstacles or fill needs, but also include organizations that provide new opportunities and pathways to success, service, or leadership.
- Relationships with potential employers, post-secondary institutions, and service groups such as Public Allies or the National Civilian Community Corps that accept YouthBuild graduates for a second year of paid service, are to be developed with the same level of attention as social service links, although in many programs this will be done by a different staff member in charge of post-secondary placements.

## **When to engage the experience and help of professional counseling linkages**

One of the first ethical principles of all helping disciplines is “do no greater harm.” The staff of YouthBuild programs throughout the country have varying levels of professional training and it is important that individual staff members recognize their limitations in presenting themselves as help providers. Many staff are “natural helpers” and it is not unusual for young people to flock to these people, sensing their heightened level of nurturing capacities and empathy. Organizations are fortunate to have these compassionate staff members to provide for young people who have often been shortchanged in regards to nurturance and support. However, it is often difficult for staff who possess these innate qualities to “let go” or even to “share the load” once they have bonded with the youth who have reached out to them. They fear that the young person will feel abandoned or neglected, once again, or they worry that the young person is not currently equipped to utilize the more formal services that various partnering agencies are offering.

It is immensely important for all staff to recognize that some youth have been so severely hurt that they require a higher level of professional help. Others are suffering from mental disabilities that likewise demand therapeutic intervention that a typical YouthBuild staff member is unprepared to provide in time or skill. In such instances, there is potential for “greater harm.” A qualified YouthBuild staff member will recognize this reality and seek additional professional assistance when it is needed.

It is important for project directors and program managers to be vigilant in assisting workers to know their strengths and limitations. There are numerous ways to address this issue, many of which are currently operative at YouthBuild programs throughout the country. Case conferencing and staffing procedures ensure that various concerns about young people are shared and discussed in professional forums that take the pressure away from the individual worker. Additionally, hiring practices should seek to find the most qualified workers possible, and staff development processes should include on-going training and periodic performance reviews. In these ways, skills are increased and staff members are supported in identifying areas of desired or needed attention. Such processes can also reduce the fears of vulnerability and job security that can inhibit staff forthrightness regarding any limitations. High performance work organizations create a climate that encourages and even rewards high levels of introspection and acknowledgement of areas that need improvement.

A systematic approach that recognizes the administrative responsibilities of the case management function will routinely provide training updates for staff in the areas of substance abuse, mental health, and gang behaviors, and other areas, so that staff become familiar and comfortable with identifying the behaviors and habits that signal the need for more specialized help. In short, although professional staff is obligated to take personal responsibility regarding acknowledging their capacity, leadership should partner with them in both understanding and coping with the aspects of this work which are critically serious and potentially dangerous to the individual and others.

Major collaboration with mental health, substance abuse, and specialized youth services should be developed prior to the specific need for these services, as stated throughout this handbook. Cross-training opportunities should be encouraged, and liaisons within each agency established and regularly contacted. All staff should be involved in determining what specific services and organizations are desired for formal agreements.

A strong organization will encourage staff at all levels to attend trainings and conferences that broaden their overall professional awareness. In addition to attending, staff should routinely be encouraged to share new learning with peers and coworkers.

It is not unusual to hear from programs with intense agendas such as YouthBuild's that there is not sufficient time for staff development activities. Believers will say you cannot afford not to incorporate these practices; that they are actually time-savers in the long run.

## Group Processes

Group dynamics in YouthBuild is a powerful force. Although the participants are selected by staff, not by each other, the relationships among them become a primary force in pushing them forward or pulling them back.

If not properly structured and guided, groups can have very unpredictable and negative consequences. Counseling and case management staff should therefore be trained in the basics of group process and dynamics. The program should deliberately and thoughtfully use the power of groups to build a sense of family, of common commitment to common goals, of trust, and of safety from the unpredictable forces of the street.

Even the division of the total group into the two teams that alternate work on the site and work in the classroom has been seen to have surprising consequences when not done thoughtfully. When the teams have been allowed to choose names for themselves, they sometimes choose names that have value connotations and seem to become predictive. For example, in one program one team called itself "The High Achievers" the other team called itself "Brothers and Sisters United." The High Achievers achieved more. The following year, one group called itself "Young Leaders Committed to the Community;" the other, "The Flavor Unit." The first group achieved more.

While the cause and effect of the above scenarios can be argued, a reasonable conclusion to the discussion always is that unit names should be goal-oriented and forward-looking with positive implications. If the groups are to name themselves, the process should be carefully guided with explanation that names make a difference and the name should be related to who they want to become and what they want to achieve.

The staff also needs to take into account the power of its own attitude toward groups. If one team becomes identified as more successful than the other, the staff often unwittingly refer to the groups in ways that reinforce this perception and stereotype the lesser-performing team. The counselor and director need to be alert to these dynamics and guide the staff accordingly.

Beyond guiding the spontaneous evolution of groups, the counseling component uses groups consciously and deliberately in a variety of structured forms. These groups have different names, purposes, and formats. Some are meant to generalize material covered in individual counseling and case management sessions, such as how to do a life plan. Others are for addressing common topics of interest, like child rearing, sex, police relations, parents, racial discrimination, or street life. Some are for the development of specific skills, such as conflict resolution or job interviewing. Some provide personal emotional support for each individual. Others resolve day-to-day problems within the program and among participants.

Some groups have outside presenters or facilitators; some involve other staff; some are handled just by the counselor or case manager. Following is a general description of an approach to group work, followed by specific models of groups that have been effectively used throughout the YouthBuild network.

## **The whys and hows of effective group work**

This section develops a theoretical base for group work and speaks to some of the conditions that need to be in place in order for group work to be effective in a YouthBuild program. While it is true that in order to run groups one must have training and understanding of the process, and while it is challenging for young people in a program to run their own group, it is still possible to have effective group practice in a YouthBuild program. A number of YouthBuild programs have already established regular group meetings and report that the practice has been successful in enabling young people in the program to make significant changes.

Three aspects of personal development have been referenced: understanding oneself, understanding one's impact on others, and understanding community and how to navigate the outside world. Understanding oneself often takes place during one-on-one counseling. Learning how to navigate the outside world is a key focus of the counselor. The critical middle piece of understanding one's impact on others is best addressed in well-run groups.

All too frequently when abusive language is used and someone's feelings are hurt, the student says, "Aw, I was just kidding. No big deal." Sometimes a student will remain silent because of his own discomfort in speaking his opinions. Often the student will act in a way that is disrespectful and then claim that he wasn't doing that. Other times a student will show up for a job interview inappropriately dressed or come back with a story about how he wasn't treated fairly when in reality he may have been a contributor to whatever interaction took place. All of these behaviors may be addressed in the daily life of the program but may be best dealt with in a group context.

## **Some advantages of group counseling over individual counseling**

In an individual counseling session, sometimes the counselor—who just is another adult—no matter how skilled, may be trying to convince a young person to change the student's ways. While this is at times appropriate, it has its limitations, since young people have been told what to do by adults most of their lives. The advantage of a group is that it is an arena where a young person will get feedback from his peers, which in most cases is more penetrating and has greater influence than feedback from an adult.

Counselors have reported referring students to groups especially when the students are unaware of how their behavior impacts others. For example, a case manager may repeat himself many times, saying, "If you use language like that, people are not going to react well," but it is only in the group when the student hears from other people through perhaps some particularly unpleasant exchange that her behavior is unacceptable that real changes starts to take place. Simply put, a well-run group by a skilled group leader can help young people understand how they are perceived by others and can also help them become supportive to other young people in the program who may have similar unawareness about how they are perceived.

In order to understand the effective use of group counseling, it is important to understand the developmental tasks of YouthBuild students:

1. **Increasing responsible autonomous functioning as well as learning interdependence**
2. **Developing a capacity for respectful openness and trust with peers**
3. **Preparing for the future—skill development and the selection of a path**
4. **Preparing for positive partnerships**
5. **Handling crises and obstacles**
6. **Raising one's own family**

Dr. Irvin Yalom, in his classic book *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (1995), talks about the 11 primary therapeutic factors of groups. In a YouthBuild environment, the following seven are most appropriate.

1. **Installation of hope.** People often feel alone in their struggle, and often feel hopeless that there are any solutions to their problems. An effective group, especially one of peers, can provide for the installation of hope, and even provide good strategic support.
2. **Universality.** The magic that takes place in a well-run group when a person realizes that his particular struggle is not unique but is shared by others. The notion that you, too, have a family that doesn't support you, or "Yeah, I get jealous also when someone does better than me," or simply the universality of "I'm scared, too, to go out and get a job," is very important to young people's development. They learn that they are not alone. These are universal parts of every human being's experience and rather than be hidden, they can be shared in a safe group.
3. **Imparting information.** While in a therapeutic group imparting information is not of utmost importance, in a YouthBuild group it ranks very highly. Employment opportunities, post-secondary education, health issues, and sexually transmitted infections are some topics that can be discussed. If members and leader feel that the group is safe, and if people are respectful of each other, it is perfectly appropriate for the leader to bring information to the group, to ask members to do additional research and report back at the next group meeting what they have learned—in many ways to create an ideal classroom without calling it such.
4. **Empathy.** One of the most disheartening things to watch is when someone falls down and gets hurt, and other people laugh, or where it's considered not masculine to be kind since the ethos of the street is so strong that basic acts of kindness are not valued. In a well-run group with very little help from the leader, if somebody is upset and begins to cry, invariably someone will try to comfort that person. During that moment, not only is there a comforter and a person being comforted, but the rest of the group is observing what it looks and feels like to be comforted. Empathy can be developed most effectively in a group setting.

5. **The corrective recapitulation of the primary family group.** Often when young people say their YouthBuild program is like family, they are not necessarily talking about their own family. Instead, they are talking about their new family of YouthBuild. Part of that family is the other young people in the program. What Dr. Irvin Yalom means by “corrective recapitulation,” is that we get a chance to be loved, re-parented, or treated kindly in ways that we might not have had growing up. YouthBuild, through its teachers, construction staff, and case managers, provides for that re-parenting, but the other students in the group also make a major impact.
6. **Development of socializing techniques.** How to talk, how to disagree, and how to be vulnerable are all socializing techniques and can take place in a group even without the group members being aware of it.
7. **Imitative behavior.** When a young person sees another young person being kind, when a young person witnesses another person being open about their struggles, or when a young person speak up for herself, but in a way that is not destructive—all of this can be imitated. A good group leader will, after such a moment, stop and ask the group what they observed. Imitative behavior, especially in groups that meet regularly and work hard, is a powerful result of effective group process.

These are the essential therapeutic factors culled from Yalom’s 11, and of course applied in a different way than in a classic therapeutic group. YouthBuild groups are not therapeutic groups, nor should they be. YouthBuild groups are designed to share information and learning, but in the process of doing so an amazing amount of healing can take place as well.

## How to begin group work practice in a YouthBuild program

As stated earlier, YouthBuild counselors and case managers are frequently reluctant to initiate groups because they are unsure of what to do. While some of their apprehension is justified since there is a set of skills to be learned, there are some principles that should stand them in good stead, as discussed below.

1. **Decide what you want the group to be.** Content should be the driver. The interpersonal and personal gains stated in the previous section are the rewards of a content-based agenda. A group that is brought together to discuss something that is relevant to young people’s lives, such as careers, family relationships, parenting, gang violence, community improvement—or whatever the group proposes—are all good topics for a group. Young people are not signing up for group therapy, but they are willing to join a group if they think they can learn something or get to hang out with their friends. The job of the group leader is to accomplish the triple goal of imparting information, helping young people learn about the subject they are interested in, and allowing young people to express their feelings about the subject in a safe environment, which means that even a person who has an opinion that attracts no agreement will be treated with respect.



2. **Composition of the group.** Groups may simply be organized to include students from all the gender, racial, and cultural groups represented in the program, and focused on issues common to all young people. There may be times, however, when it makes sense to have groups that are more homogeneous to focus on their common concerns. Many programs have found it useful to hold men's and women's groups—sometimes called “brother to brother” and “sister to sister”—to talk about their different experiences and perspectives as men and women. These are sometimes safer and more authentic than a mixed group. Sometimes a group on parenting for young people who are already parents is useful. Composition should be thought through related to the purpose of the particular group.
3. **Determine the size of the group.** Six to ten members is an ideal group size. It can in some cases go as high as twelve members, but more than that turns a group into a classroom, which should be avoided in a group process.
4. **Support from rest of the staff.** If there is an agreement to hold sessions on a regular basis, then it is critically important that construction staff, teachers, and administrators are all supportive of this time allocation. YouthBuild programs frequently have very dense schedules, with individual departments jealously guarding, for good reason, the amount of time they can spend with the students. If there is going to be regularly scheduled group work, this has to be an agreement that is supported at the highest levels of management of the program. In some cases, especially if there is an area of tension in the program, it may be wise to have staff participate in the group.
5. **Expectations from the group.** It is critical that group ground rules be set. It is also important that these ground rules be developed with the group members. Otherwise they will be seen as just another thing they have to do. Suggested ground rules are:
  - Participants are expected to be present when the group meets.
  - The discussion will be confidential—what gets discussed stays in the room. This is important because confidentiality, which cannot be promised in individual sessions, should be promised within the group.
  - Foul language, scapegoating, mocking, putting people down, and laughing at people are not permitted. Students are relieved when these rules are in place.
  - Members do not have to speak. A good group leader will encourage members to speak, but it should not be mandatory. With patience, eventually everybody speaks.
  - While no one is being forced to speak, it should be emphasized, of course, that the more you participate, the more you will gain. The effective group leader can have a private conversation with a silent group member to discuss this point.

## 6. What the group needs from the leader

- Help in establishing useful procedures, such as time limits, and a tentative agenda
- Help in maintaining an informal and friendly atmosphere in which cooperation, participation, and learning can be achieved
- Help in initiating discussion and stimulating participation
- Help in keeping discussion directed toward the subject—guiding the conversation without dominating it
- Help in removing blocks to good discussion, such as one person dominating or side conversations
- Help in developing specific, well-defined discussion areas and questions that are pertinent to the topic
- Help in providing opportunities for all points of view to be expressed, encouraging members who wish to participate, and preventing individual monopoly of discussion
- Help in reaching decisions, suggesting action steps, or making conclusions based on presentation through a brief summary
- Help in summarizing group progress from time to time. Consider a group self-evaluation periodically so that the group can look at its own behavior.

## Group leader essential roles

The group leader also has two other essential types of roles: task roles and maintenance roles.

### Task roles

- **Catalyzing.** Thinking of subjects and posing problems to get things started
- **Getting information.** Asking questions, finding out where people are. Probing in a gentle way to learn what group members are thinking.
- **Giving information.** For example, explaining what careers in health care are like. Or talking about college opportunities. Responding to any questions that students have about any particular concern.
- **Clarifying.** Listening to ideas. Listening to what group members say and constantly summarizing the ideas. For example: “I think what Johnny is saying is that he doesn’t feel that people take him seriously,” or “I think what Rose is saying is she doesn’t think she can go to college because she has not done well enough in school.”

### Maintenance roles

- **Displaying warmth.** Smiling. Listening attentively to the student who is talking. Finding gentle ways to say, “Let’s give everyone who wants to a chance to give their opinion on this point.”
- **Summarizing the feelings of the group.** Noticing how the group seems to be responding. Identifying the “vibe” in the room. Making it OK for people to either agree or disagree with the interpretation. The leader should, however, always check out her interpretations since they can often be wrong.

- **Getting between two disagreeing members in a way that reduces tension while still respecting that there is a disagreement.** Helping them to agree to disagree.
- **Setting goals.** Working with the group to establish a set of goals. “By the end of the next three sessions, we will have a better understanding of racism,” or “By the end of the next three sessions, we will have a better understanding of how the student council works.” By setting goals, the group leader can bring people back to task if the session becomes aimless.
- **Understanding that group process is not a linear process.** Groups go through many stages. The most traditional description is the “forming, storming, norming, performing” concept that often applies to groups. This describes a process by which a group forms, surfaces tension and conflict, determines its standards, and then works through to good results. Whether or not this particular pattern takes place, it is important to note that groups will frequently have divisions, cliques may form, some members may consciously or unconsciously dominate a group, and angry feelings may be expressed. None of this needs be destructive for the group if handled well. Life contains many of these rough spots, and if a group learns how to manage them, the members will be the better for it. In YouthBuild programs, group development is often fairly smooth when led well. Young people come together, are guided to listen to each other, become caring and supportive, align around key issues that they feel passionate about, and learn to disagree without being disagreeable. It is the job of the leader to recognize and to gently but firmly guide the group toward positive relationships.

#### Some things not to do

- **Do not lecture the group because you’re the expert and you came up the hard way and you know what’s best.** Don’t tell stories about how you were just like them, but you straightened out so you have no patience for those who aren’t as self correcting as you.
- **Do not act like a teacher.** Do not come prepared with a lecture that will show how knowledgeable you are. Do not give group members homework.
- **Do not discourage people from talking about personal things because it makes you uneasy.** Don’t redirect the conversation to something more concrete or change the subject quickly and cut off the expression of feeling when someone is being emotional. Do not make any members regretful that they might have said something revealing.
- **Do not encourage people to spill their guts without providing them a safe time to heal from that experience.** Do not leave raw emotions unattended so that the person learns that it is never a good idea share feelings.
- **Do not let anyone dominate the discussion in such a way that no one else speaks up.**
- **Do not preach to group members about the right way to do things.** Do not present yourself as an important moral leader.
- **Do not allow anybody to verbally abuse anybody else.** Do not let anyone have a good laugh at someone else’s expense. Do not hesitate to interrupt a conversation that is starting to get abusive.

- **Do not punish group members for being critical of you.** Do not lead them to believe that because you represent management criticism of you is insubordination. Do not abandon your role as group leader and become a bureaucrat.
- **Do not be serious all the time.** Do not fail to see humor in some situations. Don't be afraid to make self-deprecating comments or admit to being stumped. In other words, don't be so serious that you're never having a good time.

## Summary

Groups can be an effective means for communicating information and for young people to accelerate their knowledge and understanding of each other and themselves. Groups can also be an effective vehicle for preparing people for the outside world, encouraging each other to be ambitious and hold each other accountable for disrespectful behavior. At their best, groups create a community of caring, loving people who may have difficulty separating when the program ends. If this separation anxiety is carefully planned for, if group leaders are willing to hone their craft, and if the regularity of group meetings is supported by the leadership of the program, groups can be an effective means of helping young people change their lives.

So far we've discussed group leadership and dynamics in general. Below are descriptions of specific types of groups that have been used in YouthBuild programs

## Types of Groups

Groups are meant to support members as they work through personal problems or difficult feelings. The group allows every member to realize that he is not the only one facing that particular issue. By sharing feelings and ideas, group participants help themselves and each other break through some of the obstacles that they may not be able to overcome in individual counseling.

There are several useful and distinct types of groups:

- **Life-story groups**

A life-story group is a very basic and easy group to lead and is often used in orientation as a way for students to get to know and bond with each other. Each member is invited to share as he wants to about his life before YouthBuild, how he got to YouthBuild, and what he hopes to accomplish at YouthBuild. Each member gets about eight minutes to share; after the eight minutes he is appreciated by the people sitting on either side of him or by each member of the group. If he can't fill eight minutes with his story, the other group members ask him questions that demonstrate their interest and draw him out.

Before a life-story group begins, everyone is given a briefing on the power of positive attention, of uncritical acceptance of each other's reality, and of welcoming each other. The equal time format is explained, and the leader lets each person know when he has approximately one more minute. This format is powerful in creating a positive group experience. Sometimes people spontaneously share quite deeply.



- **Support groups for people with similar backgrounds**

YouthBuild programs have had regular support groups for women, men, parents, people on parole, recovering addicts, and others. The safety of being with people with similar experiences often allows people to open up more easily, since they don't have to explain or defend certain things. Of course, any YouthBuild group is actually a group with similar experiences that have brought them to YouthBuild, so this safety can exist in any YouthBuild group or subgroup. The format for a support group can vary from unstructured discussion to equal-time sharing in which each person gets an uninterrupted turn of equal length, actually timed by a watch, to simply say what's on his mind. Equal-time sharing tends to result in important feelings being shared because the format creates an unusual level of safety by creating an uninterrupted space and relieving members of the question of how long they should talk before yielding the floor to someone else. At the end of equal-time sharing, each member should receive appreciation from at least two other members in order to reassure the speaker that the sharing has been heard in a positive way and to relieve any feeling of being overexposed.

- **Rap groups**

In rap groups, either the young people are free to bring up whatever is on their minds or a topic is provided. Sometimes students will lay out a series of topics for rap groups and the counselor will invite expert resource people to join the discussion on the particular topic, since it has been planned ahead.

Rap groups can cover a variety of issues. The issues should be very broad in scope and allow ideas and opinions to emerge. Rap groups tend to concentrate more on thoughts and ideas than on feelings. The comments of group members will often cause some members to react with strong opinions and feelings, but the focus is less on the personal or internal matters and more on group, program, or community problems.

As noted earlier, group dynamics can be very powerful and get out of control if not properly guided. Because of this, rap groups should also be led by staff that have some training and experience in group leadership. The rules of not interrupting each other should be maintained, and discussions can be begun most effectively by allowing each person an opening comment on the subject of about two minutes—enough to show the breadth of what is on people's minds about the topic before dialogue begins, and to give the facilitator more information with which to manage the conversation.

When rap groups are convened to address problems internal to the program, the dynamic can be even more charged and require enormous skill on the part of the group leader. For example, after a violent episode in which a young woman participant was attacked by a male participant, one YouthBuild program reports using rap groups extensively to process the feelings of the community. The process wasn't exactly smooth:



The rap groups are all talk about what happened. For weeks after the violence, the rap group focused on violence. During the rap group, I asked the group how they felt about the incident. About 80 percent of the men said that you have to slap your woman around to keep her in line. They don't have much foundation in conflict resolution skills. They started working together to identify alternative ways to deal with violence. But, it's fashionable . . . to be violent and smack your girlfriend around when she's out of line. Most expressed support for it. One guy who just got out of prison said he would walk away and not risk getting arrested, but that was a minority opinion. It was pretty courageous for him to express that in the group. We eventually moved the general view closer to his perspective.

Clearly, under such circumstances the rap group leader needs to have a clear head as well as skill in handling conflict and reflection on values.

#### ■ **Concept groups**

A concept group is a particular type of rap group that uses a concept or a question as a starting point for discussion. For example, the saying "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones," can be the basis of a long rap group about taking responsibility for one's self and avoiding judging others. It can lead to many different interpretations and ideas.

Here are some other examples of exciting guided discussions for concept groups:

- Is it possible to eliminate racism? If so, how?
- Many great leaders have taught people to love their enemies. Can that work? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- How can a father maintain a good relationship with the mother of his child if they are not together?
- If you decide you never want to strike your child, how do you maintain discipline?

The staff or counselor can think of the questions and concepts that will trigger value-laden discussion. This is the kind of discussion that should begin with each participant being invited to express his ideas for up to two minutes, timed, before anyone speaks twice or dialogue is allowed. This creates a deeper and less volatile tone that respects everyone's contributions at the outset so that individuals do not have to wait impatiently for a chance to say what they think in response to what someone else has said. And it does not allow anyone to hold forth for indefinite periods of time.



- **Equal-time support groups of four to six people**

Like the life-story groups, equal-time support groups are structured so that each person gets equal time to talk while the others give the speaker respectful, undivided attention. People can talk about whatever they individually choose, or the group can choose a topic. Taking equal turns and really listening to each other is the key process. Knowing they will get a turn lets people relax and pay better attention.

At the end of each person's turn at speaking, the two people sitting on either side of the speaker—or all the members of the group—offer appreciations to the speaker. They share what they like or respect about the person. This positive feedback has great importance in maintaining the safety of the group and enabling the students to bond with each other.

The extraordinary safety produced by having a defined amount of time to be listened to with undivided attention, followed by appreciation, often results in students sharing surprisingly deeply. Leaders of equal-time support groups need to be prepared for the fact that students will often grab the opportunity to share bottled-up pain. If the group feels safe, crying is not unusual; stories previously held secret are often told with great feeling. After such cathartic experiences, students usually say they feel relief, and they feel close. Staff, on the other hand, if they are not experienced with this approach or not comfortable with the sharing of deep feeling, sometimes say they are unnerved by the depth of feeling that surfaces rather quickly. Sometimes what surfaces from the young people will require follow-up individual attention from the staff.

- **Structured feedback groups**

The need for feedback from peers about how one is perceived is intense among adolescents, and it is rarely fulfilled. A simple process to be used periodically is one in which a group systematically provides feedback to every individual regarding what they are doing that is helpful to the group and how they could improve their contribution to the group. This feedback is preceded by each individual stating his own view of his positive contributions and the aspects of his own participation that could be improved. After he does this self-evaluation, he listens while every other member of the group in turn tells him about his positive contributions and what could be improved. The result is usually an extraordinary sense of having received caring feedback and good information for self-improvement, as well as a lot of reassurance about one's place in the group. The role of the facilitator is to make sure everyone receives a roughly equal turn, and to make sure feedback always begins with the positive and is, if possible, weighted on the positive side, and that suggestions for improvement are respectfully offered. This process can take quite a bit of time, approximately 12 to 20 minutes per person, for the combination of their own self-estimation and the feedback from others.

- **Informal support groups**

Any situation where people are encouraged to deliberately take turns while the others listen becomes an informal support group. While the group might not be called a support group specifically, train the staff to create situations that generate informal support. This can happen in the classroom or on the construction site. The staff member can pose a question for each student to answer in turn, such as “What did you accomplish or do well this week?” “What did you learn this week?” or “How were you a good group member this week?” The staff member then unobtrusively facilitates everyone getting a turn.

- **Conflict Resolution Groups**

Conflict resolution groups are important in any organization, and YouthBuild is no exception. YouthBuild participants should feel free to express concerns about the program, staff, and each other on the path to solving whatever problems exist, without fear of retribution. Ideally this would be routine, and people would learn how to simply talk respectfully to each other about these things as they arise, but this rarely occurs without guidance. Participants’ lack of experience with conflict resolution of this type coupled with their lack of trust gets in the way of doing this routinely. Furthermore, staff are often not alert to the need to do it, and may not be much better at doing it with each other. Directors and counselors need to take the lead in making the context safe for real discussion by both staff and youth of issues that need to be addressed within the program.

One program reports success with regular meetings:



On Fridays the young people meet without the staff and then they present issues to the staff and director.

In the policy committee meetings the director meets with young people and helps facilitate discussions to find solutions to program issues. Having the director listen and implement the young people’s best ideas is a powerful antidote to conflict as well as powerlessness.

- **Mediation groups**

When there are conflicts between students, mediation, either one-on-one or in a group is often the right approach. In mediation, finding out precisely what happened in the past is less important than defining what will happen in the future. The focus is on defining and achieving the positive desires of participants. Mediation usually tries to get participants to the next higher level of goal and values clarification. To the extent that they can agree on goals and values, they are more likely to find mutually acceptable ways of attaining those goals.

There are a variety of organizations that train staff and youth in mediation techniques. It is extremely useful to train the young people so they can take an ever-increasing role in mediating problems.



One program describes its use of mediation:



Once, there was an issue with a male and a female student. The male student was picking on the female. The female student had lots of outside issues. The male would tell her that this was no excuse for her poor attitude. The staff talked to the female and asked if she wanted mediation. . . . The program manager, counselor, and the two students got together.

The rules are: you can't interrupt, you have to wait until the other person is finished talking. The first person gives her side of the story and then the other gives his side. Then they are asked, "What is your goal for this relationship?" Assuming a positive goal, the next question is, "What do you both need to happen to work together and get along?" We try to get them to . . . make their statements as personal as possible, about their own desires and feelings, not about what they think is wrong with the other person.

We start by stating the rules in the beginning. It is important, we tell the students, to listen to what the other person is saying and to try to understand the other person's perspective. We also firmly note that the session is confidential and everything that occurs within the session is to stay there. All of our mediations have been resolved. One went for an hour and a half, another for longer.

Mediations may also be useful between a student and a staff member, with a counselor or administrator facilitating.

- **Fact-finding groups**

When less formal approaches do not resolve specific serious conflicts, YouthBuild programs and staff might consider using *fact-finding* groups.

A fact-finding group can arise from any dispute of facts (as opposed to feelings or opinions). The purpose of this group is to determine the facts in any incident, dispute, or conflict. Unlike police investigations where people are usually interviewed separately, all parties who have any direct knowledge of the matter being reviewed are asked to be in the same room. Ground rules are followed about the presentation of fact. The group leader manages the process until there is apparent consensus on the facts or until it is clear what additional research must be done. He then states the findings of the group, and may direct that certain actions be taken or hold off on that until a later meeting. If action is postponed until a later meeting, the date should be set immediately so that everyone can leave the group knowing when the consequences or results will be issued.

The natural inclination is to assume that fact-finding groups are called only for negative reasons and punishment. This should not be the case. Fact-finding groups can be part of a quality improvement process. This way even if the incident that caused the fact-finding group to occur was negative (for example, an ugly incident between participants), the results can focus on what was correct in the way the process was handled and how similar incidents can be avoided in the future. It might also include a determination of responsibility and consequences, but the purpose and focus should be constructive.

# Techniques for Enhancing Group Work

## Role playing

A particularly effective way to allow students to work through some difficult issues is to ask them to develop a play or skit about a similar or related subject. This method allows them to put certain feelings (that they may not be ready to deal with) into the skit's characters as a way of preparing to reveal or deal with their own feelings at a later date. The way an issue is dealt with may be serious or funny. Humor can be very healing, physically and emotionally. Counselors should encourage humor when it is not at another person's expense.



Learning how to present one's self at a job interview or how to respond to negative pressure can also be accomplished through role playing. Students and counselors can take turns assuming different roles in prearranged situations. Sometimes the initial role simply reflects how a young person would currently handle a situation. After review, discussion, and some suggestions, the student may try a modified response to the same situations.

The review, discussion, and suggestions in role-play situations are called *feedback*. It is absolutely vital that every role play includes the feedback of everyone involved, participants and observers. Counselors will find that after a brief period of getting used to the role playing method, students will be able to talk about different reactions they had to different approaches used by the characters in the role play.

One program reports using role plays to illustrate a sensitive issue:

“

Male-female issues come up a lot in the program. There is a great deal of problems getting the young people to respect each other. One of the participants, a male, touched a female. He hugged her. She didn't like it. He was stopped right away. We explained to him that he could be kicked out of the program or sued for touching her without her permission. We explained that what he did to her amounted to unwanted attention that could interfere with his work and create discomfort for the woman. Nobody had ever explained this to him before.

We told him that sexual harassment could be verbal or physical and can lead up to attempted rape or rape. We talked with him about rights that people have to not be touched without their permission. We realized that a role play would be useful for the whole group so we arranged one where the counselor played the part of the person being touched and another staff person played the one doing the touching. As soon as the person was touched, she complained that the touching was offensive. We were then able to discuss the legal implications of unwanted touching and other unacceptable behavior in the workplace. These role plays work well.

## Fishbowl discussion format

It is sometimes useful for members of distinct groups who do not share the same life experience or identity to listen to each other's point of view in a format called the *fishbowl*. In a fishbowl group or exercise, one of the separate groups carries on its discussion in the middle of the room while the other group sits around the outer portion of the room, watching and listening. The purpose is for each group to hear the other's concerns, feelings, and expectations. There are ground rules in running such a group that must be adhered to. One is that the outer group may not speak while the inner group is in its discussion. Another is to avoid attacking people in the other group personally. In the case of men and women, this process of mutual listening can be very informative and break down some negative stereotypes or barriers to communication.

## Appreciation: Celebrations and recognition of members

A thoroughgoing practice of appreciation helps build a nurturing and positive environment in which young people and staff can learn better, feel supported, and make better decisions. This is one of the most reliable elements of building a YouthBuild program culture in which all members feel respected and appreciated. It is the opposite of what most YouthBuild students have experienced in most other contexts all their lives. Creating a program culture in which students enjoy the opposite of their negative past experiences is one of the conditions for personal transformation.

But appreciations do not always come easily. Counselor or case managers and other staff need to model the approach and explain the purpose: "In this program we never put people down, because they have had enough of that and it tends to make them fail. We put people up, so they can grow into being the people they have always wanted to be. We're here to push each other up, not down." Some programs use the term "push-ups" or "shout-outs" to mean appreciations.

Below are various methods of doing appreciations.

### Regular appreciations

Regular and frequent appreciations should be standard practice—at the end of the day, at the end of a meeting, or at the end of a conflict, for example. These appreciations are public and done one at a time so that everybody can hear what is said to each person.

To begin an appreciation session, the group leader can say something like:

- "Let's have each one of you say one thing you have already noticed that you like about the person on your left. Even if you don't know the person well, the art of seeing the best in a person is part of the leadership role that we practice here."
- "Let's have appreciations from the people on both sides of each person. Please say two positive words that describe the person."
- "What did Raymond do today that helped . . ." (the class, the work site, the meeting, etc.)?
- "What do you respect or admire about Raymond?"
- "What makes Raymond a valuable part of YouthBuild?"
- "How have you seen Raymond take more responsibility in the last few months?"
- "How has Raymond been a good leader . . ." (this week, or lately, on this job, etc.)?

The reason for sometimes structuring the appreciations instead of making them open and spontaneous is so everyone will receive a roughly comparable amount of positive feedback. Otherwise some people will get more feedback and others less, reinforcing the negative view that some people already have of themselves, and perpetuating the anxiety people usually feel about their place in a group. Sometimes being sincere, not giving mixed messages, and being specific need some coaching from the counselors at the outset.

### **Self-appreciations**

It is often more difficult for people to validate themselves than to accept praise from others. This is an important step in building self-confidence and counteracting self-deprecation. It is sometimes useful to begin self-appreciations privately since people have a lot of conditioning against “bragging” and it feels too embarrassing or exposing to do it in public.

To begin an individual self-appreciation session, the counselor can say something like:

- “What do you like about yourself?”
- “What obstacles are you proud of overcoming in your life?”
- “What are your biggest accomplishments?”
- “When did you stand up for somebody? Tell the story.”
- “Can you remember a time when you were a leader? Tell the story.”
- “Can you remember a time you helped another person? Tell the story.”
- “What do you like about yourself as an African American man?” (or as a woman, or as a young person, or as an Irish young person, or as a Native American person, etc.,)
- “What would you like others to appreciate about you?”

### **Public appreciations in assemblies**

Some programs call appreciations “shout-outs.” Programs have open time in morning meetings or school assemblies for staff and students to give shout-outs to whoever has done something noteworthy. These are a joy to watch and have a determining affect on the program culture.

### **Game show appreciation**

In a game-show-style appreciation, one person starts the session by saying, “I have an appreciation for Maria.” Maria then has three chances to guess what the appreciation is; if she doesn’t guess it, the person shares the appreciation with her. Maria then thinks of an appreciation for someone else in the group and that person guesses. This pattern continues until all members of the small group have been appreciated. This approach encourages each member to think of great things they have done lately, putting their attention on the positive while side-stepping the taboo on bragging.

### **Three-by-five appreciation stack**

Taking one person a week, have the other students anonymously write a private appreciation of that person on a three-by-five-inch index card and put it in a box. The student gets to keep the stack and can read the cards privately or share them as he wishes. Repeat this type of appreciation throughout the year. Students tend to save their stacks of cards forever.

### **Appreciation wall charts**

After enough safety has been established so that put-downs and insults are rare, hang up a piece of newsprint or poster board for each student, with the student's name at the top. Taking one different student every day, ask the other students what they like about her. Write their responses on the newsprint or poster board until the wall chart is filled. Leave the charts on the wall.

### **Guess who?**

In a "guess who" session, each student picks another student's name from a hat and writes down something positive about that person, such as a good quality or characteristic of that person. Then the student reads aloud what he wrote and the rest of the group tries to guess who it is.

There are obviously lots of variations to group and individual appreciations. To create an overall organizational culture in which people are being appreciated, of course the director and other supervisors must remember to appreciate staff frequently through a variety of methods. Appreciation and respect as core components of the culture need to be modeled by the leadership.

## **Community-wide Meetings and Events**

While the counselor may play an active role in creating program-wide activities, it is important that all staff members are present and in support of these activities. Building a community requires everyone.

### **Morning meetings**

Morning meetings are scheduled at many YouthBuild programs. These meetings are meant to be an enjoyable group process to get the day off on the right foot and reaffirm program values and culture.

Individuals may share important events they experienced since leaving YouthBuild the day before. They may appreciate each other for achievements of the previous day. They may need to address a problem from the day before. They may read and reflect on an inspirational quote, tell appropriate jokes, sing a song, or pose a riddle. People may share information about the upcoming day. Sometimes physical exercises are included. The meetings often conclude with two processes. The first process is to have everyone say what positive objective they have for the rest of the day, such as a specific task to be completed or skill mastered. The final activity is often a group recitation of a daily pledge, such as that presented in Chapter 1 of this manual.

## Rituals, rites of passage, and community celebrations

One of the things that makes the YouthBuild program unique is its commitment to fostering a sense of community and a positive peer group among its participants. Values transformation takes place as part of the personal transformation process. The new values need to be reinforced through peer group acceptance and through various forms of repetition endorsed by the most respected adults in the program.

Programs have developed various forms of ritual and rites of passage that reinforce positive values and strengthen the bonds among students and staff.

Community celebrations of individual and group accomplishments are a wonderful way of fostering the sense of closeness and friendship that the YouthBuild program is meant to create among its participants. One program describes its use of ritual as “rites of passage” at the end of orientation:



When students complete the mental toughness two-week orientation period, we believe that it is important to acknowledge their accomplishments. We do a rites of passage at the end of the orientation to give them something very special to participate in and become part of.

We know that real successful transformations sometimes take years to go through the challenges. The challenges our young people face are scary. So much of the life we explain to them is absolutely foreign to them. Like most people in society, they fear the changes, even when they know that the changes are good for them. They have to learn to feel fear and overcome the fear. Once they experience feeling fear, but meeting the challenge and overcoming the fear anyway, their self-esteem is boosted tremendously. Once they learn to successfully navigate the first set of challenges, they feel empowered and look for new challenges to overcome.

The reason for the rite of passage is recognition of success. Successful completion of the mental toughness program is the first of many challenges. The young people learn that if they apply themselves the same as they did in mental toughness, they will be successful. . . . We believe that it is critical that the young people see accomplishment as a “group accomplishment,” not only as an individual accomplishment, but also as an accomplishment that serves to further connect them in positive ways to the community. We teach them to work to try to build something in the community and to stick together as a community.

During the ceremony they are all asked to hold hands. This signifies that accomplishment can come from working together. Sometimes you can’t explain it verbally, they need to feel it to really make the connection.

The ceremony is accomplished with the lights down low, holding hands in a circle. Drumming is going on outside the circle. Speakers’ voices are low and poetic, perhaps someone is reading a piece of poetry pertaining to what they have accomplished as a group. All are sharing the same experience then. We give out African necklaces, which are placed around each student’s neck along with a personal message for each individual marking his particular success and transformation. This has been a tremendously successful event for students.



## Community service and civic engagement events

Beyond building housing, events that serve the community in other ways build community, pride, and positive values. These events may include taking the whole program to witness a presidential or mayoral debate, bringing with them their own questions and solutions; inviting a corporate sponsor to participate in service for a day; traveling to the state house to give their opinions to their elected officials; building ramps for disabled people; holding a fair for neighborhood children—the list is endless.



This type of activity is of course part of leadership development, but it serves the transformational purposes of the counseling and case management component as well.

## Regular award ceremonies, cheers from peers

Regular award ceremonies throughout the program's progression are extremely important. Many programs hold them at least every two months to acknowledge high attendance, raises, completion of parts of the academic program, GED achievement, excellent work in leadership roles, and any other progress of note. Applause, praise, hugs, and cheers from peers make a difference. Being noticed and acknowledged by the staff is also highly valued.

Including parents and outside authorities in celebrations of students' successes provides students an extra boost. Many of the students have received a great deal of disapproval from parents and authorities in their lives; important healing and reinforcement of the new positive identity comes from parents' and grandparents' deep pride in a graduating student, or a letter of congratulations from an elected official or the chairman of the board of directors.

Celebrations do not have to be for program-based events only. If a student becomes engaged, has a baby, has a positive anniversary (for example, marking the date of marriage or sobriety) or a special event, that event can be cause for a celebration. In addition to the good this does for the program's sense of closeness, it makes the student feel special. The YouthBuild program is about making sure that young people feel their own worth. This feeling gives the energy for the personal transformation that the program is helping them make.

## Graduation

Graduation, of course, is the really big one. YouthBuild students take enormous pride in graduating. They are usually involved in planning the event. They like to invite their families, dress up, give awards to staff, receive awards for a variety of achievements, and have some entertainment and special speakers. The graduations in which many students play a leadership role in delivering well-prepared remarks are always the most moving to the audience and the students themselves. This should always be treated as a special well-planned event in which the entire program puts its best foot forward.

# Chapter 6

## Leadership Development Within the Counseling Component



YouthBuild



## Overview

Graduates of YouthBuild programs have been inspired by the possibilities of becoming leaders in their communities as they recognize they can make a crucial long-term contribution to the well-being of the community. The counseling component has a contributing role to play in reaching this goal. YouthBuild graduates are currently serving as members of their local school boards, workforce investment boards, community councils, homeowner associations, and boards of directors of local nonprofits. They are serving on staff of community-based organizations as counselors, case managers, site supervisors, and several are already serving as directors and executive directors.



The counseling component influences leadership development in the following specific ways:

- Articulating values, attitudes, and goals
- Creating an organizational culture in which all members feel respected, cared about, and able to participate fully with peers in positive activities
- Eliciting students' personal life-planning goals and objectives related to leadership
- Assisting individuals to overcome the fear that can accompany leadership roles
- Challenging individuals who take on leadership roles to be consistent and to build on a solid foundation of integrity
- Ensuring that students taking on leadership roles understand that being a leader involves supporting the leadership and the contributions of others

In some programs, one of the counselors or case managers is given explicit responsibility for the leadership development component. In such cases, their role goes well beyond the roles listed above. Regardless of their level of responsibility, all counselors should fully inform themselves and participate in trainings regarding the leadership development component of a YouthBuild program.

## Communication of Values, Attitudes, and Goals

YouthBuild staff, ideally, see individuals in the program as a precious untapped resource whose ideas and vision for a better world are important, and whose development as leaders and role models is essential for the well-being of the community, as well as for the fulfillment of their own potential. Young people notice immediately whether their potential is valued or not. This may well be part of why they have not succeeded in more traditional educational and social service environments. This “youth development” approach helps students become competent adults by focusing on their positive characteristics rather than their deficits. YouthBuild programs stressing youth development strategies can assist students in building internal and external assets that enable them to develop the resilience and strengths necessary to transition into adulthood, and recognize their potential for contributing to their community.

When the counselor or case manager communicates a belief that everyone has an opportunity and an obligation to make a difference for other people—that everyone can “take responsibility to make things go right for oneself, one’s family, program (or workplace or school), and community”—and when they demonstrate this viewpoint through their own behavior, then students become motivated to move in this direction.

When the students are surrounded by the language and expectation of leadership responsibility, they internalize it. Professor Ferguson, the primary early researcher of YouthBuild programs, has remarked that surrounding students with the language of leadership from the first day of the program, even before they have demonstrated the self-discipline to consistently come in on time, is something like surrounding infants with spoken language before they can speak; by the time they speak, they speak the language they have heard and have internalized the assumptions inherent in it.

## Eliciting Individual Leadership Goals

Prior to YouthBuild, not many people have asked YouthBuild students what their personal goals are, let alone their goals for becoming a leader who makes a difference in changing the conditions of life for their friends and neighbors or the world at large. This question will be asked in many contexts during the YouthBuild program. One such context is the personal counseling sessions. “How do YOU want to improve the world, and how will you go about it?” This question gets asked by the counselor or case manager. Asking it implies profound respect for the intelligence and value of the individual being asked. It is an inherent part of the YouthBuild counseling process. It is just as important, or more important, than the questions designed to help students identify and overcome pressing immediate challenges.

Long-term and short-term goals and objectives for leadership get built into the life plan and get refined as the year goes on. Plans of action get built around these goals.

## Overcoming Fear of Leadership

Many YouthBuild graduates say that when they entered YouthBuild they were shy, they never spoke up, or they didn't think they had anything important to say. In the natural course of belonging to a mini-community in which everyone's voice is respected and many discussions are held with facilitation that draws out everyone's point of view, taking turns expressing opinions on controversial issues, most students overcome their fear of expressing themselves in a group. Many begin to speak publicly for the program or speak to people they have formerly viewed as intimidating authorities. This sometimes requires practice in advance, such as when they make presentations at public hearings regarding community issues, or it may be a spontaneous experience of sharing their viewpoint with funders or community leaders visiting the program. In either case, another layer of fear is shed and confidence is built. Often the counselor or case manager is a major cheerleader in this process, reinforced by the rest of the staff, students, and the director. All of these processes strengthen the students for all the other challenges they face.

Another type of fear of leadership is the anxiety that one's peers will reject the individual who moves into a leadership role. This is one reason why it is recommended that programs carry out elections by secret ballot for young people taking on policy-making leadership roles. Being elected by one's peers through a fair process, rather than appointed by program staff, provides a legitimacy to the leadership role that diminishes the fear of being separated and alienated from one's peers. It also protects the new leader from actual invalidation or ridicule by other young people. The group tends to respect the results of their own elections.

Discussions of the new roles, new identities, and the fears as well as the excitement that leadership roles may generate, is a useful process through which counselors can help students consolidate their gains.

## Challenging Young Leaders to Be Consistent and Build on a Solid Foundation

Very often when young people are encouraged to take themselves seriously as leaders and are offered leadership roles, they go through some negative stages. Sometimes they become pretentious or arrogant, believing that they are now outside the rules and regulations because they are leaders. Sometimes they begin to act as if speaking out or speaking publicly is the primary indicator of leadership ability, and they speak out while acting irresponsibly on other fronts. Sometimes they begin to *front*, that is, acting like leaders but harboring very negative behavior underneath the role. Continuing to use illegal substances while being a facile spokesperson for the program is one of the common problems programs have to confront.

Another common problem is that individuals get so excited by the leadership role that they lose focus on the basic steps of self-improvement needed for them to succeed in a job or at school. The glamour of making policies, speeches, or visits to foundations distracts them from the basic job of studying, working, and taking care of their families. Counselors and case managers need to be alert to the seductive and distracting aspects of leadership roles and challenge students right from the beginning not to neglect their own basic development.

Students who love leadership but are acting irresponsibly in other arenas should be denied their leadership roles until they correct the irresponsibility. However, this is not to say that leadership roles should be withheld until students have systematically gone through many steps and stages; the leadership experience at an early stage of the program is an extraordinary motivator for achieving all the other goals that otherwise might have seemed pedestrian.

One of the insights of YouthBuild is that the goal of achieving employability in an entry-level job that depends primarily on the ability to comply with rules and regulations is not inherently motivating to many young people. Jobs that they see as low-wage, dead-end, low-prestige jobs are hard to get excited about and don't motivate major life changes. This is one reason why college entrance and union membership are emphasized as goals. In addition, the ability to make a difference, to be treated with respect, to become a leader, and to help one's community are inherently attractive goals for many students.

The counselor or case manager's observations about whether the leadership opportunities are motivating, teaching, and inspiring students or, on the other hand, distracting or misleading individual students, is an important factor in helping to guide the young people toward responsible leadership.

# Chapter 7

## Ongoing Assessment of the Counseling Component



YouthBuild

## Overview

There are ongoing indications of whether or not the counseling component is going well. Part of managing the program is being aware of the quality of this component on a continuous basis and making changes when appropriate. There are simple ways to assess whether the counseling component is contributing effectively to the goals of the program.



## Points of View on Success

There are three points of view to be taken into account in evaluating this component:

1. **Students.** Do the students think the counseling is meeting their needs and helping them achieve their goals?
2. **Management.** Does the counseling meet the objectives set by the program management?
3. **Staff.** Does the counseling meet the needs of the staff for a focus on the personal and developmental needs of the students, and for guidance in how to handle difficulties?

## Ongoing Indications of Success

The director may be getting enough feedback in the ordinary course of events to know that both the counseling and case management processes and the integration of youth development with the rest of the program are resulting in things going well. All is well if the following are apparent:

- The counselor or case manager is building positive relationships with most of the students and they clearly hold him in high regard.
- Students keep appointments with the counselor or case manager and seek him out when faced with obstacles.
- Staff rely on and seek out the counselor or case manager to help with difficult circumstances.
- Staff meetings regularly include reflection on how to support the development of individual students and the group.
- The various groups, rituals, award ceremonies, life-skills classes, and events built into the counseling plan are taking place.
- Linkages with appropriate agencies are taking place.
- Attendance and retention are high, and student morale is good.
- Students have set goals and objectives and are moving toward them.

- The counselor or case manager is following up on problem situations and reporting on the results, which are generally positive.
- Appropriate staff members are involved both in thinking through the needs of the students and in implementing plans for enhanced development or interventions.
- Counseling records are well-maintained.

Under these positive circumstances, there are still some steps the director could take to improve the counseling and case management component and its integration with the entire youth development approach.

A periodic reflective meeting among the staff can be useful. In these meetings, staff review the youth development components of the program and assess what is going well, what could be improved, and how to improve it. There are almost always areas that could be improved.

A similar meeting of the youth policy council or the entire student body, reflecting on how the counseling and case-management component could be improved, will yield important feedback.

A student survey regarding their assessment of the different parts of the program, including both the counseling processes and the case management, will also provide good feedback.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For sample surveys, see the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

One element that is worthy of deeper assessment is the question of whether students are setting goals and objectives and whether or not they are reaching them. Individual records of both short- and long-term goals, and objectives set and achieved, should be kept by the counselors in partnership with the students. A system of reviewing these records should be established. The system could include a review, with each student, of his progress and an explanation from both student and counselor regarding how some goals were met and why others were not. It would be appropriate for the program director to meet once or twice a year with each student and his counselor for this type of supportive review, and to lend ideas, confidence, and commitment to the process.

If the director's observations and surveys indicate that the counseling component is not going well, or that the positive indicators (listed above) that are most closely dependent on the counselor are not present, then an analysis of the causes of the component's weakness and correction of it should be conducted.

## Measurable Outcomes as Indicators

The YouthBuild program has some basic, measurable outcomes that must be met in order for the program to succeed. High attendance and retention are the clearest ongoing objective outcomes by which management can monitor the quality of the program from day to day. If the rest of the program is not functioning well, the counseling and case-management component alone can not ensure high attendance and retention. However, it is nonetheless part of the job of this component to continually assess student participation, and to intervene in ways that improve the performance of individuals and of the program as a whole.

## **Attendance and promptness**

Student attendance is the first indicator of the overall effectiveness of the program. The counseling staff needs to be vigilant in monitoring and intervening to address problems in student attendance and tardiness, which are indicators that the student is experiencing difficulties in other areas of his life. These problems could be an indication of a drug or alcohol problem, serious problems at home, or of basic motivational problems. An attendance average below 85 percent for any student can be a warning sign that the student needs more individual attention or some kind of intervention. General low attendance is also an immediate signal to the director that the overall program culture, relationships, and structure are not working to sustain the students' interest and motivation.

## **Retention in the program**

Student retention is another indicator of the overall effectiveness of the program, and of the counseling component in particular. The counselor should be working to prevent individuals from quitting. The director should be continually watching the number of students who leave the program for whatever reason. Not only is a high drop-out rate an indication that the program as a whole is not meeting the needs of its students, but, if not addressed, it can create a domino effect. Students get discouraged as their peers give up on the program, and their own motivation can begin to slide. If students are dropping out at a rate that will result in less than 65 percent completing the program, this is a call for the reflective review and correction of the causes. Higher rates of retention—70 to 90 percent—have also been shown to be attainable in strong programs. Programs should be setting goals related to both attendance and retention and constantly reviewing both.

## **Concrete changes in behavior that support self-development and success**

Changes in student behavior are the third clear indicator of a successful counseling component. Behavioral changes are often subtle and may take time to fully manifest themselves. Though these changes are difficult to document, staff working with the young people will begin to notice changes in the way students conduct their personal lives, in their performance at work, and in their self-confidence. Keeping track of the frequency of contract infractions as the program progresses is an objective measure of behavioral change that programs might try.

Weekly or biweekly attendance and retention reports to the director should be treated with the same seriousness as financial reports, for they are an objective measure of exactly how well the program is doing on the most fundamental level. Solving general program-wide problems in attendance and retention generally requires the leadership of the director and the cooperation of the entire staff. Solving individual problems is the immediate province of the counselor.



# Chapter 8

## Mental Health and Substance Abuse Problems



YouthBuild

## Overview

YouthBuild is not a mental health or substance abuse treatment program, but many of its participants will have some of these problems. One development of the last few decades is the decreased use of institutions to handle troubled and troubling young people. This means that serious problems are seen more often in many community-based programs.

This section will familiarize counselors and case managers with some of the most common emotional and behavioral problems seen among adolescents. It will not make them experts in the diagnosis and treatment of any of these problems, but it will make them more familiar with the language of the mental health field: definitions, symptoms, and some treatment approaches for these problems. When a serious emotional or behavioral problem is suspected, the counselor should contact professionals who can help determine how best to proceed.

Professionals with many years of training can disagree about the diagnosis that should be applied to any particular person's problems. In fact, the manual that is generally accepted for diagnosing emotional and behavioral problems changes frequently. Troubled people are complex and they don't fit easily into neat categories. They will often present some symptoms or characteristics of different diagnoses. A YouthBuild counselor's job is to be attentive, sensitive, and thoughtful in deciding when additional help is needed. Common sense is very crucial in this process.

## Affective Disorders

A common set of problems experienced by adolescents and young adults falls into the category of what is called affective disorders, or disorders that concern emotions and feelings. This category will highlight depression, anxiety, and adjustment disorders.

## Depression

Depression is a common mood disorder. Many people have experienced depression of some sort and have resolved it in various ways. In adults, depression usually causes a low level of energy and interest. In young people, it may also take the form of irritability, restlessness, and even aggression. For the counseling program's purposes, this chapter will examine just a few types of problems related to depression.

A major depressive episode usually includes symptoms that start fairly suddenly and last for at least a couple of weeks. The symptoms include such things as sleeping problems, change in diet, appetite, or weight, inability to concentrate, lack of energy, feelings of guilt and self-doubt, and thoughts of death or suicide. The sudden and intense nature of major depressive episodes sometimes requires brief medical care (even hospitalization). If these types of symptoms are not sudden and appear to be constant, this may be another type of depression that can usually be handled without hospitalization.

It is often acceptable to ask the young person if she is feeling depressed. Frequently, depression results in a feeling of being overwhelmed and of hopelessness. Counselors can help a young person get perspective on some of her feelings of being overwhelmed. For example, ask, “What are two or three things you can do that will make you feel a little better?” Breaking the huge problem down to bite-sized bits is an effective approach. If a person is severely depressed, cannot get out of bed, is listless, or has a generally sad affect with no signs of hope, then it may be necessary to explore the possibility of a psychiatric referral. Bear in mind that YouthBuild counselors are not qualified to make psychiatric diagnoses, hence a good working relationship with a community mental health clinic is essential to making an effective referral.

As in the case of all referrals of young people, it is not enough to just make the referral. It may take considerable time and energy to persuade a student that the problem warrants additional help and then to get the student to actually make use of it. The counselor often has to act as the bridge.

## Anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders are not necessarily life threatening, but they can be very disruptive in young people’s lives. Everyone experiences anxiety as a normal part of life. However, those who have an anxiety disorder feel uneasy or afraid much of the time.

It is important to notice when young people are worrying too much. Generalized anxiety is an excessive level of concern or worry about anything. The anxiety and concern shows up in physical ways, too. Anxious young people have a hard time falling or staying asleep despite tiring easily. They are easily startled. Their hearts may palpitate or have a faster beat, or they may experience shortness of breath, muscle tension, and feeling or being shaky.

One anxiety disorder, relatively common among young people raised in low-income communities, is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As the name suggests, it is associated with a major trauma experienced by the person showing the symptoms. YouthBuild students are quite likely to have experienced traumas such as abuse (physical, sexual, psychological) and violence (being shot, death of friends). A counselor reports:



A young man who had been out of the program for a couple of months was murdered. He was 17 years old. During mental toughness, he was a leader for students. When he died it affected people strongly. The program called off all activities to attend the funeral, wake, and burial. This provided a good way for the students to say goodbye. The death of this young man really affected people. The fact that they did it together was good. Students who didn’t know him stayed back with some of the staff. They had an opportunity to talk about it in rap groups. They are putting together training on post-traumatic stress disorder. All the staff need to know how to deal with this since so many of the young people deal with trauma.

Within recent years, clinicians and youth workers have identified the symptoms of PTSD in child and adolescent victims and witnesses of violence. Of 221 inner city youth (ages 7 to 18) surveyed in one study (*Fitzpatrick and Boldizar, 1993*):

- 43 percent had witnessed a murder
- 68 percent had witnessed a shooting
- 50 percent had witnessed a knife attack

The study concluded that such violence seriously impacts young people. Specifically:

- 27 percent of the youth met the full clinical criteria for PTSD
- 49 percent met at least two of the three criteria
- 88 percent met at least one of the three criteria

The most common symptoms include a pattern of distressing memories and dreams, sudden fear of the event happening again and reacting physically (nausea), inability to concentrate, feeling very apart from others, and being on edge and easily shaken.

The young person suffering from PTSD may appear glib or cynical. He may be able to refer to particularly ugly experiences (his own or others') with little apparent revulsion or remorse. This is often a psychological defense mechanism that helps either repress the memory of feelings associated with a trauma or cope with the fear that one is going crazy due to the ongoing flashbacks and nightmares about the incident. In cases of PTSD, establishing a genuine and nonjudgmental rapport can be as important therapeutically as the therapy itself. The rapport is what will allow the student to bring those feelings forward, and process them without experiencing the terror, guilt, or shame she had been dreading since the trauma.

## Grief and loss

Grief and loss were noted above as some of the possible causes of PTSD. YouthBuild students are very likely to have experienced these feelings in connection with a traumatic event like a shooting or in more recurrent episodes such as multiple foster placements or other family break-ups. A YouthBuild counselor describes some of the situations encountered:



During the program one of the YouthBuild students was shot and killed. We all got together to allow a grieving process to occur. We gave time during the day for the students to talk about the deceased student. They needed time to adjust. Staff sent flowers to the funeral. As a group, we went around to the housing development to show support for the family and love for the YouthBuild member who was killed. The student who died lived in a housing project. His home was very small, so YouthBuild opened up its building and one of the staff who does catering brought food for the family and friends and allowed everyone to come to YouthBuild to eat after the funeral. At YouthBuild, everyone is family. We all look out for one another. Students easily grasp this and use the concept of family.

During the year, another student lost his mother. The entire program staff is real proud of this student. He has been on the honor roll three out of four times this year. When this student's mother passed, his counselor spent time with him. He lives in public housing and was not on the lease, so when his mother died, the project started to evict the student. The student has a 10-year-old sister who was also about to be put out. YouthBuild made calls to legal aid. Now, instead of being put out, they are being relocated.

To lose your mother is tough at any time, but for this 20-year-old to now have all the responsibility of taking care of his ten-year-old sister is really trying. Now, this 20-year-old has total responsibility for his family. He has bills to pay now. But this was a good student. He had already turned a successful internship into a job offer once he completes the program. I told the student, "You have to deal with death every day. When a crisis occurs, the only issue is, how are you going to deal with it?"

The student said that he recognized that his mother would want him to keep his family together and finish school. During this last grading period, during the time of his mother's passing, he made straight As and was on the honor roll. He won the outstanding craftsman award. Everyone is glad for him. Everyone knows the ordeal he has gone through. The YouthBuild family has been right there for him—to help him grieve. This student has been exemplary. When he has needed to take his mother's death certificate to the Social Security office or the phone company, he has done this and still he has kept his work up. The student has come a long way in a short time."

One theory about feelings of loss and grief, posed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, is that people usually go through four stages in dealing with these feelings. The recognition of which stage they are in, and whether they are getting through it reasonably, may require guidance or consultation with a mental health professional.

The first stage may be shock or denial. The person simply refuses to accept that something has happened or is happening. The next stage is anger. The person is likely to blame anyone and everyone for the situation, and may even lash out. The third stage happens when that anger is turned inward and shows up as sadness or depression. This is the stage when the real feelings of grieving surface. The person is no longer blocking reality. The ability to process feelings of depression or sadness leads to the final stage, which is acceptance and resolution.

Another theory is that if a person gets support in grieving directly and immediately—crying, sobbing, raging, talking, and in general venting his feelings fully and promptly in a supportive context—the person may not have to go through the above stages, although in any case it takes a long time to stop grieving for a lost loved one.

Various therapeutic interventions can help the affective disorders that have just been highlighted. With the support of professional mental health providers, a YouthBuild counselor should be able to help a student complete the program and get treatment for her problem.

## Suicide

Suicidal behavior among American adolescents is extraordinarily high, representing the third leading cause of death among youth ages 10 to 24. (*National Adolescent Health Information Center, 2003; <http://nahic.ucsf.edu/>*)

**Common factors in youth suicide** (*From the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, <http://www.sprc.org/index.asp>*)

- Young males are much more likely to commit suicide than their female peers; female adolescents are more likely to attempt suicide than their male peers.
- Risk factors for attempted suicide by youth include depression, alcohol or other drug-use disorder, physical or sexual abuse, and disruptive behavior.
- Previous attempt at suicide and/or a family history of suicide.
- Mental disorders or a major medical condition.
- Job or financial loss.
- Loss of a romantic relationship or family member.
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation.
- Barriers or stigma attached to seeking help, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment.

There are several other factors that put young people at risk. The danger with listing too many is that it starts looking like everyone is at risk for every reason. YouthBuild's counseling program is not about treatment for depressed or suicidal youth. Counselors are being given this information as background to help in assessing whether the possibility of suicide is something that may require attention. A severe manifestation of any one of the above factors can lead to suicide, but it is more likely that several will come to bear on a young person before a gesture is made.

Below is a list of behavioral indicators that can alert a counselor to the possibility of suicide. Direct and indirect threats of suicide are to be taken very seriously. It is a myth that people who talk about suicide won't do it. When a student says that she wants to end it all, she is usually sending a clear message. Even less clear statements like "I just don't want to feel this bad anymore" must produce a response. Additional factors include:

- Marked changes in personality or behavior. Virtually any radical change in personality and mood should be closely watched. Someone who has been nasty or selfish and suddenly becomes compassionate (with no apparent reason) is such an example. People with depression are always at risk, but an unexplained sudden lifting of a depressed mood can be an indicator of an approaching suicidal period.
- Changes in eating habits are a signal. Significant loss of appetite or suddenly beginning to overeat suggests a problem is at hand.
- Giving away one's possessions is frequently a signal of a preparation for departure. When there is no other rational reason to give away one's possessions, a serious problem may be imminent.
- Change in sleeping habits is another signal. A young person who wakes up not feeling rested is a cause for concern. This is also true of someone who is having difficulty falling asleep or waking up. Of course, these changes also often occur in people who are not suicidal in any way.
- A history of previous suicide attempts is important because there are usually a few attempts before "success."

A young person who presents emotional or physical concerns without a clear basis for them may be at risk. For example, sudden weight loss that is not related to another real illness may be due to loss of appetite, which is one of the indicators noted above.

## Clues to watch for

Assessing the severity of a suicidal gesture or condition requires advanced clinical training. There are, however, a few clues that all staff should be alert to, as listed below:

- **Specificity**

Specificity is the degree to which a person making suicidal comments is able to explain what she plans to do and how. A detailed plan that includes reasons, location, and mechanisms is a very serious sign.

- **Lethality**

Lethality describes the nature of the method and how likely it is to result in death. A person who claims that he will take poison but does not have any, or does not know how to get some, is less likely to be ready to do it than someone who says that he will swallow three bottles of aspirin. Both need to be taken seriously, but one is likely to be more real than the other.

## ■ Imminence

The imminence, or timing, of the event is important in at least two ways. How soon the suicide is likely to happen is important. A person who states, “Sometime, I’m just going to end it all,” should of course not be ignored, but a person saying “I’m going out today to drive my car off a cliff”—and has the car to do it—must not be left alone. A person known to have an upcoming anniversary of a traumatic event is also at high risk. For example, a person who is contemplating suicide on or immediately before the date on which his father or child died must be taken very seriously.

It is important that YouthBuild counselors and case managers know some possible interventions when dealing with a young person who is suicidal. Ideally, they should be able to make a successful supported referral to a trusted mental health agency or individual professional practitioner. Suicide hotlines can also be helpful. Meanwhile, there are some things that all caring individuals can do during the time a referral is being made or until it is complete. Take young people seriously and talk to them directly about suicide: “Are you thinking of hurting or killing yourself?” This should be done with genuine concern and without being judgmental. Allow the student to talk about her own feelings and values. This allows her to release a degree of anxiety while the counselor can gather information about such things as the imminence and lethality of the plans.

Focus on reasons for living without minimizing the pain a student is feeling at the moment. Avoid saying things like, “That’s not so serious,” or “Don’t worry about something so minor, it’ll pass.” Instead, acknowledge that she is probably feeling awful right now, but suicide is forever. Most problems can be resolved or decreased with time and work, but suicide eliminates the ability to work things out over time. Try to build her self-esteem by pointing out how important she is to you and others. Making a person feel valued is likely to decrease the urgency of the need to end it all.

If a suicidal incident (gesture or completion) occurs, be sure to attend to its impact on everyone else in the YouthBuild community. It is vital that staff and students process their feelings and thoughts. Reactions will vary from hysterical emotions to overly rational intellectualization. Those whose feelings seem out of control need help to regain their balance, and those who are hiding their feelings should be encouraged gently (not pushed) to express them. Guilty feelings are common and it can help to express them in a group context so people can see that almost everyone else also feels that they somehow should have been able to prevent this ultimate act of self-destruction on the part of someone in their community. Sharing this feeling puts it in perspective and draws the group closer.



YouthBuild has developed good relationships with the coordinator of the health services program. One young man in the program, an 18-year-old, was completely on his own with no help from his family. This student needed a lot of help for some really deep-rooted feelings and thoughts that he hadn’t expressed. The student said that just having me to talk to was very helpful. At one session, the student told me that he was deeply depressed and considering suicide. I told him that I was going to refer him for treatment because I had to take seriously the student’s talk of suicide. The student got through the situation. He kept his appointments with outside counselors. That was one example of when the program called in outside help and did not rely solely on our own counseling.



## Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is an extremely common problem among YouthBuild young people. The exact type of chemicals used to alter one's state of consciousness varies according to availability, preference, fads, cost, and other factors. The precise chemical being abused is only important from a medical and highly clinical point of view. Counselors should try to help the participants discover the reasons they are choosing to use it and refer for assessment those who seem to need treatment. To get to this issue with substance abusers requires a reasonable level of understanding of chemicals and their effects on people. One need not be a recovering addict to be a good counselor, but one does have to understand that stopping the use and abuse of drugs, including alcohol, requires more than simple willpower.

Please note that alcohol is included in this section. Alcohol is a drug that can be addictive and lethal when it is abused. In fact, more people are harmed and killed by alcohol-related problems than all other substances combined.

This section will provide a brief overview of the major categories of substances likely to be abused and ways of detecting possible use by students. The categories of substances include depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, and inhalants. Each category includes many different drugs or chemicals. We will list the most common ones and describe the general effect of each category.

### Categories of oft-abused substances

- **Depressants**

The most widely abused types of drugs fall in the category of *depressants*. We include alcohol and narcotics under this category as well as tranquilizers, barbiturates, and hypnotics (Quaaludes, for example). Alcohol was already highlighted for its prevalence and overwhelming damage. People often don't realize that one can literally overdose on alcohol, and that a hangover is actually a form of withdrawal. Narcotics include a large number of chemicals that are natural or synthetic opiates. These include codeine, Darvon, Demerol, Dilaudid, heroin, methadone, morphine, Percodan and Oxycodone. Narcotics are developed and used legally primarily as pain killers. Other depressants are meant for calmness, stress or anxiety reduction, and sleep aids.

As the name of this category suggests, these drugs depress the central nervous system, and by doing so they also cause various types of euphoria. This category of drugs is physically very addictive. Ongoing use requires increasing dosage to generate an effect. This increasing dosage also puts one in danger of an overdose.

- **Stimulants**

Stimulants also create a euphoric effect but of a very different type. The type of euphoria they create has led to their nickname of *speed*. The most well-known stimulants are cocaine and amphetamines. These central nervous system stimulants cause a sense of elation, excitement, appetite suppression, and a general feeling of being on top of the world. In addition to the seductive and addictive nature of the chemically induced euphoric rush, these chemicals have very serious side effects. Ongoing use leads to sleep deprivation, which often leads to hallucinations, delusions, and convulsions. Because stimulants are appetite suppressants, they can lead to many other physical complications due to insufficient nutritional intake.

## ■ Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens is a category of chemicals that lead to various forms of fantasies that are generated by their effect on the brain. They are of various strengths, and do not always cause visual or auditory hallucinations. The most commonly used hallucinogens are cannabis, which is known as marijuana or pot (and many other names), and hash(ish). Within this category, these are the mildest drugs and generally produce a sense of relaxation, sociability, and mild euphoria. The more intensive hallucinogens include LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, PCP (angel dust), and MDA. The effects of these drugs are very unpredictable and can range from elation and euphoria to panic, paranoia, and rage. People under the influence of these drugs often have an intensely distorted sense of reality, which means they are more difficult to manage. These drugs can lead to serious and, at times, irreversible psychological effects in addition to the risk of physical harm when reality is much distorted.

A counselor's comments:



Another big issue we deal with constantly is marijuana. Students smoke marijuana a lot. My background is in drug counseling. But even without a background in drug counseling, I know when someone is high. I can tell when someone is smoking weed or is schizoid on cocaine. I live in the same neighborhood as the students. I know them and I know the neighborhood. Some of the students don't understand addiction and how it progresses. I tell them, "Look at what it is doing to you. You aren't at work after payday." I have put some students on individual contracts. The content of the contract varies with the student's needs. Some are sent to drug counseling, to AA meetings, to sessions to hear about how drug addictions progress. When the student returns to YouthBuild after completing the outside counseling, the student has to be clean.

## ■ Inhalants

Inhalants are so named because of the way they are used or ingested. This category usually includes solvents and aerosols—chemicals that produce fumes that are then sniffed by the user until a high is achieved. Two things make this category of substance particularly dangerous—they can be possessed legally by young people, and they are relatively cheap. Gasoline, paint thinner, glue, and other commercial sprays are commonly used. The effects of inhalants vary and cover the whole range: depressants, stimulants, and hallucinogens. Because of their ingestion through the nose, they also cause quick and often permanent physical damage. This category causes very serious long-term effects on users.

## Recognizing substance abuse behavior

Recognizing and dealing with substance abuse means having clear program policies (in addition to local laws), developing a drug-free program culture, selecting or training staff who know basic signs and effects of chemicals, and handling interventions properly. Everyone should keep in mind a few simple truths that are often ignored:

- The effects of drugs on users are often pleasurable or at least reduce discomfort.
- Serious substance abuse problems usually represent an attempt to self-medicate one's way out of other personal hurts.
- Counseling is not possible while someone is high. Under these conditions, only try to manage behavior until the chemical effects have worn off.
- Stopping the use of drugs for an addict or an abuser is not just about having information and using willpower. Think of how hard people find losing weight or quitting smoking despite all the information about the negative effects of being overweight and smoking.

YouthBuild counselors and case managers should include substance abuse histories (the student's and her family's) during the early assessment process. This information can suggest circumstances that have led to use in the past and the risk potential. There is considerable evidence suggesting a genetic factor in addictions, but it is far from conclusive or clear. Staff need to be trained and alerted to signs of drug use, and be aware that no single sign is conclusive. Denial is common in this area and needs to be considered in every situation. Experienced YouthBuild counselors describe some program experiences with drugs:



We brought in a drug counselor to talk about marijuana, which is the drug of choice for the students. Students feel that it is normal to smoke marijuana. Drug use is a big issue in the program. We are getting ready to test for drugs and have given the students a month to prepare for it.

Another counselor describes a student with a history of drug problems. The student admitted to smoking marijuana but denied using other kinds of drugs.



We started to worry when the student missed two days of work. Plus, the last time I spoke with him, he spoke of suicide and of quitting the program. So, I went by his house one time when he didn't show up on Monday. The student called to say that he was okay, but then still didn't come in on Tuesday, so I went to his apartment and knocked on his door. When he didn't answer, I got the key from the building management and went in. The student was there, asleep. He was disoriented, dehydrated, and hadn't eaten in a while. This is something that I can't handle. I know that I do not have the skills to deal with a life-threatening situation like this. So, I contacted the local mental health facility and a drug and alcohol agency. But the student refused to go for analysis and treatment. He said that he didn't need it.

Different drugs will cause different physical and behavioral changes. Counselors should be alert to any marked change in a participant's appearance, behavior, or state of mind, and be aware of their possible relation to substance abuse. Depressants can produce slurred speech, lack of coordination, poor judgment, and on occasion (especially with alcohol) belligerence leading to violence. Narcotics produce additional symptoms of drowsiness, euphoric nonchalance, and constricted pupils. Prolonged use leads to constipation, loss of interest in eating or other normal functions, lowered blood pressure, and possibly shortness of breath. Stimulants can lead to extreme talkativeness, restlessness, rapid heart beat, dilated pupils, delusions, and sexual exhilaration followed by impotence.

Hallucinogens can be suspected when bizarre behavior is present. Mood swings and confused perceptions such as hearing noises and seeing colors are also symptoms. Physical symptoms include a higher pulse rate, elevated temperature, twitching eyeballs, and poor muscle coordination. Inhalants used over a long period of time will lead to very serious organ damage in the user. External symptoms include sneezing, coughing, bloody nose, nausea, and even hallucinations.

The main physical signs of drug use are people's eyes and, with some drugs, needle marks. Depressants will tend to constrict pupils. This means the dark center of the eye becomes smaller than normal. Stimulants and hallucinogens will cause pupils to dilate. The dark center will become notably enlarged. Marijuana will frequently also cause eyes to appear bloodshot.

Drugs are taken in many ways. Injections, snorting, smoking, and swallowing are the common methods. Most of these leave no tracks, but if a student insists on wearing long-sleeved shirts when the weather is very hot, and there are other behavioral, emotional, and physical reasons to suspect drugs, one is likely to find needle marks on the arms covered by the sleeves.

## **Drug testing**

Most YouthBuild programs have always had a rule that drug or alcohol use during the program hours would result in warnings and then termination from the program if the behavior continued.

An increasing number of YouthBuild programs have developed policies aiming to establish a drug-free lifestyle for the students, not just a drug-free work site. The belief that it is difficult for students to take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them if they are using drugs in the evening for entertainment or emotional relief is part of the reason for this trend.

It is useful to make the point to the students that they can't lead two lives. If they are trying to develop a track record of success in the program while still leading a street life at night, they will soon fall flat on their faces, stretched out between conflicting pulls. Drug testing strengthens the program's position that the young people have to choose which life they are going to lead fully.

Another reason for using drug tests during the program is that drug testing has increased in frequency as a requirement for obtaining a job. As a result, some programs have had the experience of graduating students who had functioned well during the program but who then failed drug tests administered by potential employers. Judging that they had not properly prepared their graduates for the work world if they could not pass a drug test, and that this might imply a hidden addiction to marijuana or other mood-altering substances, programs have become much more determined to confront drug use early on in the program.

A very small number of programs administer drug tests prior to admission to the program and only accept applicants who pass the test. However, no studies or any data collected over time have revealed any correlation between excluding drug users at the outset and high outcomes. The key element seems to be what actually happens in the program to inspire the student to give up drugs.

Many programs administer drug tests at the start of orientation, at program expense. They administer another test one month later. If the student fails the second one, the cost is at his own expense, and he gets one more month to clean up if he wants to stay in the program. The program offers more intensive counseling during this period or referral to substance abuse counselors.

Many programs do random drug tests during the program at unannounced times, and enter into counseling immediately with any individual who fails the test. A large number now require that all students pass a random drug test within the final month before graduation in order to be considered a graduate.

Many programs have the policy of allowing students who admit to having a drug addiction and who go into a drug treatment program to re-enter the YouthBuild program upon completion of the drug treatment.

Whatever the specific policy and practice, the purpose is to enable students to free themselves of drug or alcohol dependency, to face the reality if they have an addiction, to get help for it from within the program or externally, and, ultimately, to be prepared to obtain a job in industries that require an individual to be drug-free.

Part of this process usually involves the program staff stating clearly that students are unlikely to succeed in achieving their goals if they are trying to straddle two worlds and are pretending to be in greater control than they actually are. Getting them to lead one life, with integrity, that is consistent in the program, at home, on the street, and on the job, is part of the challenge of the counselor and the program. The program usually teaches that lying about what one is doing in one sphere of life undermines self-esteem and achievement in every other sphere. The issues around drug use—especially marijuana—are a good context in which to explore and challenge the issues of consistency, integrity, and self-awareness.

There is no one approach to solving the problem of substance abuse. But change is most likely to occur if the program staff and policies make absolutely clear that drug use is not acceptable and is self-destructive for YouthBuild students or graduates. In that context, the sum total of program opportunities, supports, discipline, personal counseling, and motivation toward a different lifestyle can have the power to help students give up drugs and alcohol.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

For additional information on substance abuse or to obtain sample YouthBuild drug policies, go to YouthBuild Community of Practice.

# Chapter 9

## Gender Issues



YouthBuild

## Overview

Issues related to women and men are of great concern to YouthBuild counselors. Programs are concerned about the general difficulties of students establishing stable, mutually beneficial long-term relationships; risky sexual activity between partners; verbal and physical abuse of partners, particularly women; the women's lack of belief in their ability to succeed in the male-dominated programs; and the posturing of men trying to survive in a world hostile to them.

Programs will need to draw upon their staff and local resources to develop a coherent approach to helping the young men and women deal with gender and sex role issues.

It is useful to keep in mind that there are four related but distinct areas:

- 1. Women's issues**
- 2. Men's issues**
- 3. Relationship issues**
- 4. Sexual orientation**

## Women's Issues

In YouthBuild programs, women have been a small but significant percentage of the student group—usually 15 to 30 percent—although there are a few programs in which women have been 50 percent or even a majority. The construction work performed by YouthBuild students is traditionally considered men's work. Young women come into the program with feelings of apprehension about their ability to succeed in the program. Following are other barriers that women face:

- Less experience with or exposure to tools and equipment
- Lack of female role models on the construction site
- Lack of childcare
- Expectation that they will care for ailing family members as a priority even during their own training
- Possible disapproval from family members about doing construction work
- Male culture and male attitudes (ranging from being too helpful to being ridiculing)
- Sexual pressure
- A history of sexual abuse or domestic violence that affects attitudes toward men and toward themselves
- Lack of trust in other women
- Fear of failing

One young woman graduate describes some of her concerns:



It's hard to come into a program where they tell you as a female that you can go a long way, and then to be the target of verbal abuse. Being told, "you're not gonna make it," or "females need to be at home," or "I don't want a woman who does carpentry or construction." Lots of verbal abuse—I don't understand what it all comes from but the verbal stuff can be very abusive.

Some of the issues facing men and women in some YouthBuild programs have to do with domestic violence, not being monogamous and sexist attitudes toward women. Men think that women are wimps, that women cannot be carpenters. Childcare is also a major issue.

## Special attention for women's issues

Programs can facilitate the support and development of young women by providing services like the following:

- Support groups and rap groups for women, specifically on women's issues selected by the students, to build support among the women and to help them address the pressures coming from the men
- Staff training on issues facing women entering the trades, exploration of biases against women in the trades, and techniques for handling sexual harassment
- Links with child-care centers to arrange slots for the children of YouthBuild participants, providing information on child-care resources and requirements for child-care vouchers, and supplying books and materials on parenting
- Life-skills workshops to support women in their roles as working parents, relationships to significant others, and coworkers
- Workshops that focus on women at the work site, including issues such as dress, appearance, and communication with men
- Referrals and health education around issues such as sexual abuse, family planning, domestic violence, and other health needs
- Sexual-harassment training for students and staff—definition, examples, and policies



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, see Chapter 12: Sexual Harassment.



One YouthBuild female graduate has the following suggestions:



Rivalries are common among the women. The program is male-based. Programs need to work out a way for women to be seen in more positive ways. Women need to be part of the orientation. Women's groups should be developed right from the beginning of the program so that women can look at what it means to have mutual respect between women. We need workshops about issues important to women.

A workshop on respecting, working with, and loving our men would be excellent. It would provide a foundation for those women coming into the program. Programs about taking care of children would be good. Have older, down-to-earth females come in to talk to the women. Get women who have some backbone, who will tell it like it is. Someone who can say, "Look, here are the issues we are going to deal with." Right from the beginning of the program, develop ways to find out where the females are; don't wait until late in the program to find out. Men should be having groups on the same issues.

Verbal and physical abuse and comments, attitudes, and behaviors that rob women of their opportunity to succeed must not be tolerated. Programs, workshops, rap groups, and same-sex support groups need to be organized around the topic of mutual respect, to help the students look at themselves, their attitudes toward each other, the quality of their relationships, and their expectations of each other.

With attention to these issues, the result can be what another young woman reports:



On my site the guys are great. They give me respect as a woman. As soon as they saw that I was willing to do the hard work, they pulled me into the group and they also help me if I ever need it. Our women's support groups are great, but the guys are, too. We get along.

## Childcare: A key support

Old sex-role expectations expect that women will take primary responsibility for child-rearing. Yet women today also work to provide for themselves and their families. A YouthBuild student who is a single mother comments:



The system makes it hard for a woman to succeed. If you work, you're a bad mother because you don't have time for your kids. If you don't work, you're a bad mother for sitting at home and collecting welfare.

Programs can develop early-recruitment and needs-assessment forms that capture information to find out the numbers of students in the programs who need help with childcare. Many women in the program are single mothers with babies or young children. For many young mothers adequate childcare makes the difference between success and failure.

As another young mother explained:



Lots of women in the program are single with children. As a female and single parent, it is hard to move into a program like YouthBuild that can give you skills, life-building skills, because childcare is so uncertain. A woman can be doing great and be well on her way and then her childcare falls through. Programs need to work out a better system for women. Programs should make sure that mothers in programs have childcare backup.

Not only do single mothers in programs need backup, but young fathers with custody of their children need the same. In addition, young fathers need workshops and guidance about taking responsibility for the care of their children.

Even when childcare is available, there are additional pressures on single parents, such as illness and medical appointments that may affect their attendance. Help in thinking through how the young parent could build a personal support system that can provide backup so she can achieve reliable attendance is an important life skill, as well as offering understanding of the difficulties.

## Men's Issues

The young men in YouthBuild also have a set of deep, complex issues. Some of these are:

- Surviving in an increasingly violent environment
- Learning how to be a respected man, often in the absence of successful male role models
- Because of the scarcity of life-supporting jobs, being marginalized as a father, breadwinner, or head of the house
- Dealing with an expanding prison system that incarcerates nonviolent drug offenders and, in the case of for-profit prisons, uses them for low-wage labor
- Having been deeply conditioned by sexist attitudes to disrespect women, yet desperately needing women for any chance of comfort and tenderness
- Having had to stuff tears and fears into an emotional closet because of pervasive messages that such feelings are not manly
- Not being able to ask for help, being independent and isolated
- Facing demanding child support payments
- Being excluded from his child's life by the mother of his child

These issues weigh heavily on men. YouthBuild programs can facilitate the support and development of the young men by providing experiences such as the following:

- Ongoing men's groups in which men explore their issues and learn how to support one another better
- Workshops on building better relationships between men and women
- A young fathers' support group, where men learn better parenting skills, help each other solve parenting problems, and encourage one another to take responsibility for raising their children, and supporting the mothers of their children, or at least communicating with them
- Learning what sexual harassment is, and working to interrupt it in YouthBuild and elsewhere
- Doing one-on-one counseling on men's issues
- Providing safe places for men to show their feelings, especially grief and fear, and to release or at least acknowledge some of their anger and rage in a constructive context
- Learning about safe, responsible, and mutual sex
- Offering individual counseling to those men who have a sex addiction or a pattern of abusing women.

Of course, by listing issues affecting men and women as distinct from each other, we run the risk of seeming to stereotype men and women, and understating the overlapping issues that both groups face and those that they need to face together. Both groups need to address sex and gender issues, both need to address issues of abuse and harassment, parenting, anger, trust, mutual respect, and learning to understand and care for themselves and each other. Nonetheless, these issues do very often present themselves differently for men and women, and programs will do well to pay attention to their different points of view and experiences, and to be aware of how continuing sexism and heterosexism in our society play out.

## Relationship Issues

Relationships between young men and women are a central preoccupation and area of growth for YouthBuild students. Relatively few have come from stable families with models of lasting, mutually respectful, loving partnerships between their parents. Many have witnessed or experienced domestic violence. Their expectations, experiences, modes of handling relationships, and aspirations for future relationships are all worthy of exploration.

The importance of establishing stable supportive relationships and of developing parenting partnerships that work for the young children of students cannot be overemphasized. Several of the available life-skills curricula include many sections on romantic relationships and training, and there are curricula available that are focused on relationships that have been tested successfully at YouthBuild programs showing positive results (see the YouthBuild Community of Practice). But even without a curriculum, the topics will flow easily from the students and the discussions and workshops can be facilitated by skilled counselors or outside facilitators.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

To see a sample format for a workshop on male-female relationships, go the Community of Practice.

There is a need to prepare the young women for the fact that in this context where women are in the minority, some of the men are likely to seek them out as sexual partners. Female students need to recognize how an unplanned pregnancy can prevent them from reaching all of their goals. Initial life planning sessions for women might explicitly ask about where child rearing fits in the ideal plan, since it seems that a young woman's likelihood of getting pregnant is decreased if she has distinct plans that would be disrupted by pregnancy.

Both men and women need to think through how they can achieve successful and lasting relationships and how to care for children (if they choose to have them) in a stable caring environment.

## Sexual Orientation

As with any youth program, YouthBuild has young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. There are enormous prejudices, misunderstandings, and often certain cultural or religion-based judgments about homosexuals within our society, and there is no reason to assume that these elements do not exist within any organization. These prejudices may or may not be stated or acted out on the surface. Such tension could result in bullying, intimidation, and even violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender youth. Managing this underlying or overt tension can be a challenge for the program. Some programs have left it unaddressed, which in and of itself is a negative message to any of the youth who are members of this group as well as a message of support of existing prejudices to all other participants within the program. More progressive programs have had workshops, outside speakers, and rap groups, backed up by individual counseling, to make this territory safer and more mutually respectful.

We recommend addressing the subject of sexual orientation for a number of reasons. First, the discomfort for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students is likely to be decreased by explicit respect for their situation and by naming the mistreatment that they face as an oppressed minority. Additionally, attitudes of homophobia may exist among the staff as well as the students, and leadership needs to be aware of the need to work with staff as well as with students to eliminate any prejudice. Students and staff need help in recognizing the societal oppression of people as a result of sexual orientation. It would be hypocritical of YouthBuild to offer themselves as a welcome haven to oppressed and vulnerable youth and then perpetuate the oppression of any group, even in a subtle manner.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

An excellent resource for this topic is the *Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)* at <http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=194&srcid=-2>

# Chapter 10

## Issues Related to Race, Culture, Sexual Orientation, and Class



YouthBuild

## Overview

Dealing with cultural identity issues in a YouthBuild program is important.

Experienced counselors say that to be effective and sensitive to the situations of the students, they need to understand the historical and contemporary social history that impacts the lives of the students, their families, and communities. Since the students bring these issues with them, ignorance on the part of the staff is destructive because it communicates negative messages of not caring, devaluing the issues, and confirming the oppressive separations among people. On the other hand, if the staff communicates a point of view that confirms the students' own stereotypes and conditioning, this is also destructive, deepening the separation and polarization that people experience.



Many YouthBuild programs are also AmeriCorps programs. To be funded as AmeriCorps programs, they have made an explicit commitment to “building community”—that is, developing respectful, knowledgeable, and cooperative relationships across racial, class, age, and cultural divisions. This goal is also part of YouthBuild’s greater vision.

This section is designed to provide a starting point forming a base from which to build racial, cultural, sexual orientation, and class-related knowledge appropriate to the specific needs of students.

Although these issues are complex and require hard work, the effort must be made. In particular, if counselors take the opportunity to study the issues, they can learn to accept and work with their own limitations and prejudices. This will better prepare them to work appropriately with issues as they arise. And they are sure to arise.

Engaging students in serious dialogue about issues of race, culture, sexual orientation, and class is a necessary part of helping the young people develop the self-esteem and self-confidence they need to change their own lives and become effective change agents in their communities. Learning to talk about the emotional content of these issues in support groups, rap groups, one-on-one counseling sessions, and regular conversation will strengthen the young people.

The program will be more successful if the entire staff engages in dialogue about these issues and if counselors help develop staff support groups and workshops that encourage exploration. The more that staff gain a certain facility of dealing with these loaded issues, the more they can be effective in helping young people deal with them.

Of course, it is understood that no prejudice or discrimination will be tolerated. On the other hand, the celebration of differences—the true appreciation of the wonderful variations of culture and history that everyone brings—will create the welcoming program culture that is typical of YouthBuild.

# A Possible Framework for Approaching Issues of Cultural and Racial Identity

Helping the young people who are in YouthBuild programs deal with the impact of societal barriers on their lives is part of the job. Below is one possible framework from which the program can work.

The framework has four parts:

1. **Informing.** Helping young people develop a useful set of ideas and historical information about their own and others' cultural and racial identities, as well as sexual orientation, and the conditions their people have overcome and still face.
2. **Healing.** Assisting young people to heal some of the emotional hurts inflicted on them due to their cultural, class, or racial identities. Part of healing is celebrating differences.
3. **Coping.** Helping young people develop effective ways of coping with the continuing misunderstanding and discrimination they may meet.
4. **Eliminating.** Involving young people in efforts to end oppressive discrimination of all kinds.

## 1. Informing

### Exchange information

Provide ample opportunities for young people to tell each other their life stories. Use the support group formats (described in Chapter 5: The Core Elements of the Counseling Component) with a focus on experience and ideas related to race, class, sexual orientation, and culture.

### Study and discuss

The history of the local community, the life stories of the elders in the community, the history of the population groups represented in the program or surrounding areas, the history of successful struggles for opportunity, freedom, and equality—all of these should be built into the curriculum. This study provides enormous opportunity for appreciating and respecting each other's history.

### Explore internalized negative messages

Help young people identify what negative messages about their own cultural group they have internalized. When people understand that these negative ideas and the causes of many negative behaviors originally came from the outside, and can be overcome, it helps. When people begin to understand that they may be mistreating people in their own group in the same ways that used to be done to them from the outside, they begin to stop. Help them share their insights across groups.



## **Present a holistic concept for understanding systematic discrimination against any particular group**

If a young person is asked what racism is, he will most likely respond that it is prejudice or discrimination against people of color by white people. The understanding is often focused on interpersonal prejudice. It can be helpful for young people to have a more analytical understanding that can be applied to many forms of discrimination. The following explanation of racism has been used successfully in several YouthBuild programs. It can be applied to all the major dimensions of diversity to understand the dynamics of discrimination.

### **Ideological racism**

At the heart of any consistent mistreatment of any group is the idea that one group is somehow better than another, and in some measure has the right to control the other group. This idea may be elaborated in many ways—the group is more intelligent, harder working, stronger, more capable, nobler, more deserving, more advanced, superior, and so on. The opposite qualities are often attributed to the other group—people from this group are stupid, lazy, weak, incompetent, worthless, less deserving, backward, inferior, and so on. These false and judgmental ideas provide a rationalization for injustice.

### **Institutional racism**

The idea that one group is better than another group and has the right to control the other gets embedded in the institutions of the society—the laws, the legal system and police practice, the educational system and schools, hiring policies, housing development, media images, and political power.

### **Interpersonal racism**

The idea that one group is better than another and has the right to control the other, which gets structured into institutions and laws, also gives permission, reinforcement, and even protection for individual members of the dominant group to personally disrespect or mistreat individuals in the other group. Interpersonal racism is what some white people do to people of color up close—racist jokes, stereotypes, beatings and harassment, threats—the whole range of personal acts of discrimination. Similarly, interpersonal sexism is what some men do to women—the sexual abuse and harassment, the violence directed at women, belittling or ignoring of women's thinking, pornography, sexist jokes. Interpersonal homophobia occurs when individuals beat up or ostracize homosexuals.

Most people in the dominant group have learned negative messages about the other group and consider their attitudes towards the other group quite normal and acceptable. Such attitudes are often reinforced by the cultural norms.

## **Internalized racism**

The fourth way societal mistreatment works is within the groups of people who suffer the most from the discrimination. People internalize the ideology of inferiority— they see it reflected in the institutions, experience disrespect interpersonally from members of the dominant group, and eventually come to internalize the negative messages about themselves. If we have been told we are stupid and worthless and have been treated as if we were all our lives, then it is not surprising that we would come to believe it. Acting out internalized negative messages runs the gamut from passive powerlessness to violent aggression directed at people like oneself or, for that matter, at oneself.

It should be clear that none of these four aspects of racism exist separately. They are connected and interrelated. Discussion of ideological, institutionalized, interpersonal, and internalized aspects of oppression and discrimination can expand the students' understanding.

Our definition of racism implies that the attitude of prejudice is accompanied by the possession of power or dominance in the society, resulting in oppression. It omits the fact that the oppressed group may have become hostile and judgmental toward the dominant group, resulting in a generalized prejudice that interferes with mutual respect and acceptance. Celebration of all cultures and separation of the individual person from the misdeeds of others of the same background are essential for building understanding and community.

## **2. Healing**

Information and analysis can be helpful, but young people often carry significant emotional hurt from experiences due to their racial, class, and cultural identities. This can weigh on them heavily; they have to try to learn, grow, and sometimes just survive while carrying this load. The pain sometimes boils over into rage, or sometimes shows itself in depression or hopelessness. It makes them less effective in life than they would be otherwise. If the YouthBuild staff have the skill and training to provide times and spaces for them to acknowledge and even release some of that pain, it can be very important. They do need to find safe places to share how they feel.

As previously noted, researchers have noticed that young people growing up in poor areas that include increasing violence show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, which was first studied in victims of war. The symptoms include anger and rage, depression, defeatism, inability to focus, isolation, distrust, and feelings of powerlessness.

A YouthBuild program is not formally a therapeutic community, but these hurts will inevitably spill into the program. The program can decide to assist young people to do some of the emotional healing work needed. One of the difficulties is that staff members might be afraid of their own feelings of rage, grief, or despair. Sometimes staff might be afraid to stir these things up in the young people. Their explosive feelings around past hurts are tough to handle if staff members have not had a lot of practice and if they are not able to deal with their own painful emotion. It is often advisable to bring in an outside facilitator skilled in handling these dialogues.

Programs can set up a variety of counseling situations focused on cultural identity issues. With the counselor(s) or outside facilitator taking the lead, the program can provide some or all of the following:

- One-to-one counseling sessions in which young people can release their feelings of anger, depression, confusion, loneliness, and powerlessness
- Support groups or rap groups focused on specific racial or cultural identities
- The teaching of peer counseling to better equip participants to help each other
- A consistent program-wide practice of validating and appreciating young people to counteract low self-esteem
- Promotion of positive images from the backgrounds of the youth participants
- Celebration of cultural pride and history of all backgrounds in the program

Explore the personal aspects of culture through group sharing. Find ways of having the young people talk about what is good and what is difficult about being from whatever backgrounds they are from. Become familiar with and learn about the racial, cultural, ethnic, and sexual diversity—build it into the classroom and community meetings. Take time to teach and celebrate each other's special holidays. Some YouthBuild programs include an obviously wide range of cultures—Southeast Asian, Native American, Latino, African American, Caucasian, Asian. If the program deliberately focuses on each culture and values it, then each young person can become aware of the richness and the specific conditions of each group. Even within a group that is seemingly of the same background, there are often rich differences. An all-white group might include Irish, Italian, Russian, and Swedish people. An all-black group might include African Americans, Dominicans, Haitians, Africans, Jamaicans, and Trinidadians. An all-Latino group might include Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexicans, Chicanos, Salvadorans, and Colombians. An all-Asian group might include young people from Vietnam, Laos, Singapore, Korea, China, etc. An all-Native American group might include young people from many different tribes since there are hundreds of tribes in the United States.

One YouthBuild program had six or seven refugees from Sudan in the program. The majority of the other participants were poor and white. The Sudanese young people carried themselves with a certain pride and did well academically, since they grew up in a country run by blacks where education was stressed. The white young people thought the Sudanese were “tourists.” Misunderstanding and conflict ensued. So the program invited those of the Sudanese students who were interested in sharing their stories to sit on a panel and tell what life had been like in the Sudan and why they left. When the white students heard about the horrors of decades of war in Sudan, the tragedies suffered by these students and their families, and the painful exile from their homeland, understanding and respect was built.

Another program had several lesbian participants who were confident enough to openly share being gay with the rest of the students. Their matter-of-fact communication and willingness to answer questions lessened the homophobic jokes and comments, and countered some of the stereotypes of gay people that the other participants had carried into the program.

There is much diversity that is not so obvious. Religious backgrounds, physical conditions, types of parents, prison and mental hospital experience, the difference between being raised in a rural versus an urban culture—all of these bear on a person's identity and people find it a relief to share these things in a safe context.

Do not underestimate the difference between urban and rural students' points of view. We have watched them approach each other with enormous wariness at national conferences. It always requires extra attention to make sure the rural students, including black, white, Latino, and Native American students, feel comfortable in the environment dominated by an urban culture.

Even when program staff lack the skill or confidence to create a context in which students can share their feelings about past mistreatment, they can always create a culture in which different backgrounds are respected and celebrated, studied and understood. This, in itself, has a healing effect as the defensiveness dissolves and a sense of safe community is created.

### 3. Coping

No matter how good their information is or how much healing they have done, when young people walk out that door, they will continue to meet difficulties. Young people need to develop effective ways of coping with external barriers and stereotypes. There are many ways a program can help them deal more effectively with these obstacles. For example, a program can help students in:

- Learning to handle sexually harassing behavior
- Studying their legal rights in cases of discrimination
- Learning to act or dress to counteract stereotypes
- Practicing different ways of responding to insensitive jokes or comments
- Role playing various ways of handling a racist or patronizing boss without getting fired, or a hostile policeman without being arrested
- Learning to develop personal allies who will defend or speak up for them

Coping is not just about handling external obstacles and discrimination; it is also about handling one's own feelings. The feelings of inadequacy and isolation, of being overwhelmed or very unsure of oneself, continue on in many situations. Learning to recognize and name them is helpful well beyond the end of the program.

### 4. Eliminating

Understanding, healing, and coping are good steps for survival, but young people emerging as leaders need tools for eliminating injustice and prejudice and the conviction that progress can be made.

The program's first goal is to try to eliminate injustice, discrimination, and prejudice within the program, creating an oasis in which students participate creating and sustaining, and that gives them a lasting sense of what a just and caring world, in which all people are welcome and appreciated, could be like.

Involve the young people in tackling the issues. Engage the young people in generating ideas for building a program where racial and cultural differences are explicitly respected and misunderstandings resolved.

Interrupt interpersonal mistreatment. After discussing some of the personal effects of being mistreated or disrespected because of their cultural identities, gain the agreement of the young people to implement a policy of interrupting any racist, sexist, homophobic or insulting comments, slurs, jokes, or interactions among program participants or staff.

The second goal is to challenge students to get involved in improving the world beyond the program. Engaging young people in the discussion of what it would take to improve conditions in their communities and helping them become actively engaged in finding solutions to these problems is important. Introducing them to local civil or human rights organizations, participating in community forums on important issues, enlisting local community leaders as mentors for young people interested in larger issues, studying the newspaper and writing letters to the newspaper, writing and presenting position papers on community issues—these have all been done and are all a natural part of a social studies curriculum.

Beyond their own involvement, the young people will feel encouraged if they see the YouthBuild program itself taking a stand in the wider community on a relevant issue. Numerous local or national issues will present themselves during the course of a program year. Some will demand attention, while others will require a conscious decision to stretch the program's resources to get involved. The young people can learn how to act more powerfully, think more critically, and solve problems more effectively to the extent they are involved. Discuss the issue widely in the program. Ask young people how they think the program should respond to the issue. Communicate information, successes, and next steps often. Use it as an ongoing learning experience.

## **Interactive approach**

Of course, understanding, healing, coping, and eliminating injustice are interdependent. Doing concerted work in any part can affect the other three. For example, for a young person to learn about the contributions of his people can itself be a healing process, and in turn give him increased information and confidence to handle a racial slur or discrimination incident more effectively.

## Some Multicultural Counseling Issues

### Racial issues

To many students of color, white people represent all the negative things done to their people not only historically, but currently. Largely because of the social and economic differences that separate most whites from many people of color, many of the young people will have no or very little positive experience with white people. Further, although some of them will have had very positive experiences with individual white people in the various professions, some of them will have had very negative experiences with particular white police officers, teachers, or social workers. The mental picture they have from the stories they've heard and some of their own negative encounters with the legal, social services, or educational system may be the only way some of them know whites.

Given the power of the notion of individuality so cherished by our society, it may be hard for many white staff or participants to understand how individual white people can be blamed for the collective and historical acts of white people. It is equally hard for people of color, who want to be valued for their own unique contribution, to be viewed negatively because of the color of their skin and reacted to as part of a group, rather than as individuals, especially when that group is stereotyped as malcontents who lack the stomach for hard work or the intellectual ability to be successful in a meritocracy. Most people of all backgrounds would rather be seen as individuals than as objects upon which are projected hurtful ideas and notions.

Counselors should be prepared for expressions of anger or frustration on the part of students of color as a result of experiences of racism. Counselors can help students understand that, while justified, this anger can sometimes be expressed in ways that are self-destructive, self-defeating, or harmful to other people, and that the YouthBuild program strives to create a community that values all its members and treats everyone fairly. Of course, when the program is working properly, everyone does in fact build genuine respect and appreciation for each other and stereotypes are overcome.

Counselors and all staff working with diverse or oppressed groups and striving to be culturally sensitive need to make special efforts to acknowledge and correct their own biases and predispositions and to learn about the cultures represented in the program. For example, it is not reasonable to assume that a fourth-generation African American has a great deal in common with a new immigrant from Ghana. Both may experience racism due to their skin color, but even if both are poor, these two young people are very likely to hold different views on many matters, and react to the same stimuli in very different ways. Similarly, a counselor working with Hispanic young people who happen to be Puerto Ricans living in New York City would have a distinctly different experience if he were to then work with southwestern youths of Mexican descent. A counselor working with Hopi Indians might find that they have quite different perspectives from Ute Indians, and that the proper attitude of respect is not to assume that all Native American Indians hold similar viewpoints or share the same culture.

## Examples of cultural differences

Counselors will find it useful, when counseling students from different cultures, to have an understanding of the ways different cultures may relate to issues. For example, according to Thomas Kochman in his classic, *Black and White Styles in Conflict* (The University of Chicago Press, 1983):



The differing black and white conventions of aggressive behavior have . . . implications for black and white communication. . . . When opponents become angry and engage in verbal dispute, whites feel that they are reducing the danger of violence by keeping the antagonists apart. This is based on their view that struggle is basically divisive and that public arguments, if not stopped, will inevitably escalate into violence. Blacks, however, believe that personal differences can only be worked out by an engagement becoming heated and abusive. To stop people from arguing is to deny the struggle and therefore the possibility of reconciling differences. Consequently, blacks conceive the danger of violence as greater when people are not communicating with each other than when they are, no matter how loud, angry, or abusive their arguments may become.

Of course, this quote should not be construed to mean that heated and abusive arguments should be the tone set or allowed in the program. This is an example used to remind the counselor to be alert and nonjudgmental about variations in attitudes among students or between students and staff.

Another area in which counselors need to be culturally sensitive is working with newly immigrated groups. According to Duryea and Grundison (*Conflict and Culture*), Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong hesitate to create problems by complaining and will make an effort to avoid conflict, argument, and confrontation. Legal action would be a last resort for many of them. Sacrificing one's own feelings to help avoid conflict is considered polite and fighting is shameful.

Many Asian families feel that "good" families live in harmony and mutual respect. They are not prone to admit that conflict exists in their family. Asians have a strong desire to ensure privacy and save face, and avoidance of community friction is especially important. According to Duryea and Grundison, Asians believe that family problems should stay within the family and will not offer help to a friend in a dispute unless asked. In disputes, Asians will try to settle the dispute themselves, or, if this doesn't work, they will seek help from family and close friends. If YouthBuild counselors counsel Asian students, they should remember that shame at disclosing one's problems is of such concern that confidentiality is especially crucial to the development of a trusting relationship.

In many Asian families, children have an attitude of reverence and duty to family members, especially elders. In traditional Asian cultures, women are expected to endure, suffer, and struggle, and be patient, tender, thrifty, and hardworking, while men are expected to resolve any dispute within the family. These are all matters of which counselors of Asians should be aware. The respect offered men and elders and the deference expected of women in Asian society are markedly different from what is expected in American families, and this can be the cause of great consternation in recently immigrated families.

The above issues are offered simply as examples of the wide range of possible differences between cultural groups that counselors should be sensitive to learning and respecting.

## Internalized disrespect

Unless one has had similar experiences, it may be difficult to understand the confusion in the lives of some YouthBuild students. Most live in great poverty, without socially adept adults to guide their way. Many have internalized serious negative beliefs about themselves, their families and loved ones, and their communities. In order to turn their lives around they are going to need to develop trust and appreciation for the counselors, case managers, and other staff members in YouthBuild programs.

For many students, their lives are in almost complete disarray, and in some cases all that may stand between them and the street is your willingness to listen to them with an open heart, without rejecting them for their looks, their lives, or their ways, while at the same time redirecting them.

Finally, remember that black young people, in particular, feel the effects of America's racial history. They live with it every day in the lives of their families and loved ones and often they move to act out their reactions and their entrapment in that history. Whites may fail to understand that the black community is aware of how the historical past lives in them while the white community may be entirely unconscious of how the past lives on. For black young people, especially those still living in poverty, the past lives in the memories of loved ones who tell stories of how their friends and family members' ancestors were treated: "This happened to my grandmother or my mother and what I learn happened to them I continue to feel and experience in my own life."

Similarly, Native Americans did not choose their position in American society; they were coerced through conquest onto reservations and into poverty. Their land was taken from them and their language and culture denied to them in myriad ways. Preserving their existence as a people, within any tribe and any Indian nation, has been an incredible struggle, against odds. There is no Indian young person who is unaware of this history. The results of continuous oppression of Native Americans are that by numerous statistical measures they suffer much greater levels of alcoholism, suicide, and various diseases than any other group. Their viewpoint on society is different from any other group. Gaining trust takes awareness of their history and a long-term commitment to justice.



# Chapter 11

## Sexual Harassment



YouthBuild

## Overview

Operating as both work sites and educational settings, YouthBuild programs have a general need for staff knowledge and thoughtful preparation regarding sexual harassment. Since YouthBuild offers training to women in a traditionally male-dominated field, and women are a distinct minority in the program, sensitivity to these issues is particularly important.

Sexual harassment occurs frequently enough to warrant attention in this Manual. Many problems can be avoided by being well-informed and clear about expectations and limits. Many times staff and students do not have a clear idea about what constitutes sexual harassment, and often programs have not established clear policies in advance of facing incidents.

Although the majority of sexual harassment victims are women, men may be sexually harassed as well. There are also cases of same-sex sexual harassment. For the purposes of explanation, this chapter assumes that the victim of sexual harassment is female. Following is general background information on sexual harassment to prepare counselors and directors for their role in educating staff and students and setting policies to create an environment free of sexual harassment.

## What Is Sexual Harassment?

A lot of the problems around sexual harassment occur because many people are unclear about what sexual harassment is. In practical terms, *sexual harassment* is any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that causes interference in one's life. The most important elements in this definition are *unwelcome* and *behavior of a sexual nature*. The term *unwelcome* means that the action or behavior being complained about was unsolicited and nonreciprocal. In other words, the person complaining did not invite the behavior. What is unwelcome is determined by the recipient of the behavior, not the one doing the behavior. It is the impact of the behavior and not the intent of the person doing it that creates liability for the harasser and employer.

The second element, *behavior of a sexual nature*, includes any conduct that refers to sex. This could include using sex-related language or telling sexual jokes. It may include using terms such as *babe*, *baby*, *honey*, or *sweetheart*, or making comments about body parts. (It should be recognized that the above terms can also be considered innocent terms of affection.) Behavior of a sexual nature may include leering and ogling, and clearly includes any unwanted touch such as patting, hugging, or pinching. Finally, *behavior of a sexual nature* includes any request for sexual favors in return for favors or benefits.

Sexual harassment covers a range of conduct. An employee who is told that she must sleep with her supervisor to keep her job or receive a promotion is clearly a victim of sexual harassment. An employee whose coworkers regularly tell offensive jokes or who constantly belittle her or refer to her in sexist terms is also experiencing sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is different from other issues because of the deeply personal and emotional nature of the problem. For many women, sexual harassment is a deeply personal affront. Until very recently, sexual harassment was accepted as an unavoidable fact of life that women just had to put up with. As more women have entered the workplace in positions of authority and power they have been less willing to tolerate different treatment based on their gender and are demanding an end to sexual harassment.

## The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Courts look to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for guidance on matters of sexual harassment (<http://www.eeoc.gov>).

It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person's sex. Harassment can include "sexual harassment" or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

- Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.
- Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex.
- Although the law doesn't prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).
- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.
- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

The two forms of sexual harassment described below evolve from these guidelines and court decisions.

### Quid pro quo

*Quid pro quo* is a Latin term that means *you do something for me and I will do something for you*. Quid pro quo could mean sex for grades, promotion, favors, or special treatment. Quid pro quo harassment also exists if the victim is threatened with some penalty if she does not comply with the request for sexual favors.

One single event of quid pro quo harassment constitutes a violation.

### Hostile environment

Hostile environment harassment is the most misunderstood form of sexual harassment. For practical purposes, any sexually oriented conduct or infliction of a sexually oriented atmosphere can be grounds for a hostile environment complaint. This area is subject to misunderstanding because men and women can often interpret the same behavior in different ways. As outlined above, what a man may consider innocent, a woman may consider offensive. Thus, it is important to remember that courts now favor the victim's point of view.

Unlike quid pro quo harassment, hostile environment harassment requires a consistent pattern of behavior. A single event does not usually constitute a violation of the law. In order for the behavior to be considered to have created a hostile environment, the behavior must be “sufficiently pervasive and severe.” Courts look to see how frequently the behavior occurred, whether the conduct was hostile and patently offensive, whether others joined in the harassing behavior, and especially whether the alleged victim joined in the behavior. The EEOC takes the position that the more severe the behavior, the less the need to show a repetitive series of incidents. As one court stated, “A play cannot be understood on the basis of some of its scenes but only on its entire performance. Similarly, a discrimination analysis must concentrate not on individual incidents but on the overall scenario.” (*Robinson v. Jacksonville Shipyards, Inc.*, 1991) See:

<http://www.sba.oakland.edu/Faculty/york/Sexual%20Harassment%20Policy%20Jacksonville%20Shipyards.pdf>

However, even one incident of extreme behavior has the potential to be determined to have created a hostile environment.

## Examples of sexual harassment

Following is a list of behavior that judges, arbitrators, juries, and employers have determined are sexual harassment when they are unwelcome. This list is not meant to include all behavior that might be considered sexual harassment.

- A teacher singles out a female student and makes sexual innuendoes about that student’s body.
- A teacher seats students who are attractive to him in the front of the classroom and stares at their bodies.
- A counselor asks a student to meet him after school on the pretext of doing class work, but makes sexual advances toward that student instead.
- During a presentation, a presenter shows slides that are sexual and emphasize a female’s anatomy out of context with the topic being presented.
- A woman talks with a young woman peer who is a new employee. The older woman tells the new employee how pretty she is, that men are not good enough for her, and that she likes her hair. She touches her hair, neck, and face; invites her over for supper; and brings her little gifts.
- A workplace is pervaded with sexual slurs, insults, and innuendoes, and a female employee is personally the subject of verbal sexual harassment by her peers.
- A manager has a three-foot poster of a woman clothed in a brief negligee taped on his office wall. When women come into his office to talk with him, at his desk, the poster is directly behind them.
- A manager responsible for receiving sexual harassment complaints has a puzzle cube covered with a nude woman on his desk.
- A supervisor tells an employee the reason she has a skin rash, headache, and backache is because she does not get enough, or she gets too much, sex.
- Employees play a sexually explicit computer game.

**Verbal harassment**

- Whistling or cat calls
- Making sexual comments about a person's body
- Turning work discussions to sexual topics
- Asking about sexual fantasies, preferences, or history
- Asking personal questions about social or sexual life
- Repeatedly asking out a person who is not interested
- Making kissing sounds, howling, and smacking lips
- Telling lies or spreading rumors about a person's sex life

**Nonverbal harassment**

- Looking a person up and down
- Staring at someone
- Blocking a person's path, hindering the other person's movement
- Following the person
- Displaying sexually suggestive visuals
- Making facial expressions such as winking, throwing kisses, or licking lips
- Making sexual gestures with hands or through body movements
- Offering unwanted letters, gifts, or other materials of a sexual nature
- Invading someone's personal space: standing closer than appropriate for the work being done, or standing particularly close to a person of the opposite sex

**Physical harassment**

- Giving a massage around the neck or shoulders
- Touching the person's clothing, hair, or body
- Hanging around a person
- Hugging, kissing, patting, or stroking
- Touching or rubbing oneself sexually around another person
- Standing close or brushing up against a person
- Touching, patting, goosing, caressing, or fondling
- Tearing, pulling, or yanking clothing
- Exposing oneself

## “Reasonable woman” standard

Courts have largely determined that sexual harassment should be described from the perspective of the person being harassed. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (<http://www.eeoc.gov/>) advocates that the standard for determining sexual harassment should be a “reasonable woman” standard when the victim is a woman. Many courts agree. As one court noted:



(M)any women share common concerns which men do not necessarily share. For example, because women are disproportionately victims of rape and sexual assault, women have a stronger incentive to be concerned with sexual behavior. Women who are victims of mild forms of sexual harassment may understandably worry whether a harasser’s conduct is merely a prelude to violent sexual assault. Men, who are rarely victims of sexual assault, may view sexual conduct in a vacuum without a full appreciation of the social setting or the underlying threat of violence that a woman may perceive.

*(Ellison v. Brady, 924 F.2d 872 (9th Cir. 1991))*

With more frequency, courts are finding sex-related comments and conduct to be sexual harassment; however, these cases are still difficult to win. The ambivalence even among women about what constitutes sexual harassment makes it hard to prove. A person who perceives herself to be the victim of sexual harassment must be prepared to provide evidence of a particularly offensive incident or that the conduct is severe and pervasive in the workplace. A victim must be prepared to prove that the sexual conduct she complains about is unreasonable and that she is not being hypersensitive.

## Reporting is difficult

Women who are sexually harassed may have difficulty reporting the behavior. They may feel guilt, shame, embarrassment, anger, and fear of being labeled a troublemaker or hypersensitive. Many women keep silent because they distrust the procedures or the persons in charge of handling their complaint. They fear that the system is stacked against them and that no one will believe them.

For years, women have been socialized to believe that they have the responsibility to set the bounds of closeness in relationships with men and so when harassed blame themselves. They fear that others will think they “asked for it” or that the person they complain to might say, “No one else has ever complained about Joe before,” as if the fault must lie with the woman and not with Joe.

Women often fear that they will not be taken seriously and that reporting the harassment may make more trouble for them than if they simply endure the harassment. They may fear that the situation may be looked at as simply a personality conflict. A woman may hesitate to complain because she does not want to get her harasser in trouble. In some male-dominated professions and work places, it may be still generally acceptable for a man to openly admit and be proud of the fact that he makes passes at women.

Victims of sexual harassment may feel self-conscious, lose confidence, and feel afraid and helpless. Sometimes they experience nervousness, loss of sleep, uncontrollable anger, and crying. They worry that they may lose their jobs if they say something about the harasser or that they may be ridiculed by their coworkers. Many are afraid of the stigmatization that might occur and are reluctant to draw attention to themselves. Some women feel that it is demeaning to have to seek personal protection for themselves and prefer to handle it alone.

In YouthBuild programs, if a student is sexually harassed by staff, there is usually a very intense fear that if she complains she will be fired and will lose what she sees as her one chance to get her life on track.

There is a great deal of ambivalence even among women about what specific behaviors constitute sexual harassment. Some women consider behavior such as touching, grabbing, or hugging as sexual harassment. Some women consider comments about how they look in their clothes or, “My, you have on a lovely sweater today” to be a compliment, while others may be discomforted and offended by such remarks.

## **What a victim should do**

Of course, the first thing a person who feels harassed should do is directly communicate in a non hostile manner to the harasser that she does not welcome, appreciate, enjoy, or want his attention, overtures, offensive remarks, touch, or whatever. She should explain what she does not like, and ask that it not occur any more. Sometimes simple communication can clear up a situation in which the other person simply misunderstands appropriate behavior or the attitudes of the other person.

But in a situation where this has failed, and the behavior continues, and the victim feels it necessary to build a case that will persuade the big boss, the personnel committee, or the court that real harassment has occurred and must be stopped, the best evidence a person can submit is that she let the person know that the behavior complained about was unwelcome and that in spite of this notice, the harasser continued the conduct.

A victim of harassment should promptly tell other people about the harassment. At a YouthBuild program, a victim should tell staff and follow the procedures of the program regarding responding to sexual harassment. Staff may help the victim document the harassing behavior in writing. Telling others will provide valuable witnesses if the victim decides to take the matter to the courts. Witnesses can verify that the victim was angry or upset about the behavior. Failure to write the details down or to tell others about the harassment may lead the court to believe that the victim was not really upset by the behavior.

## Reactions to accusations of sexual harassment

Often, men questioned about sexual harassment react with fear, anger, confusion, indignation, or resentment. When many men entered the workforce, sexual innuendo and joking were common on the job. There are cultural as well as generational differences among men about what is acceptable behavior. Some men do not consider some forms of what is now considered sexual harassment as wrong. The reporting of sexual harassment might cause a stifling effect in the workplace. Some men begin to worry that any comment to a woman might be misunderstood and hesitate to compliment a woman on her appearance for fear of running the risk of a lawsuit. The goal of awareness is not to inhibit the development of relaxed and warm mutual relationships.

Sexual harassment is unwanted, non-mutual, unacceptable behavior and is about intimidation and the abuse of power. For men (or women) who may be fearful and wonder how they should conduct themselves, the best advice for them is to use common sense. They can be friendly and personable to members of the opposite sex without being offensive. Some rough guidelines might be:

- Would you do or say this in front of your spouse or parents?
- Would you say or do these things to a friend or coworker of the same sex?
- How would you feel if a female or male member of your family were subjected to this same treatment?
- Does what you are doing or saying need to be said or done?
- If you are interested in someone romantically, be honest and say so.
- If you are rebuffed in your romantic approach, back off and let the other person initiate further involvement.
- When in doubt, ask.



## What the Program Should Do

### Adopt a specific sexual harassment policy

Developing good written policies and implementing well-thought-out procedures about sexual harassment is the best way to protect a YouthBuild program against it. Every program needs to develop a written policy that makes it clear what behaviors will not be tolerated. When an employee or student feels that sexual harassment has occurred, the employee needs clear procedures to follow and trained individuals available who can give confidential advice about sexual harassment. A well-drafted policy can be incorporated into personnel manuals and student contracts, and should be displayed in some highly visible public place. During orientations, students and staff should be notified about the consequences of sexual harassment and the process to follow if someone feels she is a victim of sexual harassment. All staff and students need to be instructed about how to file a sexual harassment complaint.

Every YouthBuild program needs a formal complaint process handled by people trained to recognize sexual harassment and to talk sensitively to people who perceive themselves to be victims. Having women on staff who can play this role is helpful. Programs need to provide a high level of comfort for people who want to lodge complaints of sexual harassment or even just talk about their experiences in the workplace.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

A sample sexual harassment policy can be found at the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

### Train staff and youth

Workshops on the definition of sexual harassment, the laws surrounding it, and how to handle it personally, are an extremely effective way of establishing a common awareness. All organizations are advised to do this, and there are many lawyers and women's advocates trained to provide such workshops.

Since issues between men and women are so important in the lives of the students, such workshops should be part of a larger series of workshops, rap groups, and support groups related to the establishment of mutually respectful and supportive relationships between men and women.

Often it is not the recognizable sexual harassment that must be addressed, but the more ambiguous, slightly inappropriate behavior. This type of behavior is not likely to be challenged as illegal sexual harassment, but it still should be addressed as inappropriate and the individual who is seen to be doing it should be counseled about its impact.

## Review the general tone of the workplace

An organization needs to look carefully at its workplace and classrooms to see if tensions exist between individuals or groups that seem to be sex-based. Are there complaints or grievances about hiring, work assignments, promotion, or grades? Look to see if there is a lot of gossiping about employees' and students' personal lives and behavior. Do you hear boasting about sexual behavior in the organization? Are there some tasks regularly assigned to women and others to men? Are men and women equally represented when it comes to jobs that are seen as important?

If a staff member believes that there might be a problem in the organization, she should meet with others who share this concern. Together, the staff can talk about the issues facing the organization and figure out what needs to be done to eliminate the potential for sexual harassment in the environment.

Set generally good policies:

- Write a short, direct statement that says that sexual harassment will not be tolerated in the program.
- Make it clear that sexual harassment is illegal.
- Give clear definitions and rules.
- Define what specific behavior is prohibited and list some specific examples.
- Make it clear that retaliation for complaints will not be tolerated.
- Give guidelines about how to report harassment.
- Provide training to staff and youth.

# Chapter 12

## Building a Positive Program Culture



YouthBuild

## Overview

The two most important methods of preventing negative behavior and violence are establishing a well-defined set of expectations and rules, and a context in which students feel safe and respected. Note that the word *expectations* appears before the word *rules*. It is always better to try and guide behavior through positive incentives and expectations than through reactions to broken rules.

To the extent that the program creates a safe culture of mutual respect and caring, negative behavior and violence tend to disappear as the fear and tension that trigger them dissolve. One of the factors in creating this culture is the small size of each program, which creates a manageably sized community in which everyone can know everyone else.



## Expectations in YouthBuild's Counseling Program

Setting a positive tone is crucial in every aspect of a constructive process. YouthBuild programs should establish high standards and expectations for staff and students. Some expectations are generic and apply to all aspects of YouthBuild, and are key to building the program culture in which individuals feel supported to grow and change.

The general attitudes expected of people involved in YouthBuild include, but are not limited to:

- We are involved in the program because we have decided to work towards fulfilling our potential through education, constructive action, and positive relationships.
- We are committed to building a mutually respectful and caring community in which all members are supported in reaching their goals.
- We will treat every person with dignity and respect.
- We will strive for our collective good while honoring individual needs.
- We are committed to honest and trusting relationships in which staff are clear about what is and is not confidential, and students are encouraged to express their true feelings and opinions.
- We hope to establish a context in which everyone genuinely cares about each other as human beings and fellow community members.
- We accept the need to express our feelings in a constructive way.
- We will act responsibly by being aware of our feelings and thinking things through before taking action.
- We will use the tools YouthBuild offers to further our development.

Expectations and rules are part of what is referred to as *social norms*. Every organization or society establishes a set of norms to assure its ability to function. Students and program staff must have, as part of YouthBuild's norms, reasonable clarity about the boundaries of acceptable behavior. This is important for every organization, and is particularly vital for young people whose home or street life may be chaotic and without clear limits.

## Ways to Build a Positive Program Culture

### Basic program contract

Many programs have chosen to develop a basic contract between the program and each student, defining the expectations, agreements, and consequences for violating agreements. Within the contract, some programs have established what some therapeutic communities refer to as cardinal rules. This is usually a small set of rules that if violated have nonnegotiable consequences. The most typical set includes:

- No violence or threats of violence
- No possession of drugs or weapons
- No sexual or racial harassment

The specific consequences for violating one of these rules may include expulsion from a program. This does not mean that the person is not able to re-enter, but the conditions for re-entry need to be clearly stated. Most programs that utilize cardinal rules have as the ultimate consequence (usually reserved for multiple violations or especially severe violations) termination from the program without possibility of re-entry.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Samples of YouthBuild program contracts can be found at the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

### Managing anger and violence

Despite the best efforts of any program, anger will erupt occasionally and may escalate to violence. Violence within a YouthBuild program can occasionally occur, and staff will need a consensus on how to handle it if it does.

YouthBuild and other group-based organizations are ideal settings for efforts at anger management and violence prevention or reduction. Many of the group processes that are suggested in this Manual are ideally suited for this purpose. The effect of group process, role modeling, and positive peer support (and sometimes peer pressure) has been shown to be very important.

It is important that program staff undergo training and self-assessment about their own reactions to anger or violence. Staff will do better if they are aware of ways their own anger can be provoked. For both students and staff it is useful to discuss the fact that anger can be produced by an offense in the present, but that what occurs in the present may also be triggering much more intense and gripping feelings from the past that are difficult to understand or control. Situations in the present that resemble terrible experiences from the past can seem to generate rage—or grief, or powerlessness, or shame, or whatever feelings were associated with the past experience—that escalates quickly beyond expectations. In order to understand the intensity of the emotional response in the present, the counselor will need to help the young person understand its origins. This may enable her to be less susceptible to its power when the feelings associated with that past hurt are triggered again by current events. This process is a long one and will not take place by instructing the student, but only by helping her understand the difference between the present experience and the original experience.

The staff's ability to understand, manage, and express their own anger in a reasonable or constructive manner is crucial in role modeling for students. One of the basic goals of violence prevention is the ability to gauge one's stress level and deal with it appropriately.

The following example illustrates the importance of staff preparation for violence:



One time a 24-year-old ex-convict male student beat up a female student. It happened on a snowy day when the program was having a slow start. The male went into the hallway where the woman was and punched her and started kicking her. The staff that were present were able to pull him off. They found out later that she had a crush on him. They were friends and were possibly going to date, but she was obsessed with him and started calling him at all hours of the night. His mother is sick, dying of cancer. When the girl would call at all times of the night, the calls would wake up the mother. When the male student came into school that day, he just walked up to her and decked her. The students responded that they thought that he did the right thing because “she was a pain in the ass.”

The staff wanted to know how we were supposed to deal with this. We feel that we cannot deal with this alone. Then we realized that the other students in the program must have been traumatized. We called in the local community crisis response team. The team did not go into the specifics but did talk about the feelings that come up when you go through violent trauma. “It’s okay,” they said, “to have those feelings.” They asked the students to talk about how they had dealt with trauma before. They gave the students an opportunity to come from their own lives. They let them know that trauma happens and whether we know it or not, it affects us.

After the incident, a few of the rap groups allowed the students to talk about their feelings. We also met with the violence prevention coordinator for the city. “There is no quick fix,” we were told. We talked about language and how people underestimate the power of language.

A big learning for the program occurred when we realized that the staff was traumatized, angry, and feeling helpless. Then we got together in groups to talk about our feelings about how things were handled and how to handle them in the future.

## Anger management and violence prevention

Preventing violence means learning to manage anger by helping participants train themselves to be aware of the stimuli that trigger difficulty in thinking something through, and then dealing with the unwanted feelings by expressing them in a nondestructive manner.

It is a mistake to try and keep people from expressing their feelings. See this example:



Sometimes the students become abusive or confrontational, so you put boundaries on how far they can go, but you don't kick them out of the program. You don't let the behavior go to extremes, but these young people are angry because of the circumstances of their lives. We know that they are going to curse and swear and fight and we put boundaries on the ways they can do these things, but we don't tell them to just suppress the anger. That doesn't help anything. But the boundaries keep them from becoming too extreme. They know that if they go too far they will suffer the consequences, maybe a loss of pay, but you don't get rid of the person. Just guide the person to change their behavior.

We do lots of interaction when anger surfaces. We might ask, for example, "Why are you feeling so angry?" We try to help them understand what they did wrong. We know that the young people will do it again, but you just stick with it. Help them understand that it is not good for them to suppress their feelings but get them to express their feelings in particular ways, channel their energy. But, most of all, the staff understands that the students must have opportunities to let the anger out. They can't just bottle up their feelings.

One counselor speaks of anger in this way:



People behave in the manner in which they know how to get their needs met, and can only change if they recognize what need they are trying to meet and what behavior will help them meet that need in an appropriate manner. People with anger-control problems need to be taught how to get in touch with their other emotions and ask what emotion is being hidden by the anger. In my work I teach the core emotions of mad, sad, glad, and afraid, then ask what emotion did you respond with and how would you have preferred to respond. I also use a problem-solving process to teach a different path. It goes like this:

What is the problem?

What is most likely to happen if there is no resolution?

What is the most desirable resolution?

What can I do for a 50–50 chance of success?

What can I do for a less than 50–50 chance?

What is the least desirable outcome?

What will I actually do?

Even programs that practice anger management well will occasionally experience violent situations. Program staff should be ready to respond quickly when a violent incident occurs. Immediate action must be taken to safeguard staff and students and to ensure that the incident doesn't undermine the goals and accomplishments of the program. Although a violent incident will be upsetting to students, it may be more upsetting if students perceive that staff can't respond effectively. Many students have experienced or witnessed violence prior to coming to YouthBuild. It is important to demonstrate through the handling of these incidents that what happens at YouthBuild will be different from their previous experiences and that the program will continue to be a place of safety.

There are several nationally recognized training programs available for the proper intervention in escalating situations, including physical confrontations. It is advisable that programs that expect to experience these conditions consider getting some or all of their staff trained. These courses have different names, but all stress the preference for de-escalation as a first choice, and that when a physical intervention is needed, it be done in an effective and nonviolent manner.

The overview of the four stages of a violent crisis presented below is based on the teachings of one of these copyrighted approaches taught by the National Crisis Prevention Institute (<http://www.crisisprevention.com/>). This is a brief excerpt, and is not meant to replace the actual course material nor presentation. Quotes in this section are from YouthBuild counselors.

Violence within an organization is usually preceded by various stages of upset feelings and hostile behaviors. One YouthBuild counselor describes how the youth experience and understand these stages:



In the beginning of the program, when the students listed their expectations, safety was their main concern. To these students, being safe means being protected from bodily harm or even death. You can tell that these young people are really concerned with safety by the way they react to strangers in their midst. When a stranger walks in, everyone's attention shifts to the stranger. The body language speaks of rigidity and wariness.

One of the signs of impending violence is escalation. When a person comes in and immediately begins yelling that is not a problem for the students, but when a person comes in quiet and starts talking and voices begin to be raised, there is concern with how far the person will go. The same when a person gets upset and leaves. The students will often watch for that person's return. When that person comes back everyone is watching. There is usually a lookout person who is watching and will say to the others, "Yo, that person is coming," then everyone is prepared to expect something upon their return.

A crisis episode usually progresses through the stages of anxiety, defensiveness, acting out, and de-escalation or resolution. Below is a brief discussion of each stage and the appropriate staff response to it.

As a general rule, staff must remain focused and in control. To do so, they should become aware of their fears or anxiety in volatile situations. It is unlikely that training will eliminate the fear. It will, however, help staff to manage it and channel the energy it creates constructively. Staff (and eventually students) should learn that violent situations can be diffused through such things as body language, positioning, and tone of communication.



Something as simple as assuming a stance that is angled away from a stressed-out person is less likely to set him off. Avoiding entering the personal space of volatile people will keep them from escalating. How one is spoken to when he is under duress is more important than the words used. A supportive, level tone of voice with moderate volume, and speech with consistent cadence (and calmness), is invaluable in diffusing a tough situation.

## Four stages of a violent crisis and how to handle them

1

### Anxiety

Anxiety is the first stage in a crisis situation. It shows itself as an unusual change in a person's attitude or behavior. Most of the time, anxiety is very evident because of its unusualness or pace. That is, an anxious person may suddenly start pacing, wringing her hands, twitching, or showing less dramatic but equally out of the ordinary mannerisms (rapid eye blinking, moving hands in and out of pockets). The appropriate staff response is to be supportive and empathetic. Staff's goal at this stage is to convey to the anxious person that she is aware of her distress and would like to help resolve the situation.

2

### Defensiveness

Defensiveness is the stage where a troubled person is beginning to feel like she is losing control. In fact, she is defending against this pending loss of control. Defensiveness looks and sounds like someone "calling you out" but not making sense about why or what she hopes to get accomplished. This usually includes questioning things in a hostile manner, refusing reasonable requests or suggestions, and outright intimidation.

Staff's role during this stage is to remain calm while taking control of the situation. The staff person should become directive (this should not be confused with aggressive), and should set limits in a calm, reassuring, straightforward way. If done properly, the agitated person may feel more secure by knowing that someone is taking control of the situation, and the need for her defensiveness will decrease.

3

### Acting out

The most dangerous stage is acting out. One counselor describes an acting out episode and the resulting resolution in this way:

“

One day there was a retreat. One of the students showed up to go to the retreat and right away started cursing out people. He was high as a kite. He was told that he could not go on the retreat because of the drugs. He started throwing things and had to be physically escorted out. The counselor told him that his problem might be bigger than what could be handled at YouthBuild.

A person whose behavior is escalating acts out her anxiety because she has, in effect, lost control. The behavior at this stage may include running away, destroying things in the environment, harming one's self, or attacking other people. Staff must, once again, remain calm while undertaking an intervention that may include a nonviolent physical restraint. The restraint must be geared only at preventing injury to people and property by controlling the individual until she is able to regain control of herself. It should continue only until the person is able to regain self-control and begin the resolution process.

## 4

### Tension reduction

The final stage of crisis management is tension reduction. A person who is acting out usually releases a great deal of energy in a short period of time. If the restraint or lesser intervention has the desired result, the person will calm down, and may even realize that she has acted poorly or done something wrong. During this stage, the interventionist should maintain a positive therapeutic rapport with the person who acted out. It is a time to allow her to “save face” while acknowledging that she lost control. Ideally the situation is ended with the person discovering what underlying factor triggered the outburst, which may assist in being more aware in future situations. An example from a YouthBuild program:



An incident occurred with two people, a male and a female who were friends before. The girl said something and he said, “bitch.” She said something about his mother and finally, she said that she was going to get her brother to get him. This threat to have someone “get him” violated the safety issue. In our communities, you don’t say things like that without meaning it. When it is said, all the defenses go up. At any rate, he hit her, and she hit him back.

This occurred in the hallway between classes. When I got there I started asking how it had happened, how it got to that point. They told me what had happened and I said, “Does that mean that everywhere you go when you hear this word it is an automatic fighting word?” This led them back to the root of the problem. “How can you know,” I asked, “what this person is experiencing? You stressed when you came into this program that you wanted safety but you were going against what you said were your expectations of the program. There is no way that you can sit here and say that this was justified.”

The students lost the argument because they finally said, “Well, maybe there is another way.” Then we worked out a contract. It’s now an agreement. But, getting the parties to agree to change their behavior is only part of the answer. You must dig deeper, what is it that led to the fight, that is what is important. You must find out what really led up to it. What is the real source of the problem? Until you find the source of the problem, another similar situation will trigger the feeling again. No one wants to hurt someone else on purpose, but they feel that they must lash out because the anger is hurting them and this gets the anger out. The students know no other directions to put anger toward except releasing it to the individual.

The crisis stages described above are fairly similar regardless of the people or “rank” of the people involved. One is not likely to see much difference between an episode among students and one between students and staff. The level of agitation may be higher when a student is confronting a staff person, but the sequence of stages and responses will often follow the same pattern.

It is advisable, however, that programs establish a particularly strict rule about assaults on staff, because staff are the ones whose job is to challenge each student. In doing so, they are more likely to “push buttons.” The greater the taboo that’s being broken, the more volatile the person breaking it and the ensuing situation. Programs are advised to have the “cardinal rules” (against violence, for example) apply in all cases, but that the consequence be more severe and less negotiable when committed against staff. This may sound a bit non-egalitarian, but with properly trained and supervised staff, any assault upon them suggests a more serious problem in the student’s ability to self-regulate.

Of course, any violence committed by staff needs a severe and nonnegotiable response or the integrity of the program is instantly undermined. Students hate any indication of a double standard that allows staff to break rules themselves.

After any incidence of violence, it is very important for both group and individual counseling to address the issue. The intent should not be to create shame, but to help young people understand themselves, their impact on others and their role in society, and the impact of their actions. Some programs have strict policies of expulsion for fighting, because they feel that that is a cardinal rule that must be enforced strictly. Others have a more incremental approach to discipline. The important thing is that the incident be processed, discussed, and if a decision is made to work with the offending party, the issue of anger management has to become central to a plan that the counselor and student will develop.

## **Most Important Elements of Building a Positive Program Culture**

While managing challenging behavior with caring, respect, clear expectations, and balance is necessary, much difficult behavior can actually be avoided by building a positive culture through the other elements described earlier in this handbook, including but not limited to the following:

- caring and dedicated staff clearly committed to student success and willing to go beyond the students' expectations to demonstrate that commitment;
- high-quality supervision and teaching on the construction site and in the classroom, clearly moving students toward higher skill levels;
- full implementation of the program components that have been proven to work in successful programs and are found in the basic program handbook;
- positive values communicated through the use of a program pledge and through visual media such as posters, charts, and photos;
- existence of a strong youth policy council that works closely with the director to set policies that create a positive program culture;
- clarity of expectations and appropriate consequences coupled with fairness and kindness to help the young people step up;
- opportunities for young people to serve their communities in ways that strengthen their personal transformation and internalize the ethic of service;
- opportunities to celebrate successive small victories and incentives for high performance in attendance, academic gains, construction skills, and leadership roles; and
- support from staff in setting personal goals and achieving them on a path to a successful future.

The goal is to create a program culture that expresses pride, success, respect, caring, and hope in a well-managed and highly competent context. The young people will be inspired to contribute toward that positive, caring community of peers and adults.



## Part B: Case Management in Practice



YouthBuild

## Introduction to Part B: Case Management in Practice

YouthBuild programs must employ strategies that assist youth in developing the skills required for success in the current workplace and beyond. Staff must understand the needs of youth, particularly the neediest youth, in order to increase the effectiveness and success in the delivery of program services. Case management can provide the infrastructure for effectively delivering the appropriate mix of services that has proven to be effective in identifying education, employment, and training needs. Just as important is the identification of personal barriers that may interfere with completion of the YouthBuild program or with transitioning into the workplace or secondary education and training. A successfully implemented case management system will efficiently facilitate the achievement of the student's educational, employment, and personal goals.

Part B of the *YouthBuild Manual for Counseling, Case Management, and Program Culture* addresses the nuts and bolts of effective case management. Successful YouthBuild programs recognize the value of incorporating steps and processes that allow the process to be orderly yet still structured to be youth-centered and flexible. These steps vary in priority, sequencing, time allotted, and content based upon individual goals and needs. Many steps described are ongoing or regularly repeated rather than one-time activities. A successfully implemented case-management system ensures that the appropriate services are delivered and attained outcomes are documented. It bears stating that case management is not about managing students' lives but about managing the process that enables them to attain success. We once again recognize that the term case manager has, in many programs, been replaced with titles such as youth specialist, youth advocate, and many other titles that encompass a youth development approach. Whatever the title, it represents a staff person who is supporting and guiding a young person throughout the YouthBuild program and perhaps beyond through follow-up services to graduates of the program. High-performing YouthBuild programs recognize the value of the professional development of their frontline workers. The following chapters provide YouthBuild staff with fairly standard steps and strategies that will assist YouthBuild students in gaining self-sufficiency.

# Chapter 1

## Recruitment, Orientation and Enrollment



YouthBuild

## Overview

YouthBuild case managers may be responsible for multiple components of a case-management system, such as recruitment, pre-screening, application and enrollment, service strategy planning, implementation of the service strategy, follow-up, and evaluation. To assist case managers successfully fulfill each of these roles, the following sections provide information on recruiting youth as well as effective practices for selecting and enrolling participants.

## Recruitment

Community outreach and recruitment may be the first contact that youth have with a community-based employment program of any kind. On the other hand, they may have had previous experiences and promises that have fallen short for them. The uniqueness of the YouthBuild approach and its track record for success are powerful recruiting messages. In many instances, active recruitment may not be necessary, as some programs have waiting lists from which they draw groups of students. However, this is not always the case. When recruitment is required, it is important to remember that for the student, recruitment presents the first impression of the program and the organization.

### Why recruiting may be necessary

Reasons that youth may not participate in employment and training programs such as YouthBuild include lack of information on training programs, inaccessible training locations, lack of immediate and tangible rewards, and skepticism that participation in an employment program will lead to concrete, long-term personal benefits. Organizations may have difficulty in recruiting youth because of a disconnect between young people's needs, interests, and desires, and the organizations' outreach and recruitment strategies. Clearly, youth must overcome numerous obstacles to achieve self-sufficiency. YouthBuild staff who serve as recruiters and service providers need to have an awareness of barriers that may be external, psychological, and cultural in nature.

Therefore, successful outreach and recruitment of youth must draw on a range of strategies designed to appeal to potential participants. Youth most likely to benefit from the education and training offered within the YouthBuild program are often the least likely to enroll in the program based on flyers or public service announcements. This is particularly true if the service delivery environment resembles training institutions in which they have experienced difficulties, such as public schools or the juvenile justice system.

Word of mouth remains the best means of recruiting students. When a YouthBuild program develops a reputation for being a safe, respectful, caring, and successful youth development and training program, current participants as well as graduates of the program can be the best way of recruiting participants.



## Recruiting out-of-school youth

Approaches that organizations have found to be effective in recruiting out-of-school youth follow:

- Connect with youth where they are. Go to those places where young people are most likely to be found, such as parks, recreation centers, shopping malls, health clinics, clubs, movie theatres, community-based and faith-based organizations, day labor agencies, unemployment offices, emergency food programs, and homeless shelters.
- Canvass homes, stores, and community centers, particularly in neighborhoods where youth are most likely to be eligible for services. Utilize strategies such as walking through the neighborhood, engaging youth and others in conversation about the program, and distributing brief, easy-to-read, colorful flyers or brochures.
- Use a “sector approach” by dividing the community geographically into areas and assigning recruitment teams to each one. In some organizations, staff have posted a large map of their target area highlighted and sticky notes to remind them of what is targeted, what is not, and what needs to be done in the many neighborhoods and communities.
- Schedule recruitment activities during evening and weekend hours to target those youth who may have been missed during the day.
- Ask youth to serve as recruiters, particularly YouthBuild alumni. Actively involve YouthBuild students on the outreach and recruitment team. Encourage them to speak positively and honestly about their experience. In addition to serving as an effective recruiting strategy, engaging participants in outreach and recruitment promotes youth development. Recruitment serves as work experience, and youth recruiters learn a sense of responsibility and increase their communication skills.
- Always carry identification when recruiting.
- Collaborate with partner agencies, community and faith-based organizations, local government and nongovernmental entities, and schools to recruit the hardest-to-reach youth. Actively involve community partners on the outreach and recruitment team.

### Examples:

- Ask religious institutions such as churches, synagogues, and mosques to insert flyers in bulletins or announce information on the program at their weekly service.
- Identify and partner with organizations to assist in the recruitment or referral of youth isolated from mainstream organizations, for example, youth with disabilities, homeless and runaway youth, teen parents, youth on probation, and youth with limited English proficiency.
- Conduct presentations for local officials, such as high school principals, juvenile court judges, probation officers, and counselors at drug treatment facilities. Request referrals from agencies that coordinate services for foster youth, youth on probation, or youth in detention centers and group homes.

- Ask the local health department and clinics serving families to refer young parents who may be eligible for program services.
- Set up information booths at youth centers, local Boys & Girls Clubs, and public housing developments.
- Advertise in free local newspapers or a community-service cable television station.
- Arrange organization-sponsored sports or entertainment events designed to appeal to youth.
- Make contact with youth who are on the local high school's dropout list. Offer to visit with the youth and parent(s) to provide information on the YouthBuild program and available services.
- Maintain ongoing contact with interested youth. Get them involved in activities as soon as possible. If the time between recruitment and orientation becomes too long, young people may lose interest.
- Recruiters or case managers in some organizations give youth an appointment card that reminds the youth to come to the program on a particular day and time. On the day before the appointment, the recruiter or case manager calls the youth to confirm the appointment. This call conveys the importance of their participation.
- Prepare a memorandum of understanding about how recruitment will be coordinated among two or more youth-serving organizations. Ensure that frontline staff from each partnering agency are familiar with the services provided as well as the eligibility requirements of all partnering agencies. One idea would be to hold an open house reception and invite frontline and administrative staff from all partnering agencies to meet each other and learn about the services offered in the community.

## Continuous quality improvement

One strategy for improving recruitment is to identify which recruitment strategies work most effectively for different youth populations. Collect and review data that show how youth first heard about YouthBuild. Include a question on the participant enrollment form that asks the youth, "How did you hear about the program?" or ask the question during the initial interview.

Some questions to consider concerning recruitment methods include:

- How is eligibility for the program explained to youth and parents or caregivers?
- What basic information do recruiters collect from the youth they contact during outreach?
- Is the information necessary for follow-up collected, including multiple contacts?
- How does the organization's management team use the recruitment information to plan activities?
- What are some of the questions youth and parents ask most frequently during recruitment and outreach activities?
- How are youth participants involved in outreach and recruitment?

## Pre-screening, Orientation, and Enrollment

The purposes of the pre-screening, orientation, and enrollment process usually include eligibility determination, collection of core identification and demographic information, and orientation to the YouthBuild program and expectations regarding participation.

Within some YouthBuild programs, a pre-screening process, handled through personal appointments or group sessions, precedes the official enrollment process. Topics discussed during such pre-screening sessions include the eligibility requirements for program services, what will happen with young people who are ineligible, identification of what each young person present expects on arrival, an overview of the purpose of the program, the services provided, expected results or outcomes (for example, employment, obtaining a credential, or higher educational attainment), and a description of each person's responsibilities. Information gathered during this process is important and needs to be included in each student's record.

Some organizations have found it helpful to stress the following points:

- Youth will be treated as active partners rather than passive recipients.
- A case manager will work with each student to identify and deliver services to help achieve the goals set, but it is the student who will have to do the hard work of attending classes and appointments and fulfilling other program obligations.
- After achieving a major goal such as job placement, entering college, or obtaining a GED, each young person will be expected to maintain contact with their case manager regularly on an agreed-upon schedule to achieve other goals such as keeping the job, earning a raise, or completing college courses with passing grades.
- The uniqueness of the YouthBuild approach should be discussed, including some of the challenges that previous students have experienced in developing their construction skills. This is a good place for a discussion of standards, as well as having the student understand that assistance is always available and how to access help.

The orientation and enrollment process that follows the initial pre-screening works best when it is a positive, caring experience handled by the case manager rather than by a clerical aide. Too often, the process is a bureaucratic, mechanical "fill out the forms" situation. Instead, it should become an opportunity for establishing the tone and quality of an ongoing relationship between the student and the case manager. Invaluable assessment data may be collected during this stage of the program process, and it is important that documentation is inclusive of such information. Organizations need to establish a systematic approach that assures all YouthBuild students experience a standard pre-screening, orientation, and enrollment process.

Unlike the "tell us your name/address/phone number" approach that all too often comprises traditional intake interviews, YouthBuild's approach to enrollment may best be described as a "getting to know each other" process. It may take more than one appointment, and each appointment should start with some friendly small talk (sports, news event, TV program, or movie, for example). The application and pre-screening process should allow the young person time to relax and become comfortable before business starts. It may take some time for a satisfactory level of comfort to be established, but the young person will not begin to "talk for real" until rapport is established.

As part of the relationship-building process, the case manager may explain that the application and pre-screening process will be used to get to know the young person, get a feel for what he has done and wants to do, identify what he is good at, and determine what seems to get in the way of fulfillment of her goals. After the young person and the case manager become comfortable with each other, the case manager might initiate the first steps in the assessment process by asking the young person about her personal dreams—what does the participant want from life? The answers to this question, or lack of them, reveal much about the young person. Is the youth defeated? If so, what will it take to re-energize her? Does the individual have something to strive for but doesn't know how to reach the goal? If the dream is totally unrealistic, what should be done?

Before enrollment and the provision of services begin, eligibility should be determined. The case manager should put requests for personal information into a context—explaining why each piece of information is important, showing how it might be used, and, if possible, giving examples of how similar data from other youth has been used in the past. The case manager should also explain the confidentiality policies of the organization. As always, the case manager should determine what the young person thought the program would be about, identify the youth's goals, and work out how both might be addressed during subsequent meetings.

The case manager should not use application and pre-screening appointments purely as a means to collect documents and facts to enter on a form. Instead, the case manager should use this opportunity for the young person to talk in detail about important issues. In this way, the case manager will have the chance to really hear who the young person is, listen for unspoken statements, observe body language, and be aware of feelings. By the conclusion of the application and enrollment process, the case manager will have learned much more than a set of facts (*Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University, 1989*).

Some additional strategies used by youth programs to make the application and pre-screening process more youth-friendly are as follows (*Callahan & McLaughlin, 2002*):

- Customer checklists, sometimes on the reverse side of an appointment card, note the list of documents the young person must bring to help staff quickly determine eligibility so the young person has the chance to collect documents prior to the application and enrollment session. Some documents, such as immunization records or birth certificates, can be hard to come by, so youth may need help in writing to request documents or in paying fees. For information on getting a:
- Birth certificates, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>.
- Social Security card, visit: <http://www.ssa.gov/> and click on "Your Social Security Card Number."
- Staff use micro cassette tape recorders and are trained to gather information using the recorder. (Youth are asked for permission for staff to use the recorders.) The tapes are then given to a staff person who completes the application or enrollment forms.
- Various parts of the process are interspersed with engaging the young person in some productive or interesting activities.

YouthBuild is unique in that it offers a more in-depth orientation than most youth development programs. Many YouthBuild programs offer a mental toughness orientation process that can last anywhere from a few days to two weeks. This provides staff and prospective students an opportunity to learn more about each other and decide if YouthBuild is the program for them. Youth are not officially enrolled in the U.S. Department of Labor's Management Information System (MIS) until orientation or mental toughness is completed.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

For additional information on conducting orientation/mental toughness go to the YouthBuild's Community of Practice.

## Chapter 2

# Assessment and the Development of an Individual Development Plan



YouthBuild

## Overview

Once students have successfully completed the YouthBuild's orientation or mental toughness and been enrolled in the program, it is important to complete the official assessment process. Helping students identify their interests and goals, skills and abilities, and personal characteristics is an essential component in the development of an individual development plan (IDP).



*Note: This plan is called an IDP in this section to correspond with the term utilized within the DOL MIS but each YouthBuild may have different titles such as individual educational plan and life plan.*

Whatever this document is called, the assessment and planning process provides information and tools for assessing youth academically and occupationally and for supporting their ongoing development towards reaching their employment and training goals. It is also essential that the program is designed so that services can be tailored to address the unique strengths, challenges, and needs of each participant.

## Assessment

Assessment is the foundation of good planning and overall good case management. It is an ongoing extension of the enrollment process and guides the development of the student's initial individual development plan as well as subsequent updates and revisions. It is not a one-shot, up-front activity. Following is a brief summary of the principles of effective assessment, the components of a comprehensive objective assessment, the case manager's role in the assessment process, various types of informal and formal assessment tools, and suggestions for engaging students in the assessment process.

### Principles of effective assessment

Some key principles to guide the development of the assessment process are:

- Develop an assessment strategy based on an understanding of the decision to be made and the person(s) being assessed.
- Utilize a comprehensive and exploratory approach.
- Make assessment an ongoing process of the individual development plan (IDP). Once a baseline is identified, measurable objectives can be established, and progress can be measured. Services can be revised and updated depending on a student's progress.
- Use assessment procedures and instruments that are valid, approved by the U.S. Department of Labor, and reliable for the program's participants and related decision making.
- Administer assessment instruments under conditions that do not adversely affect performance.
- Seek opportunities to embed authentic assessments within program activities.



## Components of a comprehensive objective assessment

A comprehensive objective assessment process identifies strengths and assets, including abilities, aptitudes, interests, and occupational and employability skill levels. Barriers to employment and training that will interfere with participation in the program should be assessed on a continual basis and supportive services provided as needed.



## Strengths, assets, interests, aptitudes, and developmental needs

The variety of assessment methods and tools that can be used in this assessment process include dialogue conversations, where students are encouraged to inform the case manager about their lives, experiences, and feelings; structured questioning during conversations; observation; self-assessment checklists; structured worksheets; Internet resources; and formal standardized tests.

## Literacy and numeracy skills

The U.S. Department of Education worked with state officials to establish a National Reporting System (NRS) for measuring gains in literacy and numeracy skills. DOL has adopted this reporting system for adult education to use in YouthBuild programs, as it pertains to meeting DOL performance measures. These performance outcomes reflect the common measures under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (for additional information on WIA Common Measures, see TEGL No. 17-05 [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=2195](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2195)). The U.S. Department of Education updated their definitions in February 2010 and this can be found at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-2181.pdf> where the approved standardized basic skills tests in literacy and numeracy are listed. The outcome measures are based on educational functioning levels that describe what a learner knows and can do in three areas: speaking and listening, reading and writing, and functional and workplace skills. As outlined in the NRS, there are two sets of educational functioning levels: six levels for Adult Basic Education (ABE), and six levels for English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students. The ABE levels roughly equate to two grade levels. YouthBuild programs must use one of the NRS crosswalked tests to measure literacy and numeracy gains.

## Employability

The assessment of work readiness and employability should focus on the skills and characteristics that employers have identified as essential for success in the workplace. In 1990 the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) spent 12 months talking to business owners, public employers, supervisors, managers, union officials, and frontline workers to identify those skills required to obtain good jobs and succeed on the job. The answers were the same across the country and in every kind of job: good jobs depend on people who can put knowledge to work. New workers must be creative and responsible problem solvers and have the skills and attitudes on which employers can build.





## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For more information on the 1990 Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) can be found at <http://wdr.doleta.gov/opr/fulltext/document.cfm?docn=6140>

The Commission grouped the skills identified as being particularly important for high-performance workplaces into five competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities. The five competencies are:

- effectively using resources
- interpersonal skills
- information
- systems
- technology

The three-part foundation skills are:

- basic skills
- thinking skills
- personal qualities

These SCANS skills are reflected in the job-readiness curricula developed by a number of organizations. One example, “*Skills for a New Century: A Blueprint for Lifelong Learning*” can be found at <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/papers/bkgrd/blueprint.html>

Another example is the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan (MWBLP) (<http://www.skillslibrary.com/wbl.htm>). The MWBLP is a six-step process involving employers. It provides a means for measuring competency gains in nine SCANS categories of skills: communication and literacy, organizing and analyzing information, problem solving, using technology, completing entire activities, acting professionally, interacting with others, understanding all aspects of the industry, and taking responsibility for career and life choices.

ETA has developed a dynamic, industry-driven framework for foundational competencies that are necessary for entry-level workers in the advanced manufacturing industry. This model framework will allow for consistency across industries, customization within sectors, and easy updating to accommodate changing technology and business practices.



## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For more information on this initiative, go to <http://www.doleta.gov/pdf/AdvncdManufactFWK.pc>

## Barriers to employment and the need for supportive services

The assessment of supportive services needed by YouthBuild students may be guided by the definition of supportive services provided in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. According to the act, such services for youth, once they are officially enrolled, may include transportation, childcare, dependent care, housing, linkages to community service, referrals to medical services, and financial assistance with work attire and work-related tools such as eyeglasses and protective eye gear.

Students who need medical services, including mental health assistance, should be identified so that appropriate referrals can be made to initiate medical care and address health barriers to participation in program activities and employment.

Alcohol and substance abuse constitute a major barrier as well. Comprehensive guidance and counseling services, including substance abuse counseling, should be identified in the individual development plan when assessment indicates a need.

Good health is clearly linked to the young person's ability to complete the YouthBuild program, and ultimately stay in continuing education or employment.



Many employers require an employee to have a valid driver's license. During the assessment process, case managers can ascertain whether a student needs to take a driver's education course or test, or resolve court issues that resulted in a loss of license.

Some youth may have issues that can result in arrest (for example, failure to pay court fines or child support) or impact their ability to subsist on an initial placement wage (if wages are garnished, for example). A case manager can link students to organizations that work with court services to resolve these issues.

## Establishing career goals

Even if a young person seems to have a clear career goal and knows exactly what she wants to do without having undergone some kind of structured assessment process, it is possible that a good decision—one that can be sustained over time—has not been made. Since service strategies are geared toward this choice of occupational goal, it is critical that youth make a well-informed choice. A number of interest inventories have been developed that help youth identify their preferences for a particular activity and then make suggestions about occupational clusters that most closely match those interests. The case manager can then arrange for the youth to explore these occupations, using O\*Net Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>) or a state career information delivery system. Since the goal for both the young person and the program is employment that leads to self-sufficiency, it is also important that the occupational goal relates to a need in the local labor market. The discussion of career goals is an appropriate time to discuss in more detail with new students why the construction trades are the focal point of this program, and also how they can use this opportunity to transition into whatever career path interests them most. Case managers need to assure students that they will be available to assist them through such a transition.

Students can evaluate wage and salary progression, job duties, career paths, and projected demand for various career choices. It may be possible for them to test out their preliminary choices through job shadowing, work experience, and internships. Individual development plans can and should be revised as occupational choices are refined.

A wide variety of tools are available to help the case manager obtain the necessary information regarding all aspects of a comprehensive assessment.

## The case manager's role in the assessment process

Each YouthBuild program should identify the assessment tools that will be used to assess the aptitudes, interests, basic skills, occupational skills, employability skills, and supportive services of each program participant. Staff using these instruments should be fully trained on their use and how to form goals, objectives, and service strategies with results.

Assessment begins at the first meeting with a young person. Although the assessment process may vary from program to program, general guidelines include:

- **Determine what assessments should be used.**

What information does the student have already? What assessments are available from other sources such as schools and partner agencies? How current is this information? (Remember that academic assessment cannot be over six months old.) What additional information does the individual need in order to make a good career decision? What types of assessments might be appropriate for this particular student, given her comfort level with assessments, past experiences, or level of decidedness? Will the assessment information be useful in developing a service plan? Even if a student seems to have a clear career goal and know exactly what she wants to do, without having undergone some kind of structured assessment process, it is possible that she has not made a good decision about the occupation. For example, it is very common for a young person to select a career because someone in their family or a teacher has told them that they would make a “good secretary” or a “good chef.” However, the youth will need to do some additional self-assessment and research to determine if this career is truly appropriate. The partnership role of the student during the assessment process is self-discovery. Case managers should encourage and assist students in the self-discovery process, both individually and, if possible, in small groups.

- **Select the instrument or instruments best suited to the youth's needs.**

How many grades of education has the student completed? Does the student have any disabilities (such as sight impairment or dyslexia) that might affect the test administration? Does she have any language difficulties? Is the student a member of an ethnic group other than those the test was developed for?

Rather than making all students undergo the same battery of assessments, the best approach is to have several tools that can be used with different youth based on their needs. Just as the career planning process should be customized depending on the student's individual needs, so should the assessment process also be customized. Nevertheless, some selected, standardized, formal assessment tools may need to be used with all youth in the same program or project in order to measure common areas of need, meet program requirements, collect group data, measure individual progress, measure interim objectives, measure skill attainment, and conduct project oversight.

For assistance in selecting assessment instruments, two useful reference guides prepared by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration can be downloaded:

- *Tests and Other Assessments: Helping You Make Better Career Decisions*  
[http://www.onetcenter.org/dl\\_files/testAsse.pdf](http://www.onetcenter.org/dl_files/testAsse.pdf)
- *Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices*  
[http://www.onetcenter.org/dl\\_files/empTestAsse.pdf](http://www.onetcenter.org/dl_files/empTestAsse.pdf)

■ **Prepare the young person for assessment.**

Discuss with the student the assessment process and any concerns or issues she may have. Be sure to include:

- The name and type of instrument(s) to be administered
- The types of questions the instrument(s) will include
- What information the instrument(s) will, and will not, produce
- How long the assessment will take
- When and where the assessment will take place
- How long it will be before the results are available
- How the information collected will be of assistance to the student

■ **Administer the assessment and score the results or refer the student to the individual or organization that will administer and score the test.**

When the assessment is administered, care should be taken to ensure that the assessment is administered in a uniform manner each time and that the testing site is conducive to testing. Accommodations should also be made for persons with disabilities or language difficulties.

■ **Interpret the results with the student.**

The case manager should conduct the following activities:

1. Remind the student of the assessment that was taken, discuss how the individual felt about the assessment, and explain the results and how this is related to their service plan
2. Review the assessment prior to meeting with the student to gain a thorough understanding of the assessment, what it measures, and how it should be used in career decision making
3. Consider in advance how to handle various issues that may come up during the session. For example, if a student indicated that she was interested in a particular occupation that the assessment says she will not be well-suited for, how will this be discussed with the student? How can the career decision making process be facilitated given this new information?

- **Maintain assessment records.**

Include all assessment information in the student's case file. The case manager should also be prepared to discuss with each student the student's concerns around assessment and the need for ongoing assessment as they continue through the career development process. In particular, students should understand that self-knowledge is an ongoing process and they should plan to continually evaluate their interests, abilities, and work values and see how these fit in with occupational choices throughout their work lives (*Freedlance Group for Career & Workplace Innovation, 2001*). This ongoing assessment allows the case manager an opportunity to evaluate how effective services are in meeting particular needs and ensuring flexibility in adapting service-delivery strategies to a student's needs.

## **Informal and formal objective assessment tools**

Two types of assessment can be used to obtain the required assessment information:

- Informal
- Formal

Informal assessment tools include structured questioning, observation, self-assessment checklists, and specific Web sites. These tools may be most helpful in obtaining information about dreams, goals, strengths, interests, fears, feelings, perceptions, family and peer interaction, prior work experience, barriers, and supportive services needed. The use of these tools may be less intimidating and more enjoyable than more formal assessments. However, the interpretation of the results of informal assessments may be more subjective and less reliable.

Formal assessments are tests that have been developed professionally according to scientific principles of test construction and have written instructions for administration and interpretation. Formal standardized assessment tools may be of greatest assistance in obtaining information regarding reading, math, and other academic skills; aptitudes; and work readiness and occupational skills.

An effective, comprehensive assessment process will include both informal and formal assessments. It will also be an ongoing process with assessments during the enrollment process, embedded in activities and instruction, and administered after delivery of services to determine progress, results, and direction.

# Informal Assessment Tools: Questioning, Worksheets, Internet, Observation, and Structured Multi-step Processes

## Structured questioning during conversations and interviews

By using questions designed to elicit as much information as possible and asking the questions in a friendly caring manner, case managers can conduct very thorough assessments. Some of the types of questions that can be used effectively during assessment interviews and conversations are listed below:

### Open versus closed questions

The closed question is generally more useful when seeking facts.

**Example:** *How old are you?*

Closed questions generally limit the amount of information received, and frequently overlook the feelings underlying facts. Open questions are more effective tools for gathering data on feelings, opinion, and perceptions. They provide a better “window” into a person’s frame of reference.

### Types of open questions: statement, indirect, example, plus-minus, why, and how

- **Statement questions** ask the young person to elaborate on facts and feelings. They encourage the student to continue the conversation.

**Example:** *I'm concerned about what has been going on since our last visit. Tell me how you feel about seeking job counseling help?*

- **Indirect questions** are the open-ended way of asking direct questions. They begin with who, what, when, where, and how. Structured appropriately, they encourage students to expand on their answers.

**Examples:** *How do you think you could find that information? What happened when you went to the community college? How do you think your friends will feel about your going to work?*

- **Example questions** ask the student to explain in more detail using an example. They can often help youth move from vague statements to more concrete ones.

**Examples:** *Student: I just don't feel I'm good at anything.  
Case Manager: What kind of things do you have real difficulty with?*

- **Plus-minus questions** explore the positive and negative aspects of a situation. They can be used to help students explore the pros and cons of a situation or decision.

**Examples:** *What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of staying in school? What would be the pros and cons of placing your child in day care?*

- **Why questions** have distinct disadvantages for the case manager because they frequently ask a person to justify herself. They often lead defensiveness and resistance to sharing information.

**Example:** *Why didn't you keep your last appointment?*

- A more effective way of asking the why question is to focus on the problem solving aspect of the situation by using **how questions**.

**Example:** *How do you think we could set up your visits so you could come?*

Additional examples of effective questions:

### **Work**

- How do you feel about not working now?
- What would be the best things about having a job or a better job?
- What problems make working difficult for you?
- If you could have your ideal job, what would it look like?
- What did you like and dislike most about your previous jobs?

### **Education**

- How do you feel about the amount of education you have right now?
- How will your present level of education affect your ability to get the kind of jobs you want?
- How would you feel about going back to school now?
- What is the biggest drawback to your returning to school?
- What kinds of training would interest you?

### **Present situation**

- How do you feel about your life right now?
- What do you like about your life now?
- What bothers you most about your present situation?

### **Future situations**

- If you get the job, how will you get to it?
- What courses do you need to take to be admitted into this college?
- After you have worked there awhile, how can you get a promotion?
- Who can help you care for your baby during the day?



### **Self-image**

- How do you see yourself at this point in your life?
- What do you think are your greatest strengths? Your weaknesses?
- What would you like to change about yourself?

### **Change**

- What would you like to change most about your life now?
- If you could make one change now, what would it be?
- What keeps you from making this change?
- What could help you make this change?

### **Goals**

- Where do you see yourself a year from now? Five years from now?
- If you could have a good life for yourself and your family, what would that be?

Although questioning is a useful assessment tool, if used too frequently or for too long a period of time or to the exclusion of other methods, the questioning can sound like an interrogation and prevent the establishment of rapport. Combining questions with reflecting feeling statements creates a conversational effect and is more conducive to building a relationship and gathering information.

Reflecting feeling statements can be used by the case manager to help clarify and expand the feelings underlying facts, improve the accuracy of communication, and convey interest in understanding the young person's point of view (*Ford, 2003*). Some examples of phrases, words, and sentences in reflecting feeling statements include the following:

- Would you tell me a little more about...?
- Let me see if I understand...
- I'd be interested in hearing more about...
- It would help me understand if you would give me an example of...
- I'm curious to know more about...
- Tell me what you mean when...
- I wonder...



An example of a sequence of questions and reflecting feeling statements is as follows:

- Case manager:** *Tell me how you feel about going back to school? (Statement question)*
- Potential student:** *A little nervous, I guess. I've been out of school for a long time and I wonder if I'm not too old to go back.*
- Case manager:** *You're feeling a little scared about trying school after you've been away from it for so long. (Reflecting feeling statement)*
- Potential student:** *Yeah. There'll probably be a bunch of kids there who know everything and I'll feel out of place*
- Case manager:** *What kind of school do you think you'd be most comfortable in? (Indirect question)*
- Potential student:** *Maybe some place where there are people my age, with kids who'd understand what I'm going through.*
- Case manager:** *You'd feel safe in a school where the people were more like you and understand your situation. (Reflecting feeling statement)*

Some case managers and YouthBuild programs have found it helpful to standardize the questions asked during an assessment interview. Some programs may decide to select and use a limited number of the questions in order to create a shorter document and reduce the amount of time required to use it. An alternative consists of just asking the questions related to one or two topics, such as strengths and friends, during any one conversation with a young person with questions from other sections asked during subsequent conversations. This approach may allow the case manager to obtain needed information without alienating the young person through a tedious, lengthy process.

## Worksheets and inventories

Structured worksheets can be used individually or with large and small groups to gather information that can be used for assessment purposes. Numerous resources for structured informal assessment questions that can be used for self-assessment of strengths, study habits, learning styles, and peer relationships can be found on the Internet.

## Internet resources

A variety of free online assessments are available on the Internet. A few are listed below. Before recommending a Web site, a case manager should carefully review the material at the site to understand the kind of information that will be provided. The results of the assessment should always be discussed with the student.

### ASSESSMENT OF CAREER INTERESTS AND MATCHING INTERESTS WITH OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

- O\*NET Computerized Interest Profiler: Gain knowledge about personal vocational interests and over 900 occupations. (<http://www.onetcenter.org/CIP.html>)
- O\*NET Work Importance Profiler: Match work values (achievement, autonomy, conditions) with occupations. (<http://www.onetcenter.org/WIP.html>)
- New Career Zone (<http://www.nycareerzone.org/>): profile interests
- Career Key (<http://www.careerkey.org/>): match interests and jobs
- Type Focus (<http://www.typefocus.com/>): match personality and jobs
- Career Development Manual (<http://www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca/>): self-assessment and career planning
- Youth Instructor's Guide to Self-Assessment Activities (<http://www.nextsteps.org>) self-assessment and career planning

Ansell-Casey Life Skills (<http://www.caseylifeskills.org/>): is a free and easy to use tool to help young people prepare for adulthood. It addresses work/study habits; money management; self-care; social development; daily living tasks; housing and community resources. The life skills assessments provide instant feedback. In addition, the tool provides customized learning plans that clearly outlining next steps. Additional teaching resources are available for free or at a minimal cost.

## Observation

Through careful observation during both one-on-one conversations and group activities, case managers can assess some aspects of work readiness and employability as well as barriers to employment and potential emergency crisis situations. For example, in terms of work readiness through the tool of observation, a case manager can observe:

- When the student arrives (early, punctual, late, wearing a watch)
- If the student dresses appropriately (business, gang signs, clean)
- Does the student greet the case manager (make eye contact, shake hand, respectful)
- If he or she completes the required forms (hesitantly, precisely, sloppily)
- What is the student's behavior when taking a required test (rush, hesitate, concentrate, seem anxious)
- Does the student talk with peers (relaxed, friendly, belligerent, ill at ease)

## Observing Additional Service Needs

When the barriers are substantial, it may be necessary to seek assistance from external resources such as professionals in the field of special education, behavioral, substance abuse, and mental health fields or experts on physical and mental abuse victims to help overcome them. Since these specialists are certified to conduct lengthy formal assessments that can be costly and may feel invasive to a student, YouthBuild case managers can prescreen students (through questionnaires and observation) to determine the need for formal assessments and additional help. It is therefore critical to know what indicators to look for. The process of responding to students' barriers to employment should always include attention to the strengths of the people and their families. Involving students in the identification of their strengths and deficits, and the resources available to address those barriers, is a critical life skill for self-care, self-advocacy and self-sufficiency. *Some* of the signs that *may* indicate the need to include another individual or organization for an in-depth assessment by a specialist in the field are listed within each section.

## Learning Disabilities

A learning disability (LD) is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store and respond to information. The term is used to describe the seeming unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills. These skills are essential for success at school and work, and for coping with life in general. LD is not a single disorder; it is a term that refers to a group of disorders that can affect a person's ability to communicate, particularly in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, or mathematics. A learning disability is not a disease, so there is no cure, but there are ways to overcome the challenges it poses through identification and accommodation.

Depending on the type of LD and its severity, as well as the person's age, different kinds of assistance can be provided. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (<http://www.ada.gov/>) people of all ages with LD are protected against discrimination and have a right to different forms of assistance in the classroom and workplace.

The Institute for Community Inclusion (<http://www.communityinclusion.org/>) has developed the following checklist for case managers and others who work with youth. It lists the indicators or "red flags" that learning disabilities may be an issue.

### **Possible Indicators for Referral for Treatment or Accommodations for Learning Disabilities Include:**

- Has poorly formed or inconsistent handwriting
- Confuses similar letters such as *q* and *p*
- Misspells the same word several times
- Confuses similar numbers such as 3 and 8
- Omits or adds words, particularly when reading aloud
- Is easily distracted or unable to pay attention

- Has problems with understanding or following directions
- Seems generally disorganized
- Appears clumsy or poorly coordinated
- Has problems with spatial coordination: confuses up and down, left and right, easily becomes lost
- Has problems with time: is often late or unusually early, unable to finish assignments in standard amount of time
- Displays excessive anxiety, anger, or depression

If any of these indicators are evident, the case manager should have or get information about appropriate mental health resources in the community. She may also discuss this with other staff and follow the appropriate YouthBuild policies.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For additional information and resources go to YouthBuild's Community of Practice.

## Locating a qualified professional

To find a qualified professional who can assess whether an individual has a learning disability, begin with the resources available for assessment and referral from various education, social service, or workforce partners, including vocational rehabilitation.

## Behavioral Health, Including Substance Abuse and Mental Health

A potential source of local behavioral health providers can be located through Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Medicaid is a program that pays for medical assistance for certain individuals and families with low incomes and limited resources. This program is jointly funded by the federal and state governments (including the District of Columbia and the territories) to assist states in providing medical assistance to people who meet certain eligibility criteria. Most states provide Medicaid assistance to children and youth under 18 years old whose family's income is low. Some states allow teenagers living on their own to apply for Medicaid on their own behalf. Many states also cover children up to age 21.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For more information on Medicaid and accessing services in your state, visit <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/consumer.asp>

If state or federally funded providers are unavailable, formal agreements can be developed with local behavioral health providers for basic counseling or other services. Both individual and group counseling services can be very effective, and it is possible to develop a group-counseling program to assist with the development of specific life skills (such as parenting).

When screening for mental health and substance abuse symptoms, it is always important to remember the “ABCs.” When interacting with students, staff should always pay close attention to:

- A:** Appearance, Alertness, Affect, Anxiety
- B:** Behavior (movements, organization, speech)
- C:** Cognition (orientation, calculation, reasoning, coherence)

## **Possible indicators for referral for treatment of substance abuse**

- Alcohol on breath
- Slurred speech
- Unsteady or overly careful gait
- Runny nose
- Pupils overly large or small
- Evidence of fresh needle tracks
- Glazed look in eyes
- Flushed or overly pale skin
- Unhealthy or unkempt appearance
- Distracted or inappropriate behavior

If possible substance abuse is indicated, the YouthBuild program policies should explain what action the case manager needs to take in clear and concise terms. For more information about commonly abused drugs, visit [http://www.theantidrug.com/drug\\_info/](http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/).



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

Sample YouthBuild drug policies can be found at the Community of Practice.

## **Possible indicators for referral for treatment of depression**

For at least two weeks:

- Loss of interest in things the student formerly enjoyed
- Feeling sad, blue, down in the dumps

Also, at least three of the following for at least two weeks:

- Change in sleeping patterns—too much sleep or too little
- Rapid change in weight or eating habits
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Preoccupation with death or suicide
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Periods of crying
- Lack of energy
- Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering, or making decisions
- Feeling slowed down, restless, unable to sit still.

If there are signs of depression, case managers may need to refer the student to a mental health professional. It is highly suggested that case managers receive training about appropriate immediate responses, particularly when a pattern of signs and symptoms emerges.

## **Possible indicators for suicidal tendencies**

- Any current threat of suicide, either verbal or written, especially when accompanied by a plan and the means to carry it out
- A history of suicide attempts that have been documented, especially if within the last three months
- A history of mental illness or emotional disturbances
- A recent life-shattering crisis, or perceived life-shattering crisis, accompanied by a grave sense of loss, such as a death in family, the end of a relationship, or a diagnosis of terminal illness
- Depression accompanied by a sense of hopelessness or helplessness about themselves or their future, and a lack of will to live
- Putting personal affairs in order, such as giving away possessions
- Isolating themselves from others and not participating in activities or communicating with friends or family
- Repeated or recent academic deterioration or failure
- Perceived substance abuse problem

A description of crisis intervention strategies, steps, and resources to utilize if there are signs of possible suicide should be available in writing within all youth-serving organizations and distributed annually to all case managers.

## **Possible indicators for referral for physical abuse**

- Presence of old and new bruises, especially those that resemble an object or hand, often on upper or inner arms, thighs, several different surface areas
- Injuries that go untreated
- Multiple injuries in different stages of healing
- Fractures, broken bones, sprains
- Pinch marks, puncture wounds, burn marks, human bite marks
- Multiple scars, scratches
- Inappropriate clothing or accessories, possibly worn to cover signs of injury (for example, long sleeves on a hot day to cover bruised arms or sunglasses worn inside to cover a black eye)
- Stress-related ailments (such as headaches, backaches, and stomach distress)
- Anxiety-related conditions (such as racing heart, feelings of panic, and fear)
- Pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, genital injuries (which may indicate possible rape or sexual abuse)

## **Possible indicators for referral for emotionally or physically abusive relationship**

- Demonstrates constant criticism, verbal assault, or name calling; insults or ridicules beliefs, religion, race, class, and other characteristics
- Displays extreme jealousy, accusations, interrogations
- Humiliates partner in front of family or friends, case manager
- Manipulates with lies
- Tells partner how to dress and behave
- Insults or drives away friends, family
- Abuses alcohol or drugs, encourages partner to do the same
- Throws objects at partner, destroys treasured possessions
- Abuses weaker people or animals
- Threatens partner with violence, or commits violence such as shoving, kicking, slapping, and hitting
- Performs angry, unstable activities such as taking away money or car keys, driving away leaving partner stranded, or stopping car and shoving partner out of the car
- Threatens suicide if partner leaves

Each staff member who interacts with the students has a responsibility to protect the students from harm if a threat exists. This includes potential harm to oneself (suicide), perceived harm from others, or threats to harm another. Each YouthBuild program should train case managers in advance on crisis intervention strategies for any type of suspected abuse, including domestic violence and rape. Training should include the organization's official response to these issues, including what steps to take, what internal and external resources are available and how to access them, and what reporting requirements are called for by state and local laws.

## Formal objective assessments

YouthBuild programs include a formal assessment as part of the enrollment routine. This assessment measures basic education skills. Some YouthBuild programs also use assessments to measure life skills, occupational skills, and interests and aptitudes. Programs should select and use assessment tools that blend in with and complement their program's philosophy and services.

Methods of administering formal assessments include paper and pencil tests, hands-on activities, and computer-administered tests. Some of the various types of formal assessments include literacy and numeracy skills tests, interest inventories, work values inventories, occupational aptitude tests (such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery), personality inventories, and career-maturity inventories.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Detailed descriptions of numerous assessment tools in each of the categories previously listed are presented in:

*Paper and Process; How Youth Programs Manage Program Intake, Individual Service Strategy Development, and Case Files* (Callahan & McLaughlin, 2002),

[http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=1364](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=1364)

A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment Instrument

[http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/asset\\_manager/get\\_file/4028](http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/4028) (National Career Development Association in Cooperation with the Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education, edited by Edwin A. Whitfield, Rich W. Feller, and Chris Wood)



## Engaging youth in the assessment process

Engaging students in the assessment process is a challenging task for case managers. Listed below are some suggestions that may help:

- Channel a student's developmental need to discover who they are and identify strengths, skills, and talents into self-assessment for career development purposes.
- Emphasize the purpose and value of assessment and how both the student and the case manager will be able to use the information.
- Avoid the use of the word "test".
- Present all assessment results positively, emphasizing strengths and presenting an action plan that can develop weaker areas.
- Vary the type of assessment tools used and, when possible, limit the use of any one type of tool to 30 to 45 minutes.

## Selection of assessment tools

Neither the authors nor the U.S. Department of Labor advocate the use of any specific assessment tool or assessment process. Organizations will need to select the assessment tools and design the assessment process that matches their philosophy and purpose and provides the information needed by participants and case managers to set appropriate education and employment goals and choose supporting developmental activities. However, as previously stated, be certain the academic test(s) you are using in your YouthBuild program meets the standards provided by DOL.

## Development of an Individual Development Plan

### The purpose of the individual development plan: process and form

The individual development plan (IDP), sometimes called a life plan, developed with each YouthBuild student has three purposes:

- 1. Identify and set employment, education, and personal development goals**
- 2. Identify service objectives and a service plan of action needed to achieve the identified goals**
- 3. Document services provided and results**

## Identify Goal(s)

The process of mutually developing, implementing, and revising an IDP with a student should be viewed as an important part of the student's development process. By using the planned versus the accomplished aspects of the IDP process in a continuous manner, the case manager and the student have a framework within which to identify, monitor, and adjust the work that is being accomplished. The IDP process also provides a means of enabling the student to take responsibility for, and actively participate in, accomplishing goals and objectives. This mutual planning process enables the students to develop individual ownership of the plan and helps them learn that their choices and actions can lead directly to specific outcomes. Valuable skills in goal setting and planning can also be developed.



Developing an IDP is not a new concept in direct service delivery. However, a close look at the processes of developing IDPs indicates that they are often more perfunctory than dynamic. It's important that what gets produced is a carefully crafted strategy to help the students get from where they are to where they want to be. Case managers must be the primary case-plan guide or monitor, leading students through activities and services. Students should be encouraged to negotiate the systems, demonstrating for themselves and others their capacity and the specific areas around which they need assistance. YouthBuild programs should show patience and remain flexible. When performance outcomes occur, results will be enduring because students are self-motivated.

Case managers must be careful not to do things for youth that they can do for themselves. Self-reliance is not just an end goal; it is a developing process throughout the journey. By the end of the case-planning process, or sooner, the responsibility for plan implementation is put into the control of the student. This allows case managers to differentiate among the youth to whom they are accountable, and can then offer assistance based upon specific needs and in varying degrees of intensity. Case managers are also available for coaching, to the extent necessary, recognizing that a student who is not actively working their plan is not in partnership. Proceeding with students through the specifics of their plan, when they are clearly not invested in the change effort, is futile.

Revisits to the assessment and planning process should take place as often as needed, and should emphasize partnership development, goal identification, clarification, and ownership. Every effort should be made to encourage students to invest in the partnership that will help them to reach their goals and experience their personal capacity (*Center for Youth and Communities, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University, 1989*).

## Characteristics of an individual development plan

The individual development plan (IDP) is a single part of the participant's record. Different YouthBuild programs may include more information than others in the IDP, but, generally, background information is kept to a minimum. The document should be thorough yet concise enough to easily comprehend and amended. Many types of forms can be used effectively to develop a comprehensive IDP. However, every IDP form, regardless of the format, should include the following components:

- Identification information
- Brief summary of assessment information, including assets as well as any barriers to goal achievement
- Long-term goals for careers, employment, and training or education that are directly linked to the assessment process and the local labor market
- Measurable short-term goals or objectives that directly correspond to the long-term goals
- Services or activities to accomplish the short-term goals and other resources needed (including support services)
- Time frames: projected start and end dates of services and schedules for subsequent contacts between the case manager and the youth, achievement of goals, and other agreements.
- Assessment, IDP, and services received that all relate to each other
- Organizations or individuals who will provide the services and resources
- Identified tasks and responsibilities of the student
- Identified tasks and responsibilities of the case manager, family members, or others
- Signatures of the case manager and the young person.

An IDP should always be viewed as a living document that changes over time. The case manager should review the IDP with a student regularly, in planned intervals, to record progress and outcomes and note any changes in goals, plans, and timetables.

## Goal setting

Goal setting is a key component in the development of an IDP, and each student should be actively involved in this goal-setting process from the very start.

The process has several key steps:

- 1. Assessment results and career exploration that takes into account the local labor market should drive the selection of long- and short-term goals.** Assessment results influence the types of short-term objectives that are created as building blocks toward the long-term goals. Therefore, the goal-setting process starts with a thorough review of the information obtained during the assessment process to answer the questions "Where is the person now?" "What assets can be built upon?" "What is needed to overcome barriers and achieve success?"

2. **The student and the case manager then work as partners to negotiate mutual agreements in response to the question “Where do you want to go?”** Both need to own the career and academic goals resulting from this process.
3. **The case manager works with the student to define his career goal.** Career and education goals, and goals that relate to the achievement of the career and education goals, should be identified. For each primary or long-term goal, there should be a set of sequenced short-term goals or objectives leading to the long-term goal. This enables the youth to achieve regular “wins.” Each objective should be a measurable, achievable, time-limited, success-oriented outcome rather than a description of process. The organization should establish in advance what constitutes success.
4. **Additional goals related to positive family relationships and responsibilities as well as civic engagement and leadership may be incorporated into specific goals within the IDP.**

Short-term goals need to be achievable within a short time period so the student can have a sense of accomplishment. Goals consist of a time frame, an outcome, and a measure of successful attainment. Therefore, simply participating in an activity is not an adequate goal.

Some examples of how long-term goals are related to short-term goals are as follows:

***Example: Long-term employment goal: Electrician***

***Short-term goals:***

- Successfully complete YouthBuild construction component
- Complete GED
- Apply and gain admission to Electrical Apprenticeship program

***Activities and services:***

- Assistance with transportation
- Tutoring services to increase math scores
- Research apprenticeship electrician program

***Example: Long-term goal: Enter college***

***Short-term goal:***

- Increase reading score by one grade level in eight weeks

***Activity and services:***

- Tutoring two hours a day, three days a week
- Register for preparation for GED skills class

5. **After identifying the long-term and short-term goals, the goals and objectives should be time-sequenced and prioritized.** What does the student want to focus his attention on the most? The case manager must be aware that the student can tackle only so much at any one time. Together, they must devise an action plan that focuses on the “bite-size” pieces, one or two at a time.

6. **Once “where to go” is defined, the student and the case manager can determine who does what and which persons or institutions need to be involved.** At this point, the programs and services offered by the YouthBuild program can be fit, at appropriate places, into the student’s development plan and linkages can be made as appropriate to other partnering organizations for needed services not available through the YouthBuild.
7. **Finally, to demonstrate understanding and ownership, the student should restate the goals developed clearly in his own words** (*Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University, 1989*).

Within a YouthBuild program, short- and long-term goals need to be sufficiently uniform so that they carry a common meaning for all staff and can be aggregated for statistical analysis and establish a standard of value.

## **Tips for helping youth set goals and developing an IDP**

In *Making Case Management Work*, Beverly Ford suggests some of the following questions may be of assistance to case managers during the process of developing an IDP.

### **Long-term employment goal**

If a young person can identify a long-term job goal, the case manager should ask what he knows about the job skills and education required, the employment outlook, and the working conditions. The student’s research of this information can become a part of the plan.

As part of the career assessment the case manager can ask questions such as:

- Tell me about your interest in . . .
- What brought about your interest in . . .
- What do you like about this job? Dislike?
- What do you know about . . .
- What do you need to know to make sure this is the right job for you? (Suggest areas: opportunities, wages, working conditions, etc.)
- How would this job fit in with your family responsibilities?

If a student is unsure of a goal, the case manager can explore how a goal can be developed, by suggesting some of the activities below:

- List the people you most admire and what they do
- List what you like to do and what you are good at doing
- List the most rewarding jobs you can think of
- List the best, most fun, or worst jobs you can think of
- Watch TV for an evening and list all the jobs you see

Alternatively, the case manager can ask questions such as the following to help the student identify a career goal:

- What do you like to do?
- What kinds of jobs do you like to do?
- What are you good at doing?
- What are your hobbies?
- What jobs have you seen that interested you?

*Note: This type of discussion does not necessarily result in an informed long-term career goal decision. Use of formal interest surveys, followed by a full career exploration process, can assist youth in choosing a long-term career goal.*

### **Short-term goals and objectives**

Short-term goals are simply the series of action steps a person must take to accomplish a long-term goal. These action steps should be small, specific, and achievable.

**Example:** *Poor action step—get family support*

**Effective action step:** *Talk to your grandmother about taking care of children on weekdays during construction training.*

When developing the IDP, a case manager can ask a student to identify the action steps for each long-term goal by asking questions such as the ones listed below:

- What steps are necessary to get this done?
- What should be done first, second, etc.?
- What could help get this done?
- What could stand in the way?

### **Time frames**

- What seems to you to be a reasonable time frame for getting this done? Let's look at the calendar and identify how much time there is between now and the time to achieve the long-term goal and divide the time into units (or months, semesters, seasons—anything that is easy to remember).
- *If the time frame is too long:* That seems a little long to me, what do you think about setting a shorter deadline.

### Sharing responsibility

- What could help you get this done by the deadline?
- What could stand in your way?
- How do you suggest we divide up the responsibilities for getting this done?
- What part do you think you could handle?
- What part would you like me to do?

## Using an IDP form

Some YouthBuild programs have integrated a volunteer mentoring relationship into the program, wherein the mentor picks up on the contents of the IDP and supports the student actively in achieving the goals and objectives described therein. This relationship may continue after the student graduates from the YouthBuild program. The case manager may coordinate the engagement of mentors, or this may be done by a mentor coordinator. In either case, the process will build on the IDP plan.

All information, including employment, education, personal development goals, short-term goals, and plans of action for achieving all goals, should be recorded on the IDP form. The IDP form used by an agency should be standardized for all case managers. It may be used to summarize assessment results, goals, and activities across case managers. It doesn't need to record every detail of the process. Medical information should be kept separate from case notes. Supplemental forms may be used to gather background information.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For sample IDP (or life plan) forms, please see the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

# Chapter 3

## Implementing the Individual Development Plan and Monitoring Outcomes



YouthBuild



## Overview

Building connections between YouthBuild students and various organizations, and among the organizations themselves, is a way of linking services to the individual development plan (IDP). There are several broad categories of activities that will bring results: facilitating communication, identifying appropriate services, convening the players, connecting students with services, preparing students to maximize services, providing pre-appointment reminders, and following up after the appointment.



## Facilitating communication

The case manager needs to serve as the central point of contact, informing the various players of their roles in the case plan, giving them appropriate background information, and being aware of changes in the IDP when they occur. There needs to be an awareness of the service(s) the student is referred to and continuing knowledge of how well students are doing once services have been initiated.

## Identifying appropriate services

The IDP, and its identified goals, should govern the types of services that are appropriate for a particular student. The case manager acts as an advocate for the student to ensure that she receives those services that address her unique needs. To access the full array of services available in a community, the YouthBuild program should identify community services meeting criteria such as accessibility and effectiveness. No-cost agreements and financial contracts for provision of services can be negotiated and executed. Experience with the YouthBuild program informs the type of services likely to be needed, allowing the program to be proactive in executing desirable and potential linking processes. Procedures should be designed to expedite communications, make or obtain linkages, facilitate co-enrollment, conduct follow-up, share student files and data, understand an organization's confidentiality rules, and provide information for reporting and evaluation.

The case manager needs to have a comprehensive picture of what is available within the organization or within the community—as well as the nature and quality of these services. Case managers can visit other service providers and receive an orientation on each service available to their program participants. To help case managers become more knowledgeable about available services, for example, one youth project in Milwaukee gives its youth workers the added responsibility of monitoring service providers for contract compliance.

The case manager's role in identifying needed services is particularly vital because the case manager's cross-organizational perspective provides the opportunity to have a comprehensive picture of the work of all organizations with a given student and to identify any deficiencies in the services provided.

Although this guide is designed primarily for frontline case managers, YouthBuild administrators also play a critical role by designing programs that enable students to accomplish their IDP goals. This includes identifying or making available a variety of career, employment, educational, and other developmental options.

## Convening the players

The case manager serves as a bridge between the program and other agencies and organizations that serve youth (such as the Workforce Investment Act Career Center, the school system, the courts, the foster-care system, or the department of vocational rehabilitation). Using a “case conference” approach when needed and appropriate, the case manager consults individuals involved in the student’s IDP, the student, her family, and significant others. YouthBuild programs throughout the country are utilizing case conferencing very effectively and there are many models to draw upon if this process is new to the reader.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

See the YouthBuild Community of Practice for more information on case conferencing.

## Connecting youth with services

The case manager should give the student every opportunity to demonstrate, initiate, and develop competence in accessing services, while matching expectations to the skills and readiness of the individual. The selection of high-support versus low-support referrals should be made on a student-by-student basis. Unfortunately, sometimes a case manager assumes that the automatic way to obtain a service for a student is to provide the name of an organization, a contact person, and a phone number and then leave it to the person to make contact with that organization or individual. During the early stages of a case-management relationship, this approach rarely works. Instead, before making a referral, the case manager should determine how much the student could do for herself. For example:

- In a high-support situation, a case manager may make all arrangements, accompany the student to whatever appointments are necessary to establish a linkage, and provide a lot of support to get the student comfortably settled in the desired service.
- In another high-support situation, the case manager may make a phone call, summarize the student’s situation to a known contact person at the other organization, and then put the student on the phone to schedule the appointment.
- In another case with less support (middle support), the case manager may prepare the student to handle an entire call, and then have the student place the call while in the case manager’s office.
- In a lower support situation, the case manager may say: “Here is the name and phone number of the person we talked about. Call her tomorrow.”

What is critical to the above processes is that the case manager maintains a coordinative and advocate role, understanding that these outside services must be integrated into the student’s IDP and experienced seamlessly by the student.

## **Preparing YouthBuild students for linkages to the larger community of service providers**

Students who need high support or middle support benefit from pre-linkage preparation. Prior to linking the student with a selected service, a case manager can minimize any referral-related anxiety by keeping things personal. Remarks such as “I’ve got a friend, who I want to introduce you to, who can work with us to get you what you want.” Or, “I’m going to set you up with an appointment at Agency X. I’ve used them before, and I really recommend them. They’ve done a good job handling issues similar to yours with several other people I work with.” The case manager may also find it helpful to describe what will probably happen when the student first visits the organization providing a particular service. This step reduces fear of the unknown, provides a chance for students to express feelings of anxiety or frustration, and allows time to identify and consider any difficult issues related to the linkage. The case manager can review questions that might be asked during the first contact appointment, forms of identification that might be required or other written material that the student should take to the appointment, and outcomes that might be expected from the appointment.

When an appointment date and time have been set, the case manager should make sure that the student writes it down and also enters it in the IDP rather than relying on memory. It may also be helpful to discuss how the student will get to the appointment on time and where in the building the contact person is located. Finally, the case manager should ask the student to call her immediately after the appointment and to describe how it went.

### **Providing pre-appointment reminders**

In high-support situations, the case manager may want to contact the student on the day before the appointment to provide a reminder about the appointment and also address any last-minute misgivings.

### **Following up after the appointment**

After the appointment, the case manager should call both the student and the organizational contact. By calling both individuals, the case manager can:

- Confirm that the student actually showed up at the appointment.
- Identify what happened at the appointment as viewed through the eyes of both parties, if confidentiality is not an issue and the student agrees to this exchange of information. (Standard waiver forms signed by each student are a good idea to ensure that appropriate information can be shared by multiple organizations and individuals working with a particular student. Procedures need to be in place to ensure that no violations of individual privacy rights, such as protection of medical information, can occur.)
- Determine the student’s next steps and whether the case manager’s support is needed in the implementation of those steps, or whether a revision of the IDP is required.
- Take corrective action (such as rescheduling) if the student did not attend the appointment as scheduled.

The case manager may find it helpful to enter on a desk calendar the names of students scheduled for appointments on a particular day (youth's name, organization and contact, and other pertinent information). There are also several software programs available for managing contacts and appointments.

### **Monitoring services**

Once a student has been successfully enrolled into a program or services, the case manager monitors service delivery to:

- Assure that needed services are being provided,
- Verify that the service plan is being properly carried out and to what effect,
- Assist with problems that come up,
- Maintain the student-case manager relationship, and
- Provide encouragement and nurture the student's motivation to achieve the goals set.

This monitoring should focus on both the service provider and the student. When monitoring the delivery of services, a case manager can be guided by three questions:

- Is the service called for by the IDP being delivered?
- Is the service having the desired result?
- Does the service seem to be sufficient?

The conclusions reached through monitoring may require a modification of the individual development plan.

### **Motivating and encouraging**

Motivation is a need or desire that causes us to act. Everyone brings some motivation with them. However, motivation is complex and there may be several motives for any one action or behavior. A case manager's role in nurturing motivation to change and achieve goals includes the following:

- Identifying the motivators that students bring with them.
- Avoiding focusing on what the case manager wishes motivated the youth.
- Identifying the costs of change—what is keeping the student committed to the status quo.
- Showing students how their motivations can be met through a specific program.
- Preparing and helping students cope with the costs of change.
- Using external motivators to strengthen internal motivators.
- Structuring success experiences.

- Praising successes, especially small ones.
- Redefining failures as partial successes.
- Using tangible incentives to reward success.
- Constantly reinforcing original motivators.
- Providing a support network.

## Recognition systems

A recognition system designed and implemented by the YouthBuild program or the case manager is a particularly essential key to success. To spur achievement, a recognition system must be:

- **Measurable**—acknowledge tangible behaviors or achievements.
- **Specific**—identify what the reward is and how to get it.
- **Built around a desirable prize**—not necessarily something expensive, but something that is inherently prized or difficult to get otherwise.
- **Consistent**—anyone and everyone who achieves the benchmark gets the prize.
- **Frequent**—offering lots of small rewards for the achievement of small steps leading to a specific outcome or achievement, rather than one large reward after goal achievement.

Some possible milestones for recognition include perfect attendance, demonstrated improvement, positive attitude, obtaining GED, completion of training, and student of the week or month. Examples of tangible recognition symbols include a certificate, personal note, card, letter of reference to employer, cash, points redeemed for merchandise, travel, gift certificates, participation in a graduation ceremony, and a “Wall of Fame” bulletin board in a prominent area within the organization with photographs, names, and achievements posted. Properly designed and implemented incentive systems can be powerful motivators.

## Special challenges

Case managers will encounter many special challenges when implementing and monitoring the individual development plan. Three of those special challenges may be making a demand for change and growth, balancing firmness with empathy, and managing anger.

### Making a demand for change and growth

People are naturally ambivalent. There is a part of them that wants to change and grow, solve problems, and address any barriers to goal achievement—and another side that is pulling back from what is likely to be perceived as a difficult process. Changing often means discussing painful subjects, experiencing difficult feelings, recognizing one’s own contribution to the problems they are experiencing, and lowering defenses.

Deciding to change a problem situation often means tackling the difficult tasks of confronting someone directly or putting off immediate gratification.

People often avoid problem solving by changing the subject, overwhelming the case manager with the global nature of the problem (or a huge list of problems), externalizing the problem by blaming others involved, or by exhibiting any other of a number of signs of resistance. A skilled case manager recognizes and understands resistance as a natural part of change and the growth process. Hence, it is important for the case manager to make a consistent demand for change and growth (Schwartz, 1971).

## Balancing firmness with empathy

A person who sees a case manager as demanding, but not empathetic, may feel rejected. On the other hand, a person who sees a case manager who is empathic, but not firm, may take advantage of the relationship. Effective case management relies on the critical synthesis of these two behaviors (Gitterman & Shulman, 1986).

The demand for change is really a very broad concept and can be found in just about every phase of engagement. For example, all agreements established between the case manager and the student, if incorporated into the IDP, represent a demand for change. When case managers do not persist in having agreements honored, they are demonstrating their ambivalence about the necessity for or the potential of the person's efforts at change.

The demand for change can be made gently at times or strongly at other times. However, if the empathic quality is also present, the demand is more likely to be experienced by the student as real concern; the case manager cares enough about the person to insist that she does what they came together to do. Case managers must be confident about their work in order to stand firm in the face of resistance.

Certain key helping skills that facilitate firmly supporting goal achievement include:

- **Partializing**
- **Focusing**
- **Checking for artificial consensus**
- **Pointing to the illusion of change**
- **Identifying affective obstacles to change**

**Partializing.** Viewing problems as global and overwhelming is a form of defense.

***Example:** "You seem to be facing a number of difficulties at one time: trying to keep your boyfriend out of trouble, helping your little girl adjust to school, and learning new occupational skills. Perhaps we should try to prioritize these concerns, and then think about how and where they can or should connect so that you will not feel so overwhelmed."*

**Focusing.** When a theme begins to get difficult, people will sometimes change the subject as a means of avoidance. Consistent focusing by the case manager can be helpful.

**Checking for artificial consensus.** Artificial consensus, or putting a case manager off by seeming to agree with an observation or suggested course of action, can block further progress.

***Example:** “You say that you are going to be able to get your affairs in order by next Monday so that you can follow through with your training, but don’t you think that is really going to be very difficult for you?”*

**Pointing out the illusion of change.** Often the activity between the case manager and the student (as well as the independent activities) seems artificial and lacking a real investment. In these instances, it is appropriate for the case manager to challenge the student and demand a greater investment.

**Identifying affective obstacles to change.** Feelings can be substantial blocks (affective obstacles) in discussions with students as well as in getting them to follow through in various critical life arenas. Pointing out when feelings appear to block discussion or are blocking follow-through on a particular task is often essential.

***Example:** “Whenever we get close to talking about how you need to get a physical examination, you seem to tense up and change the subject. Can you talk about what is uncomfortable or frightening about this for you?”*  
(Center for Youth and Communities, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University, 1989)

## Managing anger

For occasional anger that presents a barrier, a case manager can use some of the following techniques:

- Try to determine why the student is angry—what is the root problem?
- Have the student keep an “anger diary” for one week. In it, have her write the time of the event, the event that triggered it, the intensity rating on a scale of 1 to 10, the duration of the angry feelings, what the student did, and what the consequence was.
- Have the student practice counting 10 breaths before reacting. Or better yet, to sleep on it.
- While the student is counting, have her imagine what it is like to be the provoker. Examples include “Maybe he’s having a rough day,” or “Maybe he’s just a jerk but I don’t have to act like one, too.”
- Help the student develop some appropriate responses once the cool-down interval is over. These responses might include turning the other cheek, walking away, using disarming phrases (for example, “You must be having a rough day”), distancing herself from the angry emotion, and describing to the provoker what set off the incident and what she wants done about it.



Some additional steps for a case manager to follow at the moment she is faced with a very angry student are:

- Establish mental distance from the student's anger. It's a situation, not a personal affront.
- Acknowledge the anger. Respond to the student with a "bad-good" statement: "I feel bad that you're so upset. But it's good you brought it to my attention. Let's see if we can fix the problem."
- Have the student describe exactly what is bothering her, and to be specific.

**Example:**

**Student:** *"The instructor is **always** putting me down."*

**Case manager:** *"Give me some examples." When the student offers two and can't think of any more, the case manager restates the problem: "So, the instructor has put you down **twice** since you began the program."*

- Have the student express exactly how she feels about the situation. Don't let her accuse or evaluate the provoker, just express the emotion.
- Have the student specify exactly what she wants done about the situation.
- Ask the student to tell what the consequences will be if she does not get satisfaction. Cut through bluffs and bullying. Example: "You say if you don't get back into this program you'll write the mayor and have us all fired. You are free to do that of course. But wouldn't it be better to find out first if there isn't a better solution that will help you get what you want?" (Cygnet, 1995)



## **Time Management – Determining the Youth Most in Need**

### **Using “triage” to identify high-risk youth who need intensive support**

A case manager’s time is limited, and she may not be able to give equal attention to all students. One solution is to immediately identify which students are likely to need extra attention and support. The old military medical system of triage works well here. Using assessment results, case notes, and participant interviews, the case manager will determine what level of support specific students are likely to need.

In the following lists, classification should be assigned only if the student meets all of the listed characteristics. If one or more is not true, the student should be reclassified to the next support category.

#### **Limited support**

- Strong, clear career goal
- Can realistically learn the skills within allotted time frame
- Personal life under control
- Support from family and friends
- Stable housing
- Stable childcare
- Reliable transportation
- No ongoing illnesses with student or immediate family
- History of completing tasks or solving problems
- Good work history
- Positive attitude, inner-directed

#### **Moderate support**

- Shows genuine interest in career goal
- Will be a struggle to learn skills, but still achievable
- Has some personal problems but is getting help in solving them or shows progress in solving them
- Friends and family are not discouraging
- Stable housing
- Stable childcare
- Reliable transportation

- If there are illnesses in family, adequate help is already being provided; the situation is under control
- History of completing most tasks and trying to solve problems
- Spotty work history, but good reasons for lapses
- Positive attitude; may need clear direction at times

### **Intensive support**

- No career goal or low commitment to career goal. May be just “giving it a try”
- In at least one area, skills are extremely low. Staff feel achievement is doubtful
- Major personal problems that have caused the student to miss work, school, or some other appointment
- Friends or family are discouraging the student from pursuing a job or training
- Unstable housing
- Unstable childcare
- Unreliable transportation
- Ongoing illness (student or immediate family). Adequate health care not in place or student is non-compliant
- Poor history of completing tasks or solving problems
- Poor work history or little work experience
- Negative attitude toward some aspect of training, work, or self. Not self-motivated. Requires others to make decisions for them

Some case managers write a support code such as LS (low support) or HS (high support) at the top of the plan as a reminder of case-management needs.

By linking students with appropriate services, encouraging the completion of goals set in the IDP, and monitoring services, a case manager can facilitate the attainment of one or more desired outcomes—skills, a diploma, a credential, or employment. After achieving these outcomes, a case manager can continue to assist a student in their career by providing follow-up and retention services, as described in the next chapter.

# Chapter 4

## The Critical Role of Follow-Up Services



YouthBuild

## Overview

Follow-up services facilitate youth development and retention in employment and education placements and provide for the tracking and data collection required to measure performance. There is a significant risk that young people placed in jobs may lose those jobs relatively quickly. The job departure may occur very quickly in the first week or first 30 days of employment. This creates a lose-lose situation for both the young person experiencing failure and the employer faced with the disruption and cost of staff turnover. Similarly, many young people attending high school, community colleges, four-year colleges, or specialized training programs have left those programs before completing the course of study and obtaining a degree or credential. Many young people lack the kind of family support that enables them to overcome obstacles and difficulties inherent in maintaining employment or continuing education or training. The relationship staff have developed with students, and the continuing access to program support services, can be enormously important in promoting success.



YouthBuild programs providing effective follow-up services can reverse these patterns, increase the return on the investment of time and money in pre-placement and placement services, and create win-win situations for young people, employers, funding organizations, and educational organizations.

**Follow-up (required for one year after graduation from the program) is especially important in the YouthBuild program as critical performance data are gathered during the quarters after youth have exited the program.** Many case managers have dual duty—they are responsible for monitoring students for that one year after they complete the YouthBuild program. Other programs are fortunate to have job developers or follow-up personnel devoted to keeping in touch with YouthBuild graduates and possibly coordinating alumni activities.

Follow-up services help each student:

- Work steadily and advance to better jobs,
- Attend alternative educational programs, post-secondary education or occupational skills training classes regularly, and
- Continue to grow, mature, and acquire adult competencies through participation in youth development, educational, or workforce development activities for a longer period of time.

Employers' needs for reduced turnover and a skilled, reliable workforce can be met through follow-up services. The desire of YouthBuild staff to increase entrance into additional education or training can also be met. Long-term evaluation studies showing significant income gains and academic achievement result from the investment in youth services. Such success generates increased public support for YouthBuild programs that can demonstrate this type of effectiveness.

There are two types of follow-up:

- **Follow-up for reporting and tracking purposes.** In YouthBuild programs, performance goals continue to be measured during the follow-up phase.
- **Follow-up services and activities after placement in a job or educational program facilitate further development and boost retention.** These follow-up services are an essential and integral part of the comprehensive, longer-term, goal-directed, youth development continuum of program service.

This chapter focuses on follow-up services and activities to achieve youth development, education, and employment goals, and presents a brief description of principles and best practices.

## Definitions

The definitions of some of the key words in this chapter are as follows:

- **Follow-up services** provide support and guidance after placement to facilitate sustained employment and educational achievement, advancement up a job or educational ladder, and personal development.
- **Retention** is sustained employment and connection to the workforce or continued participation in a long-term education or job training program until completion.
- **Advancement** includes achievement of higher employability skills, higher wages, benefits, better position, degrees or certificates.
- **Contact** means personal interactions between the young person and the individual providing follow-up services with direct or indirect job and personal counseling. Contacts include phone calls, social and recreational activities, meetings.

## Principles and Practices

### A supportive relationship before and after placement

A case manager can help a student successfully negotiate the world at large by listening, providing the right balance of autonomy and support, offering guidance and instrumental assistance (such as linkages and information), and showing interest, caring, and concern.

By being responsive to the changing developmental needs of students during pre-placement and placement activities, the case manager will be in a position to be very effective in providing follow-up services that will help students keep their job and/or stay in school. **If different staff are assigned follow-up responsibilities, case managers should introduce the follow-up staff to each youth and jointly work with them prior to the beginning of the follow-up period.**

It is important that case managers keep in mind that their goal is to support students in becoming self-sufficient. Trying to be all things to all students is an unreasonable expectation that can impede the students in developing their own ability to successfully navigate the world around them. This is also one of the most common reasons for staff burnout. Providing more intensive support for students with the greatest needs and gradually reducing the intensity of the support as they become more self-sufficient is not only a good time management strategy, but it also encourages positive personal development.

## **Post-placement expectations and support**

After students have achieved their goals (such as increasing their reading level, gaining their GED, obtaining a job, or enrolling in college) and are quite busy eight hours a day either working or going to school, they frequently lose interest in remaining connected to the case manager and receiving follow-up services. Before the student exits the YouthBuild program, the case manager should determine, with the student, what will be needed to ensure success after program participation ends. For example, supportive services such as childcare and transportation may be needed to help the student adapt to a new shift schedule, or drug abuse counseling sessions may need to continue. Employers may want help in coaching the former students or new employees on continuing improvement in employability skills.

Listed below are some engaging types of follow-up activities that will keep former students connected to the program and provide the opportunity for continued support and counseling to facilitate retention, questions to ask during follow-up activities that will help pinpoint areas for support, and schedules to provide a structure for support activities.

### **Engaging follow-up activities**

Some programs may be able to offer evening and weekend social, recreational, and cultural activities for small groups of individuals on the case manager's caseload. Many YouthBuild programs maintain active alumni groups and engage these young people in follow-up activities. These activities provide opportunities for informal job counseling, development of peer support groups, and networking activities. Such activities might include a movie, basketball game, dinner, picnic, hike, concert, play, or an introduction to a new sport. These fun developmental activities serve multiple purposes

- They get former students to the table
- They broaden the students' horizons and help them find areas that match their interests and skills
- They build positive peer relationships and strengthen the relationship with the case manager
- They offer opportunities to plan activities and make decisions
- They provide a vehicle for employment and education-related mentoring. To derive all these benefits, if practical, a case manager should participate in the activities rather than simply refer the former student to the activities.

### Suggested activities:

- Meeting for lunch during the workday
- Skill-improvement classes and workshops in the evening, such as computer skills, scholarships or college loans, job networking, and job advancement
- Phone calls before or after work, or on Saturday
- Home visits (accompanied by another staff person)
- Birthday and holiday greeting cards
- Newsletters designed and produced by YouthBuild alumni (these may contain achievements of graduates, or tips and comments from graduates who are working or are in college)
- Peer tutoring and mentoring (YouthBuild graduates who are working can tutor or mentor students in pre-placement activities and serve as guest speakers during evening workshops.)
- Alumni activities: hold monthly or quarterly “class reunions” for groups. Ask each group to elect two or three class representatives before completion of the group activity, and encourage the representatives to take responsibility for notifying every one of scheduled events and assisting in planning the events
- Support group meetings (for example, meetings for young mothers and young fathers)
- Community-service projects
- Speaking engagements to represent the program in policy, communications, or fundraising activities, or serving on community policy boards

### Work-related questions to ask during follow-up activities

Some types of work-related questions that can be asked during the follow-up activity that will help the case manager pinpoint areas for counseling and advice are as follows:

- How do you get along with your supervisor? Your coworkers?
- What part of your job do you enjoy the most? Which tasks are the easiest? The hardest?
- Do you have a copy of your employer’s personnel policy manual? Are there any policies in it that you don’t understand?
- What time did you arrive at work?
- Did you take a break? If so, at what time? What do you do on your break?
- When do you eat lunch? Who do you eat with?
- What do you wear?
- When things get slow, what do you do?
- Have you ever been asked to do things you don’t know how to do?
- Do you use the phone for any personal phone calls?

- Are there other jobs within your company that you'd like to have? Why? What is required to get those jobs?
- Are you having any problems with your personal life?
- What is your employer's policy on drug testing?
- How do you get to work each day?
- Is the work or job what you expected?
- How do you feel at the end of the day?
- When you don't understand how to do something or what to do, who do you ask?
- Tell me a little about your coworkers.
- What have you learned about yourself?
- What do your parents think about your job?
- What do your friends think about your job? What does your boyfriend or girlfriend think?
- What did you accomplish today?
- What worked well today? How would you rate your day?
- What do you need to do to complete probation? To get a promotion?
- Which workers have been most helpful?
- What is happening in your family situation?
- What are your new goals (short and long)?

### **Education-related questions to ask during follow-up activities**

Some types of education-related questions to ask during a follow-up activity that will help the case manager pinpoint areas for counseling and advice are as follows:

- Tell me about your instructor(s) and the people in your class(es).
- Do you get along with your instructor? Your classmates?
- Which class do you enjoy the most? Why?
- Which class is the hardest? Why?
- What grade(s) do you think you'll receive? Why? What will you need to do to get an A?
- How will your grade be determined? (class participation, quizzes, papers)
- What time does class start? When do you arrive? How do you get to class?
- When you don't understand how to do something or what to do, who do you ask?
- Have you made any new friends in your classes?
- Is college or training what you expected?
- How do you feel at the end of each day?



- What are you learning about yourself?
- What do your parents think about your attending college or training?
- What do your friends think about your attending college or training?
- What does your boyfriend or girlfriend think about your attending college or training?
- What courses do you want to take next semester?
- How can you get information about the best courses to take next semester?

### **Schedule for follow-up services**

The case manager (or follow-up specialist) must maintain frequent, systematic contact and interaction with each young person after completion of program services or placement in a long-term education program or occupational skills training program or job. Job loss frequently occurs rapidly (that is, the first day, first week, or first month of employment). Similarly, the decision to drop out of an educational or skills training program may also be made suddenly during the first weeks. Thus, case managers need to provide particularly intensive support during the first part of the follow-up period. One schedule for interaction or contact between the case manager and a recent program completer recommended by an organization with extensive experience in providing follow-up services is listed below:

1. **First and fifth day** before or after work or classes during the **first week** of employment or enrollment in college or a training class. Talk over everything that happened.
2. **Once a week** for the next **six months**.
3. **Once a month after the first six months** unless a personal crisis requires intensive contact.

### **Staff schedules**

Case managers generally work non-traditional schedules in order to use the various follow-up methods suggested and provide services for recent program completers who are usually in school, working from nine to five, or attending college classes.

Non-traditional schedules provide time for the case manager to make school visits and job-site visits during typical work and school hours and still have time on the weekend or after a typical workday or school day for individual counseling and small group activities.

## Meeting total needs

It is important to maintain a network of services that continues to support the whole person and then help YouthBuild graduates access those services. The network of support services should include:

- Medical services
- Housing
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Workplace clothing supplements

Budgeting for follow-up activities is allowed under the YouthBuild program, but just as important is the case manager's ability to partner with other organizations that can provide additional and more extensive services to youth in follow-up. For example, good health is clearly linked to the ability to attend school regularly, complete a job-training course, and keep a job. Yet many young people—particularly those who have dropped out of school—have not had a recent physical examination to identify any health problems (even poor vision), or health care to address them. A case manager can play an important role in helping a young person identify and access health services that are available. This is particularly true if a major change has occurred, such as entrance into college, a work schedule that limits access to previous health providers, or a loss of insurance or lack of understanding of employer-provided health insurance benefits. Ideally, needs in these areas will be identified and addressed prior to any job placement or the provision of follow-up services. However, on an ongoing basis, the case manager should assess the need for assistance in these areas.

Many crises that cause job loss or poor attendance in post-secondary educational programs occur suddenly on the weekends or at night. If follow-up staff have cell phones and are on call for crisis management, this will help strengthen the personal bond between the recent program graduate and the case manager he turns to at the time the crisis occurs. It will also prevent job loss and the need for replacement in another job as well as poor attendance, which may lead to dropping out of school, college, or post-secondary training.

## Non-intrusive contact with employers and school staff

Follow-up retention services must be incorporated into the rhythm of the workday or school day without causing disruption.

### Employers

The case manager or placement specialist should visit the job site the first week of employment and meet the employer or supervisor. During the initial call to arrange a visit, or during introductions at the job site, the case manager can present himself as a career specialist who will help the young person succeed on the job and acquire new skills and education as needed. During the meeting, the case manager should leave a phone number for the supervisor to use. This interaction—and all conversations with employers—should be very brief.

After the first visit, the case manager should visit the job site once a month, meeting first with the employer and then the young person. Any contact with the young person during the workday should occur during lunch or a break period.

Employers may be interested in assisting youth develop additional skills, and they may value closer collaboration with the case manager in tracking and coaching youth during the follow-up period.

### **School and other staff**

Needless to say, case managers should talk with teachers, guidance counselors, and other staff at convenient times that will not single out or embarrass a young person or take staff away from assigned tasks such as teaching a class.

## **Access to better jobs, additional education, and continuing youth development**

### **Better jobs**

The opportunity to work with YouthBuild graduates placed in jobs for 12 months after placement provides the chance for case managers to help those young people take the first step up the workforce ladder.

As a result of their current skill levels and lack of work experience, new workers are often placed in jobs that are not related to their interests and, like many entry-level jobs, have undesirable features such as late or weekend hours, unpleasant supervisors, and low wages. While such positions generate income for the students, they should be encouraged to complete the activities in their IDPs that build the skill levels needed to reach their employment and educational goals. A case manager can help a young person retain an initial job for at least 6 to 12 months by working with the young person from the beginning of the initial placement to develop plans for moving on to a better job within that time. Some of the strategies that can be used in developing those plans are:

- Set short-term goals for mastering specific job skills. Encourage students to participate in training and skill development activities during employment.
- Provide individual job advancement strategies, advice, and encouragement to YouthBuild graduates for qualifying for raises and promotions in their current jobs.
- Hold career development workshops in the evening, after work hours.
- Arrange to have a staff job developer available to work with employed youth one evening each week, once a month, or on a Saturday.

### **Additional education**

Through follow-up services, case managers can help students stay in post-secondary education and obtain diplomas, select and complete long-term occupational skill training, or obtain specific credentials that will facilitate career advancement.

## Continuing youth development

Activities that foster continued personal development and encourage responsibility and other positive social behaviors are allowable expenditures as part of follow-up services. Such activities can include the employment and education-related services described above, as well as:

- Community and service-learning projects
- Peer-centered activities including peer mentoring and tutoring
- Organizational and teamwork training, including team-leadership training
- Training in decision making, including determining priorities
- Life-skills training, such as parenting and budgeting of resources

Other soft skills include developing positive social behaviors such as:

- Self-esteem building
- Openness to working with individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Positive attitudinal development
- Maintaining healthy life styles, including remaining alcohol and drug free
- Maintaining positive relationships with responsible adults and peers
- Contributing to the well-being of one's community through voting
- Maintaining a commitment to learning and academic success
- Avoiding delinquency
- Postponed or responsible parenting
- Positive job attitudes and work skills

## Rapid re-employment assistance

If job loss occurs, help the person understand and address the reasons for the job loss and move on quickly to look for another job. Try to help the person obtain a new job within four weeks. If the monthly job site visits or calls to the employer have indicated the new worker may be laid off or fired, help this person find the next job before the loss of the current one.

## Additional follow-up best practices

When resources permit, some additional strategies that can be used when providing follow-up services include:

- **Financial and nonfinancial incentives.** Provide financial incentives such as cash or gift certificates, as well as incentives that build self-esteem (such as personal recognition awards or certificates of achievement) for milestones such as six months of employment or an upgraded skill.

- **Emergency financial assistance.** Offer access to short-term financial assistance for emergencies such as care for a sick child or temporary housing.
- **Volunteer mentors at the job sites.** The case manager can work with the new employee and his supervisor to identify someone at the job site or college, who is willing to serve as a volunteer mentor.
- **Money management skill development.** Teach all participants about saving and acquiring other assets as a means of advancement (this skill is known as financial literacy).
- **Obtaining additional contacts for each new student during orientation.** Simply maintaining contact is one of the most challenging parts of providing follow-up services. The establishment of a strong personal bond between the case manager and the student, early in their association, and the engaging of personalized, creative types of contact described earlier in this chapter, will help address this challenge.
- **Due to high mobility, it is possible to lose contact suddenly.** It is helpful, during orientation or pre-placement activities, to ask each young person to provide the names, addresses, and phone numbers of (if possible) five individuals to be contacted in case of emergency (relatives, friends, and neighbors, for example). Also, if you are unable to locate a person during the follow-up stage (if, say, the person moved or is no longer working), try contacting other students who participated in the same YouthBuild cohort and request information.
- **Teaming of staff.** The teaming of staff may minimize the effect of any staff turnover on the YouthBuild graduate's connections to the organization providing follow-up services. Frequently, if a case manager leaves an organization, the group of young people with whom he was working breaks off contact with the organization because the personal bond connecting them to the organization has been broken. However, if two case managers team up for small group activities after work with each case manager inviting two or four youths to join the activity, then personal ties are formed with a second staff member, who can step in if the other individual leaves the organization. In such a situation, the caseload of the former case manager can be assigned as feasible to the second case manager while new enrollees are assigned to other case managers.
- **Driver's education and licensing fees.** Offer driver's education training and financial assistance with licensing fees. This will be an enticing motivational strategy since many young people are eager to get a driver's license. A license also opens the door to additional job opportunities.
- **Benchmarks for successes.** Identify benchmarks for success after placement. These benchmarks may include completing three months of employment, completing a first college course, the first A received, or receiving all As.
- **Celebrations.** Through phone calls, cards, parties, gift certificates, newsletters, and other strategies, celebrate the achievement of each benchmark of success.

# Chapter 5

## Documentation: Record Keeping and Case Notes



YouthBuild

## Overview

Record keeping is an essential component of case management. It plays a critical role in supporting the work of the YouthBuild program. Individual records are used in planning, implementing, and evaluating the services for each young person.

A record includes the following:

- Eligibility documents
- Assessment documentation
- The individual development plan (IDP) or life plan
- Records of participation in activities
- Documentation of credentials and diplomas achieved
- Documentation of other outcomes attained (such as employment)
- Case notes



Much of this information can be stored electronically in the MIS. Some agencies combine these items in different formats (electronic and hard copy), which is perfectly acceptable, as long as the information is secure, that is, kept in a locked or passcode-protected filing cabinet or room.

The case record is a focal point for accountability to the young person, to the organization, to the government organization providing funding, and the youth-serving profession in general. This chapter presents a summary of some guidelines for recording case notes, organizing case files, and establishing an internal quality assurance system to facilitate maintaining high standards for documentation in YouthBuild case files.

## Case Notes

In general, a case note resulting from a face-to-face meeting or conversation should include these elements:

- A description of the context of the conversation or interview (for example, the student dropped by after school or responded to the case manager's request for a meeting)
- The purpose of the conversation
- Observations (student appearance, seating, or manner, for example)
- Content of the conversation—a summary of the issues raised by the young person or the case manager
- Outcome—Was the purpose of the meeting achieved? Were other objectives achieved?
- Impression and assessment
- Plans for next steps or the next meeting.

In addition, a case manager should document second-hand information received from other sources such as teachers, employers, and family members, indicating the source, name, and date the information was received.

**Example:** *“On 9/24/09 spoke with Jim’s mother who stated “...*

All conversations and events should be documented as soon as possible after their occurrence (preferably at the end of a phone conversation, at the end of a day, or immediately after a young person leaves the case manager’s office). However, many case managers suggest that the notes taken should not be recorded in the presence of the young person.

It is particularly important to document facts that directly relate to the goals and objectives of the individual development plan, including dates of services, attendance, outcomes, and evaluation techniques. The case manager should document all successes and show how they are linked to the plan. A copy of any credential, certificate, grade, or progress report obtained should be placed in the case file and annotated, as well as any other records and notes forwarded from other professionals.

**Example:** *“Received progress report 9/24 from Jim’s social worker, Ellen Garber, indicating completion of probationary period”.*

Similarly, the case manager should document all failures and state reasons for the failures, if known. If services are not to be provided, a statement as to why the services are not provided (for example, a failed urine test) should be entered in the case notes as well as any follow-up actions. However, derogatory comments, speculation, or comments that indicate personal frustrations should never be recorded.

Case notes should be simple, legible, factual, concise, and signed by the case manager. The notes should contain information that, should a case manager be reassigned, any new case manager or partnering agency would find useful in facilitating the continuity of services.

It is particularly important for the case manager to remember that note taking is very important but never more important than the young person. In some cases, where behavior change is a program objective, case notes may need to be more detailed.



Listed below are examples of some weak case notes and case notes that were revised for the better (Cygnet, 1995).

**Example: Weak case notes**

| DATE    | COMMENTS   |
|---------|--|
| 8/19/09 | Randy is a youth presently in the school district.   |
|         | Even the continuation high school dropped him. His mom was wondering if he could have dyslexia since his sister does. We will check into this. |
|         | Randy is very immature so I hope he makes it. Keeping his attention for the initial screening was a challenge.                                 |

**Problems**

- Labeled opinion, “Randy is immature.” as though it were a fact.
- No specific plan created for dyslexia issue.
- No timeframes or statements of responsibility.

**Example: Better case notes**

| DATE    | COMMENTS  |
|---------|---|
| 8/19/09 | Randy is a youth not presently enrolled in the school district. He reports that the continuation high school dropped him because of his attendance.       |
|         | Randy’s mother sat in on the initial appointment. She thought Randy might be dyslexic because he has a sister who is.                                     |
|         | During the appointment, at times Randy appeared distracted and uninterested.  |
|         | He stared out the window and had to have questions repeated several times and hesitated before answering simple questions, often deferring to his mother. |
|         | <b>ACTION ITEMS</b>   |
|         | 1. Case Manager (CM) will call school district to get information on learning disability testing by Thursday  |
|         | 2. Randy will bring in remaining documentation  |
|         | 3. Randy and CM will meet Thursday at 1:00  |
|         | 4. CM will find out if program can pay for testing—answer by Thursday @ 1:00  |
|         | 5. Above steps will be reviewed at next appointment   |

**Example: Weak case notes**

| DATE   | COMMENTS  |
|--------|---|
| 5/9/09 | Randy met the job developer two weeks ago. He is immature and may need work experience before a private sector placement. |
|        | Randy missed most of last week being sick   |

**Problems**

- Labeled opinion, “Randy is immature,” as though it were a fact.
- Contains no backup plan for how the CM made the decision that Randy needs work experience.
- No specific plan created.
- No time frames or statements of responsibility.
- No appointment set.

**Example: Better case notes**

| DATE   | COMMENTS  |
|--------|---|
| 5/9/09 | Randy reported meeting with the job developer on 5/7/09. Reported that job developer suggested work experience as opposed to private sector placement. Randy expressed interest in the work experience program. Stated that transportation would pose a difficulty. Reviewed his attendance in career exploration – missed 5 days last week because of flu. |
|        | <b>ACTION ITEMS</b>   |
|        | 1. CM will discuss work experience placement with job developer by tomorrow am  |
|        | 2. CM will review Randy's eligibility for WEX   |
|        | 3. Randy will call CM tomorrow afternoon to discuss CM findings   |
|        | 4. Randy will get bus schedule for the Deadman's Gulch region by Friday   |
|        | 5. No plan necessary for attendance   |
|        | 6. Will set schedule for next CM/client appointment tomorrow when Randy calls   |

### Sample retention case notes

Youth: Jolinda Ramirez

Company: General Automotive Co.

| DATE    | COMMENTS   |
|---------|--|
| 5/1/09  | Jolinda started her job today at General Insurance Company as an Assistant Bookkeeper I. I met with her this morning at her job site. She was early this morning—no problems with the bus. I spoke with Jolinda's supervisor, Marion Arnold, who said things look good so far.—S. Johnson.   |
| 5/08/09 | I visited Jolinda today; she's been on the job one week. Says she likes her job—but said she forgets what Marion, her supervisor, tells her sometimes. I suggested she keep a notebook where she can write all her instructions. Her child is fine. Spoke with Marion who mentioned that Jolinda's a bit forgetful. But says Jolinda has a great attitude. Told her about notebook suggestion and we'll give it a try.—S. Johnson  |
| 5/14/09 | Jolinda missed work yesterday because her daughter had a fever and she couldn't keep her in daycare. We discussed alternative daycare and Jolinda said her Aunt Susan has agreed to watch the child during short emergencies. She likes job, is using her notebook and doing better with instructions. Said one co-worker, Crystal, gives her a bit of a hard time, but she's just ignoring her for now. Talked to Marion who sees improvement in Jolinda's mastery of tasks. No other concerns now. I mentioned Crystal, and Marion said she'd keep an eye on it. —S. Johnson |
| 5/22/09 | Saw Jolinda today. Her daughter is fine and Crystal hasn't been a problem. She received a notice yesterday from the electric company that they're going to cut off her service because she had not paid 2 previous bills. She called them and told them she could pay next week, but the electric company said because this is the 3rd time, they wouldn't give any more extensions. I called the electric company, explained situation (vouched that Jolinda was working) and asked for 1-week extension. They agreed.—S. Johnson   |
| 5/25/09 | Jolinda called and said she wanted to quit her job. She finally told me that Crystal has been threatening her and taking things off her desk. Jolinda hasn't spoken to Marion because she's afraid. I called Marion who said she'd switch Crystal to another building.—S. Johnson  |
| 5/26/09 | Stopped by to see Jolinda. She's still on job. We met with Marion and discussed situation with Crystal and that seems taken care of. We talked about possible ways Jolinda can learn more skills. Marion said she would pair Jolinda with an Assistant Bookkeeper II because there might be some future openings. Child is fine. Bus is working out.—S. Johnson  |

## Content and organization of case files

The standardization of the contents and organization of the case files to ensure uniformity and consistency throughout all case file records aids in ensuring effective service delivery. It helps case managers, supervisors, and monitors locate information quickly and ensures a seamless and holistic service delivery system.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Division of Youth Services has suggested that organizations consider the following requirements for the contents of case files:

- Case file documentation should be:
  - Complete and comprehensive
  - Written in black or blue ink or typewritten
  - Entered in a computer database or printed on paper.
- Whether handwritten or computer generated, each case file page should indicate the youth's name and any other identifying number(s), such as the social security number. Each entry made by the case manager should be signed and dated. Where electronic records are used, the site should ensure the integrity of the documentation.
- Case files should be kept secured.
- Case files should encompass, at a minimum, youth demographic information including:
  - Residence, address and telephone number
  - Emergency contact person(s)
  - Copies of documents supporting eligibility
  - Assessment results
  - An updated copy of the youth's individual development plan
  - Correspondence
  - Copies of certificates or diplomas
  - Verification of placements (job, training, or education)
  - Documentation of short- and long-term goal completion
  - Attendance records as applicable
  - Case notes
  - Other information pertinent to the enrollee.
- Case files should contain proof of services delivered and documentation of outcomes. Some items can be scanned and thus maintained in an electronic format.
- Copies of assessments and reassessments, including a copy of the initial, on-site assessment of enrollee needs, which addresses the youth's strengths and assets; social, economic, academic, or functional status; long-term training choices; placement choices; family support; environmental and special needs. Pre- and post-test results for the measurable objectives should be kept in the file.

- Copies of the enrollee's placement history and service plans, including the long-term measurable goals and the activities planned and completed to achieve those goals. The individual development plan, based on the enrollee's needs assessment, allows the youth to gain social, economic, academic, or functional skills or maintain or increase her current functioning level.
- Documentation that the case manager has evaluated the participant's current status and the effectiveness of services being delivered. This can be accomplished by reviewing enrollee goals to determine if they are appropriate, if they have been met, or how services might be adjusted to better serve the youth. Such efforts should incorporate housing, clothing, food, transportation, child daycare, academic, medical, mental health, vocational, and post placement follow-up services being provided to the enrollee.
- Correspondence, including letters, local service provider contacts, and post placement follow-up and evaluations
- Case notes, including pertinent documentation of the type of contact made with the youth or all other persons who may be involved with the youth's care and career development.
- Documentation of the initial and regular consultation or collaboration with local service providers, if applicable.
- Other documentation as may be required by the program operator or funder, such as financial records

A sample file checklist follows.

## **SAMPLE: Guidelines for Member File Checklist**

*(Adapted from a former youth program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor)*

The file is divided into six sections. Please be sure that all documentation is located in the appropriate section.

| <b>Section I: Eligibility Documentation and Enrollment Information</b>  |
|---|
| <p>The documents within this section should be completed during the enrollment of the member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Membership Form</li><li>■ Eligibility Documentation (the documentation that is needed in order for the youth to become a member)</li><li>■ Age Verification Documentation</li><li>■ Residency Verification</li><li>■ Citizenship/Permanent Residency/Immigration Status Verifications</li><li>■ Selective Services Documentation</li><li>■ Parental Consent Form</li><li>■ Membership agreement (the terms and conditions that the youth agrees to before becoming a member)</li><li>■ Affidavit</li><li>■ Youth Member Consent Form</li><li>■ Member Emergency Medical Release Form (18 and older) or Parent/Guardian Emergency Medical Form (under 18)</li><li>■ Other: Copy of Social Security Card (some states do not permit copies of certain documents)</li><li>■ Signed copy of Completed Orientation</li></ul> |
| <b>Section II: Assessment Documentation</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Structured Assessment Interview Form</li><li>■ TABE scores (both the locator and survey)</li><li>■ Report Card (for in-school youth only)</li><li>■ Casey Life Skills Short Form Assessment Results (This assessment is computerized and the results are to be printed out.)</li><li>■ Career Interest Inventory (This assessment is also computerized and the results are to be printed out.)</li><li>■ Re-assessments (Any additional assessments that need to be done while the youth is a member.)</li></ul>  |
| <b>Section III: Additional Case File Content</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Individual Development Plan (IDP)</li><li>■ Monthly Case File extracts</li><li>■ Copies of referrals (internal and external referrals)</li><li>■ Documentation of Completions (Completion in any program activity)</li></ul>  |
| <b>Section IV: Correspondence and Other Information/Documentation</b>   |
| <b>Section V: Member's Portfolio of Progress and Achievements</b>   |
| <b>Section VI: Program Exit Documentation (Type of Program Exit; Case Notes Summary)</b>  |

**(END OF SAMPLE)**



## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

A sample case file can be found on the YouthBuild Community of Practice; Resource Room; Case Management; General Case Management; YB Case File Folder.

## Strategies for maintaining case files that comply with U.S. Department of Labor and Office of Management and Budget standards

Typically, completing paperwork and organizing files is the last item on most individuals' priority lists. However, most youth programs that receive federal funds are outcome-based, and accurate reporting is essential for demonstrating to Congress the effective use of public funds, which can impact future funding decisions. Listed below are some tips for maintaining accurate records and a tool for reviewing case files that may be of assistance to both case managers and case-management supervisors.

- The organization's management team should provide a written description of the standards for case files for all case managers, stress the importance of record keeping, and indicate that excellence in record keeping will be one of the factors considered during the annual performance review process (as well as a review of the participant planning process).
- Case managers can develop the habits of entering case notes immediately after a telephone conversation or a meeting with a young person, and reviewing all case files at the end of each month to be sure there has been at least one contact with all youth during the month and at least one entry in the case file.
- Periodic (monthly, perhaps) peer or management reviews of case files to insure quality standards are being met.
- Either the management team or an individual case manager can set aside a specific time each week to update all case files.

## Confidentiality

Experience tells us that sharing too much information about a young person may sometimes damage that young person's chances for a job or other opportunities. Sharing too little information may sometimes do the same. Throughout any program, young people are required to share private information, and may choose to share more information on their own. Confidentiality restrictions protect people from the disclosure of embarrassing personal information they may have revealed either by their actions or verbally, and from disclosure of information, such as use of illegal drugs or mental health history, that might lead to discrimination against them. Protecting participants' confidential information may be necessary for their personal security as well as their job security.

Not every partner who works with youth has to meet the same levels of confidentiality. In the justice system, for example, there is a trend toward decreasing confidentiality for the sake of public safety. On the other hand, confidentiality requirements are increasing in behavioral health and residential programs. Regulations included in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) (<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>) limit the way in which personal health information is disclosed. Health subjects include mental and behavioral health. The

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability has created a publication for people working with youth, and adult service providers who interact with individuals with disabilities. The publication is designed to help clarify what can and cannot be asked about someone's disability.



#### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For additional information on this and other resources for youth with disabilities go to <http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/>.

Confidentiality is also important because it enables people to seek services such as additional counseling without the fear of being stigmatized. If youth know that information is confidential from their peers or their teachers or others, they might be more likely to seek assistance when they need it in the sensitive areas of their lives. Young people assured of confidentiality can seek help without fear of disapproval or stigma and can confide with trust, and as a result, benefit more fully from any program.

Programs must, in every case, require that regulations are completely understood and followed by all staff that has access to information. There should be signed releases and memoranda of understanding that clearly state the exact information to be shared between partners and the necessity of the disclosure.

## Maintaining Ethical Standards within DOL YouthBuild Programs

DOL YouthBuild programs acknowledge the importance of maintaining ethical standards and see the concept serving as a foundation for all case-management services. These standards include:

- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy in a manner compatible with agency policies and procedures as well as legal reporting requirements, such as the mandated reporting of abuse. It is as an agent of the organization that a case manager can offer confidentiality, and the limits of that confidentiality should be explained to each young person.
- Avoiding any remarks, inappropriate or uncomfortable touching, or other actions that could be misunderstood and considered as sexual harassment.
- Respecting the integrity and promoting the welfare of each young person, whether they are assisted individually or in a group relationship. In a group setting, the case manager is also responsible for taking reasonable precautions to protect individuals from physical or psychological trauma resulting from interactions within the group.
- Maintaining respect for the young person and avoiding activities that meet the case manager's needs at the expense of the young person.
- Informing each young person of the purposes, goals, techniques, rules of procedure, and limitations (service and personal) that may affect the relationship at or before the time that the case-management relationship begins.
- Being honest and reliable, offering full disclosure, and not promising what you can't deliver.



# Chapter 6

## Evaluation: Measuring Outcomes



YouthBuild

## Overview

Evaluation of case-management services and the case-management system is vital for organizational planning, continuous improvement of services, and assessment of cost-effectiveness. Like the case-management system itself, evaluation occurs on two levels. On one hand, measures of success ask, “How are YouthBuild’s young people benefiting from case management?” On the other hand, measures of success may also pinpoint areas for institutional change, or changes in the case-management system.



Evaluation and management information systems should relate directly back to the short- and long-term goals and objectives set out in each young person’s individual development plan (IDP). Some questions to consider are:

- Is the case management having an observable, measurable impact upon the young people it serves in accord with their IDP?
- Are youth developing realistic, concrete, measurable goals?
- Is there adequate identification of resources and services needed to accomplish the goals of the IDP?
- Are young persons gaining timely access to the services they need?
- Are youth demonstrating satisfactory attendance in services?
- Are the young people satisfied with the services?
- Are youth satisfactorily completing the services defined in their plans?
- Are young people moving smoothly through the system?
- Are young people learning what they set out to learn?
- Are youth gaining the skills they need to meet goals?
- Are young persons actually meeting their goals (short and long)?
- Are any youth still falling through the cracks?
- Is the organization meeting its contract performance goals?

*(Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University, 1989)*

## Evaluation Tools

Some useful tools to help case managers and management staff answer some of the previous questions include a case manager’s monthly progress report, an analysis of use of services, and a youth case file review checklist.

## **Case manager's monthly progress report**

The case manager's monthly progress report helps case managers more effectively and efficiently manage a case load. Preparing the report at the end of each month helps the case manager review and evaluate the participation, progress, and achievements of the young people he is working with and assess where time should be focused during the coming month. For example, were there any young people the case manager did not talk to this month? If so, contacting them at the beginning of the month would be a high priority.

Reviewing the monthly progress reports also helps management track progress toward achievement of grant goals on an ongoing basis from the beginning of the grant period, and identify any needed corrective actions, including staff development or training, in time to achieve both youth and grant goals.

The MIS system developed for DOL-funded YouthBuild programs allows the preparation of monthly agency and individual case manager performance reports that can go directly to individual case managers and to management staff. The reports serve as a focal point for outcome-oriented, problem-solving discussions during monthly group meetings of case managers, and monthly or quarterly performance review discussions between the case-management supervisor or program director and each individual case manager.

## **Analysis of use of services**

An analysis of use of services is a tool that can be used to analyze the need for specific services and utilization of those services, as shown in the following sample.

## Case Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

## Youth case file review checklist

The following youth case file checklist can be used to establish a quality-control process to systematically and routinely critique case files and provide feedback for improvement. The file review can be conducted by the case manager as a self-assessment process, by other case managers as a peer-review process, or by the supervisor of case-management services. As a time-management strategy, three case files for each case manager can be randomly selected for review each month. The Office of Inspector General recommends that a supervisor review a case manager's case files at least twice a month.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

A sample case file and its contents can also be found on the YouthBuild Community of Practice.

### YOUTH CASE FILE REVIEW CHECKLIST

(Adapted from a former DOL-funded youth program)

Manager \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample Code:** ✓ = YES    X = NO    NA = Not Applicable

| ITEM  | (YOUTH NAME) | (YOUTH NAME) | (YOUTH NAME) |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Case file is kept secured in file cabinet or electronically        |              |              |              |
| 2. Social security number   |              |              |              |
| 3. Emergency contact person(s) and phone number(s)                    |              |              |              |
| 4. Parental participation consent form for minors                     |              |              |              |
| 5. Address and telephone number                                       |              |              |              |
| 6. Documentation of address   |              |              |              |
| 7. Documentation of legal residency                                   |              |              |              |
| 8. Documentation of age   |              |              |              |
| 9. Documentation of Selective Service registration for males 18 to 21 |              |              |              |
| <b>Assessment Data</b>  |              |              |              |
| 10. Completed and signed interview form                               |              |              |              |
| 11. Copy of TABE pre-test results in file                             |              |              |              |
| 12. TABE post-test scores entered                                     |              |              |              |
| 13. Copy of Casey Life Skills results                                 |              |              |              |

| ITEM  | (YOUTH NAME) | (YOUTH NAME) | (YOUTH NAME) |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 14. Interest inventory results  |              |              |              |
| 15. Secondary school grades entered   |              |              |              |
| 16. Copy of recent report card  |              |              |              |
| 17. Employment goals entered  |              |              |              |
| 18. Education goals entered   |              |              |              |
| 19. Interests recorded  |              |              |              |
| 20. Strengths and assets recorded   |              |              |              |
| 21. Scores and copies of any re-assessments   |              |              |              |
| <b>Individual Development Plan</b>  |              |              |              |
| 22. Appropriate long-term employment and education goals identified (reflecting youth's interests, skills, education, work history) |              |              |              |
| 23. Appropriate short-term goals identified (realistic, related to long-term goal, reflect youth assets and interests)              |              |              |              |
| 24. Employment, education and training referral(s), consistent with IDP   |              |              |              |
| 25. Youth development (YD) goals identified   |              |              |              |
| 26. Appropriate YD activities related to YD goal (realistic, related to YD goal, reflect youth assets and interests)                |              |              |              |
| 27. Youth development referral(s)   |              |              |              |
| 28. Challenges and supportive services needed identified as part of IDP   |              |              |              |
| 29. Appropriate supportive services referrals or services (realistic, related to challenges, respond to all needs identified)       |              |              |              |
| 30. Documentation of follow-up on all referrals to facilitate, verification of receipt of services                                  |              |              |              |
| 31. Utilization of community and partner resources  |              |              |              |
| 32. Tasks, responsibilities, and time frames identified   |              |              |              |
| 33. Progress updates entered monthly (attendance, grades, etc.)   |              |              |              |
| 34. Completion information entered  |              |              |              |

| ITEM   | (YOUTH NAME) | (YOUTH NAME) | (YOUTH NAME) |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 35. Achievement of long-term education or employment goal entered and documentation in files |              |              |              |
| 36. Schedule for contact entered   |              |              |              |
| 37. IDP updated or revised every 90 days, as needed  |              |              |              |
| <b>Case Notes</b>  |              |              |              |
| 38. Indicate type of contact made (phone, face-to-face, activity, letter)                    |              |              |              |
| 39. Reflect contact or conversation with teacher or guidance counselor                       |              |              |              |
| 40. Reflect follow-up on previous issues in IDP or case notes                                |              |              |              |
| 41. Entries at least monthly   |              |              |              |
| 42. Objective: No opinions or labels   |              |              |              |
| 43. Brief but detailed   |              |              |              |
| 44. Demonstrate tracking and follow-up   |              |              |              |
| 45. Reflect contact or communication with youth's family                                     |              |              |              |
| 46. Reflect communication with others working with the youth                                 |              |              |              |

Although each YouthBuild program is unique, there are, in general, common elements that run through all successful YouthBuild programs. DOL has developed the YouthBuild Assessment Tool (Tool) to assist both program operators and federal project officers in assessing the quality of each of these common elements. The Tool is not intended to replace any formal site-monitoring tools now in use, but rather provides quality indicators that can be used to gauge the effectiveness of program components that are unique to YouthBuild grants (such as construction issues), and clarifies the structure and delivery of YouthBuild training programs.

The Tool can be used to assess your counseling and case-management program to determine its strengths as well as areas where technical assistance might be appropriate. The completed assessment will highlight areas in which technical assistance would be useful and will also capture promising practices that can be shared with other grantees. Doing regular program assessments will help grantees focus their efforts on program components that can be improved.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The YouthBuild Assessment Tool can be accessed on YouthBuild's Community of Practice.

## Performance Outcomes in a YouthBuild Program

Staff at a YouthBuild program care about the young people they serve and take pride in their achievements. Seeing a student turn his life around and achieve significant outcomes while participating in the program is quite rewarding. Each program can offer tremendous, wonderful stories about the students they have served and how the YouthBuild program has impacted their lives. Just as important is documentation of performance outcomes. Experienced case managers will tell you, “If it is not recorded, it didn’t happen.” It is important to document events as they occur for each student within the program. But what is also important is the required documentation that provides the U.S. Department of Labor and Congress a clear understanding of the difference YouthBuild ultimately makes in the lives of people and the impact it demonstrates in assisting young adults to become self-sufficient. DOL has developed an online case-management and performance information system (MIS) that YouthBuild programs are required to utilize in reporting and tracking program participants.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The YouthBuild MIS Handbook can be downloaded from the Community of Practice.

The YouthBuild program has specific performance measures developed to demonstrate results. These measures serve to:

- Provide program operators and frontline staff with information for decision making and continuous improvement,
- Provide DOL information to ensure program accountability,
- Assist in identifying technical assistance needs, and
- Demonstrate program success to stakeholders (such as the community and Congress).

The primary YouthBuild measures are:

- Rate of placement in employment or education,
- Degree or certificate attainment rate, and
- Literacy and numeracy gains.

Additional measures include:

- Enrollment rate,
- Rate of retention in employment or education placement, and
- Recidivism rate.

## Rate of placement in employment or education

Placement rate is the percentage of students who are placed in employment or post-secondary education or long-term occupational training in the first quarter after exiting the program. Those students placed are divided by the total number of students who have exited the YouthBuild program in the previous quarter. This is a long-term exit-based measure.



## **Degree or certificate attainment rate**

The degree or certificate attainment rate measures the number of participants who attain a degree or an industry-recognized skills certificate by the end of the third quarter after exiting the program. This number is divided by the total number of students who are enrolled in the YouthBuild program. The measure includes the attainment of a GED or high school diploma or any industry-recognized occupational skills certificate. Allowable certificates include those awarded in recognition of an individual's attainment of measurable technical or occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation. Please note that certificates awarded for OSHA training, work readiness, or life skills do not qualify under this measure.

## **Literacy or numeracy gains**

Upon enrollment into the YouthBuild program, each student is assessed academically utilizing Adult Basic Education (ABE) or English as a Second Language (ESL) tools. This rate is measured by dividing the number of youth who achieve a gain in either literacy or numeracy within one year of participation in the program by the total number of participants who are basic skills deficient at enrollment. To be included in the numerator, an individual must advance one or more ABE or ESL functioning levels and the gain can occur in literacy or numeracy if the student was deficient in both. If the student was only deficient in one area, the improvement must occur in that area.

## **Enrollment rate**

The enrollment rate measures the success of the YouthBuild program in meeting its enrollment goal—a goal that is negotiated at the time of the grant award.

## **Rate of retention in employment or education placement**

Of those students placed in employment or education in the first quarter after exiting the YouthBuild program, this rate measures the percentage of participants who are still in employment or education in the second and third quarters after exit. This calculation captures the retention of students who are in post-program placements. It determines if they are in a placement (such as employment, education, or military) in the second and third quarters after exit after they have achieved an initial first quarter placement. The second and third quarter placement does not need to be the same placement as the first quarter. This rate is measuring retention in education and the labor market, not specific placement retention.

## **Recidivism rate**

The recidivism rate measures the percentage of students that were youth or adult offenders at enrollment who are re-arrested or re-incarcerated for revocation of parole or probation within one year from their enrollment date into the YouthBuild program. If a youth is rearrested and subsequently released without conviction, he can be taken out of the numerator. If no re-arrest or re-incarceration has occurred at one year from the enrollment date for those who were offenders at enrollment, "not re-arrested" must be entered into the MIS.

## Reporting Requirements

YouthBuild grantees are required to submit three reports on a quarterly basis: a narrative report, a financial report, and a performance report. Both narrative and performance reports are submitted through YouthBuild's MIS, and the financial report is submitted online through DOL's financial management system. All reports are due 45 days following the end of the quarter. The quarter schedule is:

- Q1: July 1 – September 30
- Q2: October 1 – December 31
- Q3: January 1 – March 31
- Q4: April 1 – June 30

## Short-Term Indicators of Success:

YouthBuild programs can readily identify their progress on a continuous basis through the following indicators of success:

- Enrollment rate
- Attendance rate
- Program retention rate
- Number of initial job placements
- Average hourly wage rate at placement
- Number of job re-placements
- Average hours worked first week of placement
- Number obtained high school diploma or GED
- Number obtained a certificate
- Entered post-secondary education
- Entered vocational or occupational skills training
- Entered pre-apprenticeship
- Entered registered apprenticeship

While the academic gains, achievements, placements, and placement retentions are long-term indicators, the indicators that give managers immediate information about the quality of the YouthBuild program are enrollment, attendance, and program retention. Chronic low attendance and or the loss of students midway through the program signals problems that require the immediate attention of a program director.

Case managers acknowledge how important performance measures are and the responsibilities in capturing data that demonstrates the individual successes as well as those of the YouthBuild grant program. Many forms of technical assistance are available to the YouthBuild program staff, including additional help in tracking and entering student data into the MIS.

# Chapter 7

## Utilizing Labor Market Information and Career Counseling



YouthBuild

## Overview

Just as it is important to assess youths' skills and abilities, it is essential that the case manager be familiar with high-growth jobs within the community or is in contact with the program's job or career development person, if this position exists within the YouthBuild program. Workforce information that constitutes an economic analysis of a geographical area provides insight into the local labor market and ensures that trained individuals have readily available employment opportunities. Who employs who, where, and for what wages, are all important pieces of the puzzle for people involved in youth employment-training programs such as YouthBuild. In addition to recognizing opportunities within the construction industry, economic information can help staff and youth identify good career paths and the appropriate training necessary, find out how much different occupations pay, understand the cost of living in a specific area, and locate the employers and employment opportunities in their community.



For employers, labor market information tracks local and national industry trends, helps determine what affects the availability and quality of workers, and assists employers in making decisions about where and how to invest training resources. It has an impact on wage and benefits levels and plays a big part in determining where new or expanded businesses will locate.

For employers, labor market information tracks local and national industry trends, helps determine what affects the availability and quality of workers, and assists employers in making decisions about where and how to invest training resources. It has an impact on wage and benefits levels and plays a big part in determining where new or expanded businesses will locate.

Community planners use economic analysis to monitor the quality of the local labor pool and workforce needs, market area resources to attract new businesses, identify economic development opportunities and needs, and develop or support effective education, training, and workforce strategies.

## Youth Career Development: Roles and Responsibilities of Case Managers

YouthBuild provides construction training that prepares young people for opportunities within the construction industry, including entry into a variety of apprenticeship programs and entry into construction-related secondary education. However, YouthBuild students may choose another career path, and it is the case manager's responsibility to assist them in understanding how what they have learned about construction translates to different career fields. Certainly, every YouthBuild program provides work experience, employability skills training, and a variety of life-skills classes. The work ethic encouraged, the team-building skills demonstrated, and the leadership opportunities provided are skills that employers find desirable in any industry. Case managers who prove themselves competent in understanding and tracking labor market information within their region are best prepared to guide youth in exploring viable career fields.

Case managers and career counselors need access to current employment trends, projected training requirements and cost, wage information, and new emerging fields in the local area. Through the exploration of workforce information, youth can get a realistic view of the opportunities located in a community, identify viable career paths, and gain an understanding of the cost of living within a particular area and how salaries compare in different localities.

Although national data provides an overall view of the economy, state and local data will prove most useful to case managers when working with youth. The local workforce board or economic development council has probably already developed the information needed for workforce development professionals to understand employer needs; what skill sets, training, and credentials are required to meet those needs; and the occupational outlook of any particular field. By investigating this current economic information, youth can explore career pathways, broaden an interest in a variety of careers, as well as become more knowledgeable about the type of training involved. Youth often underestimate the opportunities in their own region and the potential for growth with area employers. Case managers can use a regional analysis to provide youth information on industries located within a particular area, including projections for future growth.

Case managers should be aware that economic analysis is not perfect and is not the only way to gauge economic opportunities. Statistical projections are usually based on data that is at least a year old, sometimes four or five years old. In a volatile job market, a major event or political policy shift means industry and employment situations could quickly change. However, through the use of past data, information gleaned can be useful in predicting future trends. Good relationships with area employers, large and small, private and public, can provide insights into the community that cannot be gained solely through the use of statistical analysis.

A case manager does not need to be an economist to use this information with youth. Below are practical strategies for using employment analysis to enhance the case-management process:

- Using data to better understand the local economic landscape provides an opportunity to engage and recruit employers, particularly those in high-growth industries. These partnerships can result in increased internships, opportunities for work-based learning, apprenticeships, and future job placements for youth.
- Developing an economic footprint of your community utilizing economic analysis will assist case managers in enhancing career assessment, selecting the appropriate training, and promoting better job and career opportunities for youth.

## Sources of Workforce Information and Statistical Analysis

### America's Career InfoNet (ACINET)

**ACINET** is a Web-based information system developed by DOLETA to meet the needs of end users, including students who may be planning careers, workforce professionals who are guiding and advising workers and employers, job seekers who need to learn about the labor market or locate the right employment opportunities, and employers who want to investigate labor market development and trends. America's Career InfoNet provides access to occupational employment forecasts and earnings trends. Users are able to view career videos online and learn about occupational requirements. Detailed information about education and training resources including information about financial aid is also provided.

<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>

### CareerOneStop

CareerOneStop is a collection of electronic tools, operating as a federal-state partnership, and funded by grants to states. These tools can be accessed through a user-friendly portal, which includes direct links to state job banks, America's Career InfoNet, and America's Service Locator.

<http://www.careeronestop.org>

### O\*NET OnLine

Through the O\*NET Web site, users can find occupations using keywords, O\*NET-SOC codes, job families, or by viewing a complete list. Users can also use a list of their skills to find matching O\*NET-SOC occupations, and use the "crosswalk" tool to enter other classification systems (such as DOT, SOC, MOC, and RAIS) to find matching O\*NET-SOC occupations.

<http://online.onetcenter.org>

### State Workforce Information

For a listing of all state workforce information Web sites:

<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/crl/library.aspx?PostVal=10&CATID=52>

# Chapter 8

## Engaging Employers: Making The Connections



YouthBuild

## Overview

Meeting the skill needs of the twenty-first century workplace as we become a demand-driven system presents numerous challenges to youth specialists when engaging employers in youth employment programs. Students and young adults must be transformed into employees and skilled workers, while effectively bridging the gap that frequently exists between disadvantaged youth on the one hand, and businesses on the other. Engaging and retaining employers as valued partners in the development of a skilled workforce should be an integral part of any YouthBuild program. Some YouthBuild programs have staff positions whose sole responsibilities are to engage and involve employers with the programs; in others this responsibility falls to the program administrators. However the issue is addressed, case managers should be knowledgeable about their local industry base, recognize and encourage employer involvement, and be responsive to employer needs as they arise.



## Why Youth Need Employers

Aside from the obvious link to future job openings, young people gain much information about the world in general when an employment program provides strong connections to the world of work. The involvement of employers provides youth with a wealth of opportunities to connect with the workplace and experience first hand:

- Exposure to major industry and career clusters,
- The culture and demands of the workplace,
- Places, projects, people, and situations that help them develop and hone critical skills—academic, basic employability, and more advanced occupational skills,
- Professional role models,
- Work experience, and
- Paid employment.

*(Employer Engagement, Texas Youth Program Initiative Training Packet, School & Main, Boston, MA, 2003 <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/youthinit/ypi.html>)*

Employers also provide much-needed insight into current and future training needs and opportunities as well as local economic and workplace information that intimately connects youth with high-demand, high-growth industries.



## What Do Employers Want?

Ideally, employers are already routinely involved in any workplace organization's efforts to train youth and transition them into the workplace. They may serve on the local workforce board, participate in career fairs, and visit program sites to speak to participants. Truly engaging employers requires a different level of commitment and, eventually, demonstrates a partnership in which both parties experience a shared ownership. To accomplish this, YouthBuild programs should have a clear understanding of what it is that employers want and how the program's needs correspond with the employers:

- Employers want to be heard and understood; they have intimate knowledge of what they need and can communicate these needs. Within a YouthBuild program, a case manager may have limited knowledge of a particular industry or what types of skills training may be required now and in the future. The case manager should be able to speak the language of the workplace and have some understanding of the particular industry's workplace culture. Employers tend to prefer a single point of contact and appreciate timeliness of services, for example, a phone call returned the same day.
- Employers value flexibility and timeliness. Training programs or time schedules need to be highly adaptable as issues arise that require a change in technical or soft-skills training. Services need to be individualized to reflect the differences of one employer from the next, one industry from another.
- Employers do not want to be inundated with program paperwork or fiscal management issues. When writing a grant or placing youth into job shadowing or internship experiences, keep paperwork to a minimum, and handle all finances—including stipends, as appropriate—within the program.
- Employers are always looking for ways in which their businesses can benefit from a partnership. There may be tax advantages or other financial considerations that can be a selling point. The advantages go both ways: Marketing the program results in favorable publicity for the program. and, of course, the employer can tap into a pipeline of qualified, prepared workers.
- Employers want to see quality management of services and accountability. The same standards that employers strive to maintain are the same standards that will be expected of the employment program. If the youth trained and placed through your YouthBuild program do not meet appropriate standards, or case-management staff fail to address issues and complaints as they arise, the program has little value to an employer when profit is the bottom line.

## Strategies for Engaging Employers

Partnerships take time to evolve and develop, requiring patience and perseverance. Remember, although you are building a *business* partnership that addresses bottom-line needs, relationships are still about individuals. Following are some helpful strategies that will assist YouthBuild programs in building the trust and relationships necessary to sustain program needs.

- **Collaboration is a key part of business engagement**

Work with your youth council, workforce board, chamber of commerce, or economic council to assist you in initiating a dialogue. Other community and faith-based organizations that are stakeholders in the youth you serve can provide employer contacts. Local schools, community colleges, and technical schools are good sources of employer contacts as well. Consider approaching employers who have not recognized the potential in collaborating with a youth provider and have only provided job openings or recruitment information to the CareerOneStop Center.

- **Know your partners and identify their self-interests**

Knowing your partners means learning about their business or industry, their growth, and where their needs will be. What types of jobs do they offer? Which positions represent high-growth positions? What training, certificates, or degrees are needed? Will they soon experience an increase in their workforce due to a new contract and are seeking a pipeline of new workers? Do they recognize a need for workers trained in new technologies? Perhaps they are concerned about corporate-community relations or civic responsibility. Community relations and positive media coverage are frequent trade-offs for business and industry.

Analyzing economic data is not enough to learn about an industry. Arrange to meet personally with an employer and to ask what needs they have. A YouthBuild program may have connections within the construction industry but may also consider focusing on one or two additional business sectors within a community, such as the healthcare industry or one major employer such as a shipyard or manufacturing facility.

- **Develop a menu of services**

Have a good understanding of how your employment program can work with a particular employer—know what your program can and cannot do. Younger youth may benefit from job shadowing while older youth might really need paid internships. Will they need safety gear or uniforms? Who pays for what? Is the job description specific and reasonable? What about insurance and bonding? Can the employer accommodate a youth with a disability? Depending on the type of business, the employer engagement may be limited to an occasional company tour, guest speaker, or donation of materials.

- **Provide support**

It is imperative that the YouthBuild program follow through on any promises made, including the provision of items such as safety equipment, transportation, or clothing. Youth participating in job shadowing, internships, or mentoring programs should be matched carefully to ensure the employer will have a positive experience. Assist the employer in developing or distributing whatever orientation or workforce-training materials are required. Delineate the responsibilities of each party—what the employer is responsible for versus what the case manager is responsible for—and don't forget the youth.

Check on the youth on a regular basis to determine if any problems are developing. Provide a phone number for the employer to call should any issues need clarification. Be prepared to remove a youth should the placement not be satisfactory and suitable reparations cannot be made. It may prove necessary to provide interventions for the many business-cultural differences that might appear as a youth begins a new placement—issues around dress, being on time, speech and manners, use of cell phones, for example.

- **Solicit and listen to employer feedback.**

For administrators, case managers, and particularly for youth, it is important to obtain employer feedback from the placement experience. Be brief and concise when asking employers and their staff for feedback and consider conducting occasional focus groups to gather additional information. Be certain to debrief the youth participant to ascertain if it was a positive, worthwhile experience. All information gathered can be incorporated into changes within your program designs.

It is also good practice to occasionally publicly recognize the employers who support your program through media outlets, such as newspaper or newsletter articles or local television interviews. Having youth plan and host more personal events, including appreciation breakfasts or luncheons, is another way to develop and nurture strong partnerships.

# Youth Development Information and Resources

## Federal Partners

**U.S. Department of Education** <http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml>

- **Office of Vocational & Adult Education**  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/index.html>

**U.S. Department of Justice**

- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)**
  - List of OJJDP Programs  
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/programs/index.html>
- **The National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC)**  
<http://www.nttac.org/>  
Phone: (800) 830-4031  
Supports the delivery of training and technical assistance to the juvenile justice field.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

- **Family and Youth Services Bureau**  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/>  
Provides services and opportunities to young people, including foster youth, runaway and homeless youth in local communities.

**U.S. Department of Labor  
Employment and Training Administration**

- **Division of Youth Services**  
[http://www.doleta.gov/youth\\_services/](http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/)
- **Shared Youth Vision**  
<http://www.doleta.gov/ryf/>
- **Youth Resource Connections** is a technical assistance update published bi-weekly by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Youth Services (OYS), Office of Youth Opportunities, provides announcements and information for state and local partners, coaches and others interested in youth development. Subscribe online at:  
[http://www.doleta.gov/youth\\_services/newsletter.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/newsletter.cfm)
- **Workforce3 One** is sponsored by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and is an interactive communications and learning platform designed to build the capacity of the Workforce Investment System to develop strategies that enable individuals to be successful in the 21st century economy. Workforce3 One offers workforce professionals, employers, economic development, and education professionals a dynamic knowledge network featuring innovative workforce solutions. Online

learning events, resource information, and tools help organizations learn how to develop strategies that enable individuals to be successful in the 21st century economy by understanding the skills and competencies needed by business and industry.

There are a number of excellent webinars (many designed specifically for youth programs) that are archived on this site. To access archived webinars, as well as participant in upcoming ones, register at: <http://www.workforce3one.org/index.cfm>.

## National Associations

The following national associations offer a range of technical assistance to state, county, and municipal officials and agencies on youth development, education, employment, and related issues. Several of them offer online databases that you can search for "promising practices" and model programs:

### National Association of Counties (NACo)

- **Model County Program Database**

[http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Model\\_County\\_Programs&Template=/cfiles/awards/model\\_srch.cfm](http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Model_County_Programs&Template=/cfiles/awards/model_srch.cfm)

### National Governor's Association (NGA)

- **Center for Best Practices**

<http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.50aeae5ff70b817ae8ebb856a11010a0/>  
(202) 624-5300

Offers information on model programs, what works, what doesn't, and what lessons can be learned from others grappling with the same problems.

### National League of Cities (NLC)

- **The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**

[http://www.nlc.org/nlc\\_org/site/programs/institute\\_for\\_youth\\_education\\_and\\_families/index.cfm](http://www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/programs/institute_for_youth_education_and_families/index.cfm)

The Institute focuses on five core program areas: education; youth development; early childhood development; safety of children and youth; and family economic security. Subscribe to mailing list: [reid@nlc.org](mailto:reid@nlc.org) or leave a detailed message at 202-626-3014.

### U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM)

- Online database allows users to search model programs supported by city governments, including youth development and employment programs.

[http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/best\\_practices/search.asp](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/best_practices/search.asp)

## Non-Governmental Organizations

Numerous national organizations support research, technical assistance, advocacy, and program management related to youth development. The web sites of the following organizations provide links to other youth development resources on the Internet:

- **American Youth Policy Forum**

<http://www.aypf.org>

202-775-9731

National nonprofit organization sponsors learning opportunities (i.e., field trips, seminars), research, and publications for policymakers at the federal, state and local levels.

- **Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERnet)**

<http://www.cyfernet.org/about.html>

(612) 626-1111.

Web site brings together the children, youth and family resources of all the public land-grant universities in the country. Materials are carefully reviewed by college and university faculty.

- **The Forum for Youth Investment (formerly IYF-US)**

<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org>

202-207-3333

A national initiative dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement in the United States by promoting a "big picture" approach to planning and policy development.

- **Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)**

<http://www.iel.org>

(202) 822-8405

Core programs include project management, strategic planning, research and publications related to education. IEL also supports the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth to help local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies.

- **The National Youth Development Information Center (NYDIC)**

<http://www.nassembly.org/nydic/>

1-877-NYDIC-4-U (toll-free)

Provides practice-related information about youth development to national and local youth-serving organizations at low cost or no cost.

- **Youth Development and Research Fund (YDRF)**

<http://www.ydrf.com/>

(301) 216-2050 and (202) 659-1064

National network organization of over 200 youth employment/development organizations organization dedicated to promoting policies and initiatives that help youth succeed in becoming lifelong learners, productive workers and self-sufficient citizens.

- **Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet)**

<http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/index.html>

(202) 659-1064

A project of the National Youth Employment Coalition, PEPNet serves as an information base for identifying and promoting what works in youth employment and development.

- **YouthBuild USA**

<http://www.youthbuild.org/site/c.htlRI3PIKoG/b.1223921/k.BD3C/Home.htm>

(617) 623-9900

YouthBuild USA provides a wide range of materials and services, including training curricula, manuals, newsletters, and national trainings for staff and participants in youth employment programs, especially in the housing construction field.

One excellent document that YouthBuild USA has produced: YouthBuild Appendices, A revised and expanded collection of sample documents and forms for YouthBuild programs now web-based for 2009 and beyond. (2008-2009):

<http://www.youthbuild.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=htlRI3PIKoG&b=4991121&ct=6998461>

## **Resources for Native American Youth**

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

- **Planet Youth: The Native American Youth Connection** connects American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian young people with important and useful resources and offers opportunities and support for Native and non-Native youth and their families.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/ih/codetalk/planet/index.html>

### **U.S. Department of Labor**

- **Employment and Training Administration  
Indian and Native American Programs**

<http://www.doleta.gov/dinap/>

### **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services**

- **Administration for Children & Families**

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov>

- **Administration for Native Americans**

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ana/>

### **Department of the Interior**

- **Bureau of Indian Affairs**

<http://www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html>

*National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)* is a comprehensive source of information on American Indian child welfare and works on behalf of Indian children and families in areas of public policy, research, advocacy, information and training, and community development.

<http://www.nicwa.org>

*United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY)* is a national organization with 211 youth councils operating in the United States and Canada. The organization promotes youth leadership and fosters the spiritual, social, and mental development of Native American youth.

<http://www.unityinc.org>

## **Additional Web Sites for Youth Development Resources**

- **AED Academy for Educational Development**  
[www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)
- **America's Promise**  
[www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)
- **Child Trends**  
[www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)
- **International Youth Foundation**  
[www.iyfnet.org](http://www.iyfnet.org)
- **John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development**  
[www.heldrich.rutgers.edu](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu)
- **National 4-H Council**  
[www.fourhcouncil.edu](http://www.fourhcouncil.edu)
- **National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth**  
[www.ncfy.com](http://www.ncfy.com)
- **National Network for Youth**  
[www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)
- **National Youth Employment Coalition**  
[www.nyec.org](http://www.nyec.org)
- **National Youth Leadership Council**  
[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)
- **Public Private Ventures**  
[www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org)
- **Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies**  
[www.levitan.org](http://www.levitan.org)
- **Search Institute**  
[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)
- **The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development**  
[www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org)



## Publications

- **Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders** is published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in collaboration with the National Youth Employment Coalition, and the Youth Development and Research Fund, and the Justice Policy Institute. The report profiles nontraditional juvenile justice initiatives that are reducing crime and making communities safer by facilitating youths' economic self-sufficiency.

To obtain a hard copy of the report, visit the Annie E. Casey Foundation web site: <http://www.aecf.org/> or call 410/223-2890.

- **Community Youth Development (CYD) Journal** promotes youth and adults working together in partnership to create just, safe, and healthy communities by building leadership and influencing public policy. Published quarterly by the Institute for Just Communities (IJC) and the Institute for Sustainable Development, Heller School of Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. <http://www.cydjournal.org>

- **Youth Today**  
<http://www.youthtoday.org/youthtoday/>  
(202) 785-0764

National, independent paper that goes out to more than 70,000 readers in the child and youth services fields. It covers a range of issues that include youth development, juvenile justice, and workforce development. Offers information on model programs, what works, what doesn't, lessons, etc.

- **Health**  
The CDC National Prevention Information Network is the nation's largest collection of information and resources on HIV, STD and TB prevention. Their website offers a wide range of information that can be useful in working with young people. "For young people, it is critical to prevent patterns of risky behaviors before they start. Scientists believe that cases of HIV infection diagnosed among 13- to 24-year-olds are indicative of overall trends in HIV incidence (the number of new infections in a given time period, usually a year) because this age group has more recently initiated high-risk behaviors. In 2000, 1,688 13- to 24-year-olds were reported with AIDS, bringing the cumulative total to 31,293 cases of AIDS in this age group. Clearly, HIV prevention efforts must be sustained and designed to reach each new generation of Americans."  
[www.cdcnpin.org](http://www.cdcnpin.org)

## Web Sites for Youth Workforce Development Professionals

- **Center for Adolescent and Family Studies**  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~cafs/>
- **Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents**  
<http://www.e-ccip.org/index.html>
- **Child Trends**  
[www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)
- **International Youth Foundation**  
[www.iyfnet.org](http://www.iyfnet.org)

- **Jobs for the Future**  
<http://www.jff.org>
- **John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development**  
[www.heldrich.rutgers.edu](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu)
- **Corporation for National and Community Services**  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/Default.asp>
- **LMI Training Institute: Other Workforce Information Sites**  
<http://www.lmi-net.org/>
- **National 4-H Council**  
[www.fourhcouncil.edu](http://www.fourhcouncil.edu)
- **National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth**  
[www.ncfy.com](http://www.ncfy.com)
- **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disabilities**  
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info>
- **National Credit Union Administration Financial Education**  
<http://www.ncua.gov/FinancialEducation/index.htm>
- **National Network for Youth**  
[www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)
- **National Runaway Switchboard**  
<http://www.nrscrisisline.org>
- **National Youth Employment Coalition**  
[www.nyec.org](http://www.nyec.org)
- **National Youth Leadership Council**  
[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)
- **National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center**  
<http://www.safeyouth.org>
- **Public Private Ventures**  
[www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org)
- **Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies**  
[www.levitan.org](http://www.levitan.org)
- **Search Institute**  
[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)
- **Texas Workforce Commission Youth Program Initiative**  
<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/youthinit/ypi.html>
- **The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development**  
[www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org)
- **Working for America Institute**  
<http://www.workingforamerica.org>

- **Youth 2 Work**  
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers>
- **Center for Occupation Research and Development (CORD)**  
<http://www.cord.org/index.cfm>
- **Interagency Council on Homelessness**  
<http://www.ich.gov/>
- **Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Youth Program**  
<http://www.doleta.gov/msfw/html/youth.cfm>

## State and National Workforce Information Web Sites

For links to each of the States go to:

<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/library.asp?category=1.6#1.6.3>

### State Sites:

- **Alabama**  
<http://www2.dir.state.al.us/>
- **Alaska's Labor Market Information System**  
<http://almis.labor.state.ak.us>
- **Arizona's Workforce Informer**  
<http://www.workforce.az.gov/>
- **Arkansas**  
<http://www.discoverarkansas.net/>
- **California's LaborMarket Info**  
<http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/>
- **Colorado**  
<http://www.coworkforce.com/lmi/>
- **Connecticut**  
<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/index.htm>
- **Delaware**  
<http://www.oolmi.net/>
- **District of Columbia**  
<http://does.dc.gov/does/cwp/view.asp?a=1233&q=538345&doesNav=|32064|>
- **Florida**  
[www.labormarketinfo.com](http://www.labormarketinfo.com)
- **Georgia**  
[www.dol.state.ga.us/em/get\\_labor\\_market\\_information.htm](http://www.dol.state.ga.us/em/get_labor_market_information.htm)
- **Hawaii Workforce Informer**  
<http://www.hiwi.org/>
- **Idaho's internet Labor Market Information**  
<http://www.jobservice.ws/>

- **Illinois**  
[lmi.ides.state.il.us](http://lmi.ides.state.il.us)
- **Indiana**  
<http://www.in.gov/dwd/inews/lmi.asp>
- **Iowa**  
[www.iowaworkforce.org/lmi/](http://www.iowaworkforce.org/lmi/)
- **Kansas**  
<http://www.dol.ks.gov/lmis/lmis.html>
- **Kentucky**  
[www.workforcekentucky.ky.gov](http://www.workforcekentucky.ky.gov)
- **Louisiana**  
<http://livos.laworks.net/lois/analyzer/>
- **Maine**  
[www.state.me.us/labor/lmis/](http://www.state.me.us/labor/lmis/)
- **Maryland**  
<http://www.dllr.state.md.us/lmi/index.shtml>
- **Massachusetts**  
[www.detma.org/lmi](http://www.detma.org/lmi)
- **Michigan**  
[www.detma.org/lmi](http://www.detma.org/lmi)
- **Minnesota**  
[www.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/](http://www.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/)
- **Mississippi**  
[www.mesc.state.ms.us/lmi/index.html](http://www.mesc.state.ms.us/lmi/index.html)
- **Missouri**  
[www.missourieconomy.org](http://www.missourieconomy.org)
- **Montana**  
<http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/>
- **Nebraska**  
[www.dol.state.ne.us/nelmi.htm](http://www.dol.state.ne.us/nelmi.htm)
- **Nevada's Workforce Informer**  
[www.nevadaworkforce.org/](http://www.nevadaworkforce.org/)
- **New Hampshire**  
[www.nhes.state.nh.us/elmi/](http://www.nhes.state.nh.us/elmi/)
- **New Jersey**  
[www.state.nj.us/labor/lra](http://www.state.nj.us/labor/lra)
- **New Mexico**  
[http://www.dol.state.nm.us/dol\\_lmif.html](http://www.dol.state.nm.us/dol_lmif.html)
- **New York**  
[www.labor.state.ny.us/labor\\_market/labor\\_market\\_info.html](http://www.labor.state.ny.us/labor_market/labor_market_info.html)
- **North Carolina**  
[www.ncesc.com/lmi/default.asp](http://www.ncesc.com/lmi/default.asp)

- **North Dakota**  
<http://www.jobsnd.com/>
- **Ohio**  
[lmi.state.oh.us/](http://lmi.state.oh.us/)
- **Oklahoma**  
[http://www.ok.gov/oesc\\_web/](http://www.ok.gov/oesc_web/)
- **Oregon Labor Market Information System (OLMIS)**  
[www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/OlmiZine](http://www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/OlmiZine)
- **Pennsylvania**  
<http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/>
- **Puerto Rico**  
<http://www.dtrh.gobierno.pr/>
- **Rhode Island**  
[www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/lmihome.htm](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/lmihome.htm)
- **South Carolina**  
[www.sces.org/lmi/index.asp](http://www.sces.org/lmi/index.asp)
- **South Dakota**  
[www.state.nd.us/jsnd/LMInew.htm](http://www.state.nd.us/jsnd/LMInew.htm)
- **Tennessee**  
[www.state.tn.us/labor-wfd/lmi.htm](http://www.state.tn.us/labor-wfd/lmi.htm)
- **Texas**  
[www.tracer2.com/](http://www.tracer2.com/)
- **Utah**  
<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/>
- **Vermont**  
[www.vtlmi.info/](http://www.vtlmi.info/)
- **Virginia**  
[www.vec.state.va.us/index\\_labor.cfm](http://www.vec.state.va.us/index_labor.cfm)
- **Washington's Workforce Explorer**  
<http://www.workforceexplorer.com/>
- **West Virginia**  
<http://www.wvbep.org/bep/lmi/>
- **Wisconsin**  
<http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/worknet/default.aspx>
- **Wyoming**  
<http://www.wyoming.gov/>

## National Sites:

- **Career OneStop**  
[www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)
- **America's Job Bank**  
[www.ajb.org](http://www.ajb.org)
- **America's Career InfoNet**  
<http://www.acinet.org>
- **America's Service Locator**  
[www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org)
- **Workforce Tools of the Trade**  
[www.workforcetools.org](http://www.workforcetools.org)
- **The Workforce ATM**  
[www.naswa.org](http://www.naswa.org)
- **LMINet**  
<http://www.lmiontheweb.org/>
- **Workforce Information Council**  
[www.workforceinfocouncil.org](http://www.workforceinfocouncil.org)
- **ProjectionsCentral.Com**  
<http://dev.projectionscentral.com>
- **Occupational Projections Page**  
[www.projectionscentral.com/projections.asp](http://www.projectionscentral.com/projections.asp)
- **ALMIS Resource Center**  
[www.almisdb.org](http://www.almisdb.org)
- **Bureau of Labor Statistics**  
[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)
- **Occupational Outlook Handbook**  
[www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)
- **Department of Commerce**  
[www.commerce.gov/economic\\_analysis.html](http://www.commerce.gov/economic_analysis.html)
- **Census Bureau**  
[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- **LED – Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics**  
<http://lehd.dsd.census.gov>
- **NAICS – North American Industry Classification System**  
[www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html](http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html)
- **O\*NET**  
[www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org)
- **O\*NET Online**  
<http://online.onetcenter.org>
- **NCSC – National Crosswalk Service Center**  
[www.xwalkcenter.org](http://www.xwalkcenter.org)

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