

Tips for Achieving High Attendance & Retention

YouthBuild USA has collected key data on sites that have achieved high levels of attendance and retention and has compiled the following core information:

There are three key program capacities that must be in place to address attendance and retention issues:

1. The capacity to track and document attendance and retention.
2. The capacity to analyze patterns and arrive at diagnosis of the root causes.
3. The capacity to develop solutions.

There are four questions that programs must always keep in mind:

1. Why do young people come to YouthBuild?
2. What needs are they looking to have met?
3. Why DON'T young people show up or why do they leave the program?
4. Why DO young people show up each day and stay with the program?

The following are key factors for HIGH attendance and retention:

- A trainee screening, selection, and orientation process that is well organized and clear about program goals and student expectations
- Pay bonuses and other rewards and incentives for positive performance
- Stay focused: Daily reminders of why we're here and what we intend to achieve
- A strong relationship with at least two staff members
- Constant reinforcement of high expectations
- Use of written participant contracts which articulate clear expectations and consequences
- Quick and consistent response to violations of rules
- Disciplinary practices that encourage and teach self-discipline
- Program commitment to ongoing staff team-building
- Staff unity
- Mechanisms and processes to engage staff as a team in addressing individual participant issues and needs
- Time built into the daily and weekly schedule for staff team to engage in short- and long-term planning, problem-solving, and case review
- Delivery of jobs and higher education opportunities
- A respectful and compassionate program environment