

Authentic Youth Collaboration.

Created in collaboration with the
National Youth Forum on Homelessness



Objectives.

- Explain the Authentic Youth Collaboration Philosophy and why it's important to our work to end youth homelessness
- Provide a list of best practices for authentically engaging young people
- Provide concepts and ideas to consider when building a framework of how to work with youth and young adults
- Provide concrete examples to address adultism as an adult
- Provide an index of related resources to supplement your learning
- Provide a framework for collaborating with youth participants who are engaging in services or programs



What does authentic partnership look like for youth?



Authentic Partnership with Youth/Young Adults.

- Be intentional about the decision-making power that youth have in your work.
- Youth are the experts of their own truth.
- When asking young people to be involved in your work, hear them out and build a reciprocal relationship where you honor their experiences, allowing their experiences and ideas to inform the process.



Introduction to Adulthood.

What is adulthood?

Adulthood describes the systems of privileged attitudes and behaviors that adults have over those of young people.

Adulthood is driven by behaviors and attitudes that are based on the assumption that adults are better than young people and therefore entitles them to act upon or on behalf of young people without their agreement.

Introduction to Adulthood.

What is ageism?

Stereotyping and discriminating against people on the basis of age.

What is the difference between ageism and adulthood?

Ageism describes the systems of privileged attitudes and behaviors that younger people have over elders.

Adulthood in common language.

- Respect your elders -- they know better.
- Older & wiser
- Childish
- Immature
- Too young/Not old enough
- Children should be seen, not heard
- Stay in a child's place
- The more you live, the more you know

IDEOLOGICAL



INSTITUTIONAL



INTERPERSONAL



INTERNALIZED



IDEOLOGICAL



INSTITUTIONAL



INTERPERSONAL



INTERNALIZED

Adulthood

**Rapid re-housing
doesn't work for
youth.**

***“Before you can have
housing, we need to
know that you will be
responsible.”***

***“I am not mature
enough for my own
house.”***

How To Identify & Reframe Adultism.

Like many -isms or systemic oppressions, adultism is learned very early in life and, though it's all around, it is often invisible until it is pointed out. The learned ideas and behaviors of adultism come with harmful effects, including creating and perpetuating divisive power imbalances in collaborations between young people and adult partners.

Unlearn

Replace with new attitudes

Take action against oppression (speak up)

Remember, we all have been the oppressed, the oppressor, and the ally.



Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration.

Building Trust

Establishing and building trust is essential in any effective working relationship. Once positive rapport is established, genuine collaboration can begin.

Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration.

Meaningful Engagement

An issue that often gets in the way of effective collaboration between youth and service providers is showy engagement, in which young people are invited to participate simply to create the impression of inclusion and diversity.

Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration.

Autonomy

Young adults should have the freedom and agency to be the leaders of their own lives. Their autonomy should be promoted as they make decisions about the issues that impact their lives.

Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration.

Sharing Power

Young adults need to know that they have power but this should also be reinforced by our systems. Ensure that youth serving systems are informed by YYA by reserving space for YYA to have voting, hiring, and decision making power.

Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration.

- **Introductions**
- **Working agreements**
- **Collaborative curriculum (educational spaces)**
- **Thank you's**
- **Peer empowerment (youth to youth)**
- **Skillshare (and compensation)**
- **Housekeeping**

Avoiding Adultism When Collaborating With Youth & Young Adults

Collaborating on Tasks

Allowing young people to collaborate directly on tasks that involve or impact them and/or performing tasks that have traditionally been carried out by Older Adult Partners in youth spaces has been proven to create and promote authentic collaboration, thus removing intentional adultist behaviors.

Avoiding Adulthood When Collaborating With Youth & Young Adults

Online Platforms

Connecting online comes with many pros & cons; that for many can be challenging, while others thrive. Currently, during COVID-19 remote work has become commonplace. Reflect on what challenges exist for older adults and young people & how these may manifest when communicating in an online platform. Engage young people in determining what supports are needed.

Avoiding Adulthood When Collaborating With Youth & Young Adults

Online Platforms

Collaborate with young people to navigate expectations online. Allow young people to determine what platform(s) work best for them & what it means to show up in a meaningful way. Consider technological accessibility, tech knowledge and capacity for young people; develop a contingency plan to meet needs.

Avoiding Adulthood When Collaborating With Youth & Young Adults

What ways can young people safely discuss adulthood & discuss solutions with adult partners?

How does this currently look?

What ways can we begin to change culture to center collaboration & remove adultist behaviors?

What should be put in place to combat adulthood when it shows up among adult partners?

Input and Feedback from Youth and Young Adults.

Set youth and young adult leaders up for success.

Create a collaborative environment for input and feedback.

Set deadlines.

Uplift the impact of their work.



The Listening Session.

Listening sessions are facilitated conversations where youth and young adults' ideas and suggestions are uplifted in an essential way. Adult partners in the room are asked to remain silent throughout the process, centering the perspectives of young people with lived experience toward several goals

5 Tips for a successful Listening Session:

Build Trust

Have an open mind

Identify and reframe adultism

Engage in active listening

Be Specific



Identify & Reframe Activity.



Scenarios.

Scenario: A group of youth with lived experience of homelessness has been assembled to provide feedback on how to improve services in their community. They are asked to only speak about ways to improve basic direct services and not how to address systemic issues within the services in their community.



Scenarios.

Scenario: A transitional housing program has a policy that prohibits participants from bringing their phones into the space.

How would you address this issue? If interested in changing the policy, what are the steps you would take to do so?





**What are other
YABs doing,
you ask?**

Some successes.

- YAB members being paid at least \$15/ a hour
- Full integration within the CoC
- YAB members holding at least 2 voting seats
- Capacity building/ Education
- YAB members are being equipped with the proper knowledge in order to make informed decisions
- The CoC governance compliments the structure of the YAB
- Pushes towards the YAB mission and vision



Some challenges.

- Rural areas
 - Location challenges
- Access to internet
- YAB that is representative of the community being served
 - Usually predominately white members
 - In most cases, the YAB directly reflects the CoC
- Landing on a governance structure/mission/vision
- Working through/ calling out adultism when it shows up



Some suggestions.

- Listen to the YAB
 - They are the experts
- Do not attempt to have a governance structure/mission/vision in place for YAB
 - Allow the YAB to decide what the work will “look like” for them
- Focus on demographics
 - If you’re recruitment yields one type of person as the majority, keep recruiting
- Be transparent early and often



**Don't worry...
Here's a few more
resources**



Youth Collaboration Toolkit and many more.

YOUTH COLLABORATION TOOLKIT



Welcome

Whenever decisions are being made that impact young people, it's important that youth are at the table and have meaningful decision-making opportunities. This can look a number of different ways: seeking out young people to sit on a youth advisory body, involving one or more youth representatives on a board of directors, and creating opportunities for young people to speak for themselves. Young people who are developing services should be encouraged to participate in decisions that directly impact their thinking and wellbeing.

Developed as a partnership between the National Youth Council of Philadelphia (NYCP) and the True Colors Fund, this toolkit was released by NYCP and the content was shared by True Colors. This toolkit and materials included in this toolkit will help ensure that young people are authentically engaged when collaborating with the offering adults of their lives.

Identifying Barriers

Make a point to identify and address any barriers that may inhibit authentic youth collaboration. Make use of some potential barriers to consider using with strategies you can use to overcome them.



Building Trust

Establishing and building trust is essential to any effective working relationship. Once trust is established, genuine collaboration can begin.

Identical Barriers

- **Cultural incongruence:** Misunderstanding the needs and values of young adults of one's own generation after their own.
- **Cultural insensitivity:** The inability to recognize or understand the needs of others.



Strategic Questions

- Understand common misconceptions and stereotypes of young adults to avoid repeating them, which could be damaging.
- Monitor an ongoing and offering environment that meets physical and

State Index on Homelessness.



True Colors Learning Community.



Who said learning can't be fun?



Q&A.



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