



# PROMOTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MINI-GUIDE

OSTPD

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# Positive Youth Development

## WHAT IS POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

Positive youth development (PYD) is an approach and philosophy to working with youth. It includes using an intentionally optimistic frame of mind and positive perspective in your daily work. For some, it will include a cultural shift within the program, their practices and policies, as well as the way staff view their work and how they interact with youth on a daily basis.

PYD includes intentional efforts to providing programming, opportunities for success, and for youth to increase skills. The focus is on strengths and working with youth in their overall development. This philosophical approach will assist in changing how some staff view youth and their ability to succeed.

## WHAT POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IS **NOT**

Positive Youth Development is not simply a program that you implement, or a one-time event. It isn't something that you visit once a week or periodically. It is a constant frame of mind and series of efforts to engage in for every activity and interaction.

The focus is on the positive and youths ability. Avoiding a deficit or negative focus is essential. Likewise, while it does assist with changes in behavior, it not focused on just one behavior.

By choosing a positive focus and growth of the youth, we can avoid the slide or negative spiral that often occurs when the focus in on the negative consequences or the unacceptable behavior.

## COLORADO 9 TO 25 PYD FACT SHEET

The following link will allow you to access the Fact Sheet on Positive Youth Development created by Colorado 9 to 25 and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment:

[http://co9to25.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/PYD\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://co9to25.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/PYD_FactSheet.pdf)

## SUPPORTING COLORADO YOUTH TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

The Colorado Youth Development Team released a report on *Supporting Colorado Youth to Reach Their Full Potential* (ix) which outlines 7 guiding principles:

1. Strengths-Based
2. Youth Engagement



3. Youth-Adult Partnerships
4. Culturally Responsive
5. Inclusion of ALL Youth
6. Collaboration
7. Sustainability

For additional information on these guiding principles, and some recommendations for implementation, please refer to the Executive Summary, or Full Report, identified in the references and resources section.

## 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

The 40 developmental assets for adolescents from the Search Institute are a comprehensive set of indicators for youth. They are organized by sections of internal and external assets, and then listed within sub-categories, such as:

- External Assets
  - Support
  - Empowerment
  - Boundaries and Expectations
  - Constructive Use of Time
- Internal Assets
  - Commitment to Learning
  - Positive Values
  - Special Competencies
  - Positive Identity

Additional information regarding the 40 developmental assets for adolescents can be located on the Search Institute website at:

<http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>

The more assets a youth demonstrates and has present, the more likely they will be healthy, successful, and have the ability and skills to avoid high risk behaviors.

## BENEFITS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A positive youth development approach provides support and encouragement for youth aligned with opportunities for them to succeed in a healthy and supportive environment. This is done while developing skills in many developmental asset areas and increasing both the opportunities to, and ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships with positive adult role models and support.

Programmatic benefits include a more positive focus rather than a disciplinary or deficit based approach, with increasing the capacity for staff to demonstrate and encourage positive relationships between

youth as well as between staff and youth. This PYD approach includes creating and supporting a positive program culture that is inclusive of youth involvement, increases youth commitment and ownership in the program, and enables youth to feel like partners with the staff and adults.

## CHALLENGES WHEN IMPLEMENTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of challenges to be considered that programs may need to overcome and address in order to successfully transition to a positive youth development approach. Consider asking yourself these questions and determining which of challenges may apply to your program or organization, and what steps might need to be taken in order to maximize your success.

- Is your current culture truly ready to embrace the empowering of youth in decision making? This includes giving up some control of areas staff may have always made the decisions on.
- Which staff will have the most difficulty giving up the lead role and be able to stand back and allow youth to run activities and meetings?
- Do youth currently feel that their opinions, involvement and input are valued and truly taken into account? This is an area that needs to be focused on to ensure that youth feel they are so they are encouraged to continue participating.

You will need to develop a plan to address any identified areas so you rectify them.

## IMPLEMENTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Assessing where your program is currently is an important starting point. These questions help you focus on what the current climate of your program and organization is while taking a realistic view of what the issues and challenges are for youth.

- Is your program and organization ready to empower youth?
- Is your program and organization ready to give them a voice and allowing them to actively participate in decision making?
- Have you developed goals and a list of resources you may need?
- Who are your partners and allies to get this started and to support your efforts?

Some additional questions to ask yourself center around how you currently promote positive youth development in the following three categories: [\[v\]](#)

- Do youth have opportunities for personal leadership?
- Do youth have opportunities for organizational leadership?
- Do youth have opportunities for community leadership?

There are a number of ways to involve youth in the process of implementing positive youth development in your program. Collecting feedback from the youth regarding the program and activities

is important to begin their involvement and to show that they, and their perspectives, are valued. This is a beginning to inclusion and building their role as an invested partner.

Youth can also be included in evaluating the program – including all aspects. They are a vested stakeholder in the program.

Youth can be part of the planning process and in brainstorming and determining areas such as activities and flow of the program time. This increases investment and the feeling of inclusion and importance. This process can increase self-esteem of those involved, and also promote teamwork amongst youth as well as between youth and adults.

Structured and organized focus groups are another way to involve youth and to include their opinions and insight into the program.

Create a stakeholder panel and bring together all relevant stakeholders based on your program, the identified needs and goals, and the population you are working with. Schedule regular and ongoing meetings and establish what expectations and roles each stakeholder will play. Having everyone at the table is important so there is a common understanding of the goals and process as well as ownership of the vision and steps to get there.

Additional resources, such as a checklist for youth involvement and to see if you are ready to implement a positive youth development approach, as well as lists of questions for focus groups, please access the following resource: National Resource Center for Youth Development / Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center – 2008 Positive Youth Development Toolkit - <http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/publication-db/documents/2008-positive-youth-development-toolkit.pdf> <sup>[iv]</sup>

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## REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- I. Youth.Gov - <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>
- II. Colorado 9 to 25 - <http://co9to25.org/pyd/>
- III. National Resource Center for Youth Development Youth Engagement: Positive Youth Development - <http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/youth-engagement/positive-youth-development>
- IV. National Resource Center for Youth Development / Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center – 2008 Positive Youth Development Toolkit - <http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/publication-db/documents/2008-positive-youth-development-toolkit.pdf>
- V. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Putting Positive Youth Development into Practice - <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/PosYthDevel.pdf>
- VI. ACT Youth Center of Excellence – Positive Youth Development 101: A Curriculum for Youth Work Professionals - [http://www.actforyouth.net/youth\\_development/professionals/manual.cfm](http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/manual.cfm)
- VII. Search Institute – 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents - <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>
- VIII. Youth Training Project: A Training Curriculum for Youth Trainers – <https://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/publication-db/documents/youth-training-project.pdf>
- IX. Positive Youth Development: Supporting Colorado Youth to Reach their Full Potential:
  - Executive Summary - <http://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/Resources/Positive%20Youth%20Development%20Executive%20Summary,1.pdf>
  - Full Report - [http://co9to25.org/co9to25/PYD\\_Report.pdf](http://co9to25.org/co9to25/PYD_Report.pdf)
- X. Promoting Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement: After-school for All - <http://forumfyi.org/node/117>