

Center for Innovative Practices

Resiliency Tool Kit: Resource #7

Contribution and Participation

Contribution and Participation Definition: (Resiliency Leadership Ohio):

Youth with emotional and behavioral challenges thrive when given opportunities for **contribution, participation, and positive involvement**. Active involvement and meaningful belonging in community activities and schools are fostered and supported. Youth's viewpoints and opinions are valued and meaningful leadership roles are created for them. Community service and helping opportunities are made available for all youth. Communities actively seek out youth as community partners. Communities believe that youth can and do make significant contributions.

Contribution and Participation Tool #1: Supporting youth and young adult leadership experiences

1. Remember that leadership opportunities are important building blocks for adulthood.
2. Believe that it is possible to partner with youth in effective decision making.
3. Ensure that you are taking a supportive role in this process as a guide.
4. Be open to what youth have to share. Do not assume that you know what their ideas will be.
5. Consider the power dynamics involved with youth/adult roles.
6. It is okay for adults and youth to feel trepidations about partnering. Work through it together!

Contribution and Participation Tool #2: Building Leadership Skills in Youth and Young Adults Practice Tips

1. Ensure that you have support from decision makers within the organization and a plan for what kinds of leadership opportunities you are offering youth.
2. Offer any trainings around youth friendliness or youth engagement needed for adult allies.
3. Remember that it can be helpful to involve more than one young adult in leadership work.
4. Get to know young adults as people and value their strengths and interests.
5. Pace youth's involvement to match their readiness.
6. Clearly explain purpose of the leadership opportunity (e.g., structure of group involved, youth's role in the process, how they will be supported, etc.).
7. Get to know where the young adult may need additional assistance and support to participate.
8. Process potential triggers and what parts of the opportunity might stress them out.
9. Have young adult practice and write out what they are going to say or do in certain situations.
10. Hold a mock meeting or rehearsal for leadership role.
11. Ask them if they need anything during the meeting to make sure they feel comfortable.
12. Check in with the young adult immediately after the event and a couple days after.

Contribution and Participation Tool # 3: Leadership Skills Exercise for Youth and Young Adults

Review the list of leadership skills below. Think about which skills come naturally to you and that you are good at. Next think about which skills that you would like to strengthen or develop.

- Written communication
- Verbal communication
- Public speaking
- Negotiation
- Problem solving
- Conflict resolution
- Facilitating discussions
- Teamwork
- Thinking on my feet
- Developing presentations
- Creation of media for presentations
- Giving presentations/training
- Motivating others
- Self-motivation
- Responsibility
- Prioritizing tasks
- Analyzing and organizing information
- Empathy
- Anticipating barriers or problems
- Brainstorming ideas
- Adaptability
- Ability to improvise
- Developing programs
- Thinking logically
- Attention to details
- Summarizing conversations
- Decision-making
- Being part of panel discussion
- Keeping good boundaries
- Critical thinking
- Project planning and organization
- Advocacy

Pick your top five leadership skills.

Top Five Leadership Skills

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What skills are you interested in learning more about or developing further?

Leadership skills to be developed

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What are the first steps you can take to develop these new leadership skills? What help do you need?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Contribution and Participation Tool # 4: Practicing Leadership Skills Group Exercise

In a group setting have young adults role play the following:

1. **Developing young adult “voice”:** Pick a topic that is important to the young adults (e.g. Stigma, how to make organization more young adult friendly). Facilitate a rich discussion on the topic chosen, how the issue chosen has affected them, their opinions on the topic (what they feel strongly about), what their advocacy stance is on the topic, and recommendations they are proposing.
2. Have youth write a letter to the organizational leaders who they want to impact (legislatures, agency director, agency board, etc.), about their perspective on the issue and what they are requesting. Have them be specific in their request.
3. Have a group of youth do a mock advocacy presentation to the target audience on their key message(s) and recommendations. Let them decide on roles.
4. Have youth create a video on an advocacy topic area- put them in charge of the filming, editing, messaging.

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