

POLICY: Youth Engagement Policy	NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REVISED	POLICY NUMBER: C-12
APPROVED: BOARD OF DIRECTORS: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: <input type="checkbox"/>	DATE OF ISSUE: June 25, 2014	Effective Date: August 1, 2014

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT POLICY (2014)

### 1. Purpose

To provide an overall framework for the implementation of Youth Engagement Services within YSB

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and youth of YSB.

### 3. Policy

The **Youth Engagement Model** is an effective tool to connect marginalized youth and support their development of positive self-esteem through working in partnership with them to break down the many systemic barriers that youth encounter within our systems. The Youth Engagement Model promotes youth voice, fosters youth empowerment and develops partnerships with youth and effectively engages them in the development and delivering of programs and services. This model challenges service providers to confront our own biases and offers a new framework to employ when serving youth, especially those who are most marginalized.

YSB defines youth engagement as the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of young people in activities that have a focus outside of themselves within a framework of accessibility, equality, fairness, and social justice for everyone. YSB youth engagement services includes public education/health promotion opportunities through peer to peer workshops, presentations and other community activities.

YSB views youth as partners, strives to empower youth to engage in changing systems, supports youth to take ownership and control of their lives, encourages youth to take risks and provides opportunities for youth to have a strong voice within the agency and their community.

YSB strives to support youth from many backgrounds, experiences, and identities to focus on issues that are important to youth. In doing so, we hope to assist the youth participating in the youth engagement services and activities in reaching their full potential with particular attention to their personal development in building confidence, acquiring leadership skills and having a strong independent voice.

#### Procedures:

The overall safety and wellbeing of the youth involved in the youth engagement are ensured through the following procedures:

### 4. Youth Recruitment

It is strongly encouraged that youth from within all YSB programs be provided the opportunity to participate in the Youth Engagement Services and therefore front line staff are encouraged to act as a valuable resource to connecting youth to this service. The process for recruitment may change from time to time but will generally include:

- 4.1 A brief letter of application submitted to the YSB Staff Advisor;
- 4.2 If there is a vacancy an interview will be scheduled that generally will include the Staff Advisor, Youth Committee Leader and two other youth leaders from the committee.

- 4.3 In the event that there are no vacancies on the committee applied for, the youth will be advised of this and provided an opportunity to apply for another advisory committee or to volunteer on projects that come up periodically where additional youth are needed.
- 4.4 The role of the staff within the interview is to primarily be an observer to ensure the process is fair and to assist the interview members to learn skills for interviewing.
- 4.5 Youth Leaders need to declare a bias if they know a candidate and should remove themselves from the interview process
- 4.6 Once the interview is complete the interview team reviews the interview and makes a recommendation on hiring. This recommendation is then brought forward to the entire team and reviewed.
- 4.7 Once eligibility is determined and the candidate is accepted they are notified and invited to attend the next weekly meeting.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

YSB's options for youth engagement spans across a continuum of options to allow youth to self-identify their interests and skill sets while also promoting opportunities for youth to grow and transition within their roles at YSB. Youth engagement roles at YSB include (but are not limited to): Group Participant, Youth Facilitator/Committee Leader, Peer Educator, and Committee Member.

**5.1** Youth are made aware of the specific roles and responsibilities of each position at time of recruitment. The following are the program responsibilities asked of all youth

- Taking care of the physical space; creating and upholding safer space; supporting ysb values; advocating for change; creating partnerships; coming to meetings attentive to the work; taking on tasks; and being prepared

**5.2 Youth leaders:** All members on a committee are Youth Leaders however most committees also accommodate one or two of the youth to hold an overall Youth Committee Leader role.

- The Committee Leader(s) role is to take on increased responsibility including such things as chairing the weekly meetings, preparing meeting agendas, writing minutes, is involved as a key member of the hiring process and generally takes on a lead role in coordinating the day to day functioning of the committee.
- How leaders are chosen is flexible dependent on each committee's needs and can be determined through competition or appointment by the adult ally in consultation with the members. Each committee determines what works best for that particular committee.

**5.3 Contracted Youth Leaders/Peer Educators:**

- From time to time and/or with some youth engagement services, there are opportunities for youth to be recruited and selected to undertake a contract which has defined hours of work along with specific work expectations that align with a funder contract operated by YSB. Under these circumstances, youth are hired and paid through YSB payroll system. All mandatory deductions will be made from their earnings;
- Youth engaged in a contract can also be involved in a mix of paid and volunteer activities; however, these terms are explained in advance and are understood by the youth in advance of initiating the work;
- Youth engaged in a contract will receive written correspondence outlining the conditions of their employment including their rate, hours of work and where applicable the term of the position including start and end dates.

- Youth engaged in contract work will also be required to adhere to all applicable legislative and YSB policy and procedures related to health and safety.
- Youth on contract are not members of the union
- **5.4 Staff Advisors:**
  - Each Youth Engagement activity or initiative is assigned a YSB staff member who acts as the adult ally/mentor. They provide advice, support, and connect the youth as needed to resources, services, and people. **The adult ally/mentor** role changes as the skills of the youth strengthen and always within a “power with” model versus a “power over” stance. They have overall responsibility for ensuring the program environment is emotionally and physically safe for all the participants.
  - Staff advisors look for opportunities to support youth in taking on various forms of leadership;
  - Youth participating in youth engagement services and activities are made aware of how to seek additional support and/or services through YSB or elsewhere within the community if needed;
  - Staff advisors take on the responsibility for overseeing all financial transaction including honorariums and bus tickets

## **6. Compensation & Recognition:**

Youth involved in activities related to youth engagement have a few different mechanisms for both compensation and recognition. There are youth who participate in youth engagement on a purely voluntary basis as well as those who have a mix of volunteer work and financially compensated positions. Where financial remuneration is provided, compensation /honorariums are in keeping with the parameters set out by budget, scope of project or contract and as determined by the staff advisor. When youth are unable to provide their own transportation they are provided with bus tickets to get to and from meetings or activities that they are delivering within the community.

While there is some variation from time to time, generally, the following categories of youth involvement applies:

- Youth Leaders/Peer Educators that volunteer with no financial compensation
- Youth Leaders/Peer Educators that receive some financial compensation in the form of honorariums
- Youth Leaders/Peer Educators that are paid an hourly wage through YSB payroll

The following serves as guidelines to how compensation is generally applied:

**6.1** Youth Leaders that are members on an advisory committee are expected to attend committee meetings and receive an honorarium for each weekly meeting that they attend; along with the hours of meetings once a week, committee members also put in about equal hours of volunteer work throughout the week working on tasks such as planning an event, developing workshops, creating youth friendly resource materials. When actually delivering the workshop or training youth leaders are compensated with an honorarium.

**6.2** Committee Leaders are provided with additional honoraria for their increased responsibilities. This is generally equal to roughly half of the established honorarium and can be split between 2 Youth Facilitators where 2 exist.

**6.3** Contracted Youth Leaders/Peer Educators: Please refer to 5.3 above

**6.4** Youth participating in Youth Engagement activities can be eligible for acquiring their High School 40 hour Community Service Requirement providing they meet the criteria set out by their school administrators.

## **7. Orientation**

As one of YSB's core values and beliefs, orientation to youth engagement is done by:

**7.1** Staff and Board of Directors members are made aware of the youth engagement services and activities as part of their initial orientation to YSB

**7.2** Youth who participate in the youth engagement services receive as part of their orientation a copy of "Youth Engagement: A Peer to Peer Guide" that covers areas related to agency mission & mandate, the philosophy, objectives and description of the youth engagement services, roles and responsibilities of the youth, practical information and complaints process and a copy of this policy.

## **8. Governance**

YSB is continually examining how best to engage youth in the Governance as it pertains to the Board of Directors. The following represents the mechanisms for engagement:

**8.1** Minimally, on an annual basis, the Board of Directors will meet with the youth of the youth engagement programs with an agenda established by the youth

**8.2** Youth are recruited to participate as equal members on working committees that are established from time to time

**8.3** On policy development matters initiated by youth, a structure is established whereby youth are the initial participants in the drafting of the policy. Once the policy has been vetted through normal channels the final draft versions are reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Board prior to being sent to the full Board of Directors for approval

**8.4** On a regular basis, and no less than at every strategic planning cycle, a review of the effectiveness of the youth's participation in the governance process will be conducted

## **9. Program Evaluation and Planning**

YSB believes in the meaningful engagement of youth in program planning and implementation. In order to encourage this:

**9.1** Each YSB service area is responsible for providing mechanisms for youth to provide meaningful input into the identification of program gaps, and the needs of youth. At a minimum this needs to include regular client satisfaction surveys

**9.2** Youth engagement services as a whole will have an ongoing evaluation capacity with individual initiatives/projects creating specific mechanisms for evaluation as determined by the youth leaders and participants

## **10. Communications**

For YSB to communicate effectively with youth and on behalf of youth, it is important for youth to be part of the process. YSB will strive to consult youth and consider the feedback of youth in planning and designing its communications. Youth can identify communications opportunities, help craft messages that appeal to youth, provide insight into youth preferences, and enrich the material with their point of view.

**10.1** The safety of our youth is paramount when engaging in communications. Whether it is through advertising, publications, or the media, youth consent and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

**10.2** Frontline staff members who work with the youth understand the unique needs of each individual youth and are best able to evaluate the risks involved with the youth engaging in media interviews. Additionally, the Manager of Communications or a designate can meet the youth to outline potential risks, both short and longer term, of their participation and to practice for media interviews.

**10.3** YSB will not publish youth photographs, videos, or quotations without consent. Participation is voluntary, and those who do not wish to take part in any of these activities have the right to privacy. If a youth withdraws consent, YSB will promptly remove the youth's images and words from online and will not reuse the images or text in subsequent publications.

**10.4** In cases where youth advisory committees wish to use the YSB logo and brand on communication materials, the Manager of Communications and the relevant program Director must approve the publication before it is distributed.

## **11. Complaint process**

**11.1** Information regarding the complaint process is provided to all youth participating in the youth engagement services and/or activities at time of orientation;

**11.2** Complaint forms and procedures are made available in visible locations where youth engagement activities occur.

Approved By the Board June 25, 2014

---

Louise Tardif, Chair of the Board