Developed in partnership with:

Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission - MHSOAC

Youth Leadership Institute - YLI

Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee - YIPPC

MHSOAC
Mental Health Services
Oversight & Accountability Commission

yli

YOUTH-LED INNOVATION
TOOLKIT
TOOLKIT
TOOLKIT
TOOLKIT

WELCOME

THIS TOOLKIT WAS DESIGNED BY YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS CALIFORNIA.

MHSOAC | YOUTH INNOVATION PROJECT PLANNING COMMITTEE
14 YOUTHS. 12 COUNTIES. 1 MISSION.

CARINA
Monterey/
Los Angeles County 25

KYLENE
Fresno County, 23

JUAN
Yolo/San Francisco County, 21

AMANDA
Placer County, 17

KALYN
Shasta County, 24

GABE
Sacramento County, 25

CELESTE
Alameda County, 20

SAMSKRUTHI
Santa Clara County, 15

MARISOL
Sacramento County, 23

IRENE
Alameda County, 20

JEANAVY
Humboldt County, 17

MICHEL'E
Los Angeles County, 22

MATTHEW
Los Angeles County, 23

COURTNEY
Madera County, 25

The Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee (YIPPC) was formed under the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) in 2019 to explore how to center youth voice and leadership in the development of mental health services funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

With training provided by Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), YIPPC hosted Youth Innovation Labs across California to develop a model for how leaders in the behavioral health field can meaningfully engage youth in meaningful youth and adult partnership. This toolkit is a collection of their expertise captured for you!

Thank you to each member of YIPPC for your continued leadership and the expertise you offered to help develop this one-of-a-kind, multimedia toolkit.

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WHEN TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

"Nothing about us without us," is a long-standing political cry born from activism amongst groups with disabilities. This statement demands that decisions that will directly impact a group of people must be made in agreement with these same people. For example, mental health services designed for youth need to be designed with youth at the table. No exceptions.

Unfortunately, these types of decisions at the local, state, and national levels have left out our youth's voices, and that's exactly why this toolkit was made. The Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee (YIPPC) designed this toolkit for leaders who are interested in becoming strong adult allies who want to center youth voices. This toolkit can also be shared with youth leaders as a resource for empowering them to know the standards that adults should be held to when working with youth.

Although this toolkit was designed to affect change in the behavioral health field, you can apply the principles and activities in this toolkit in ANY space where policies, systems, and institutions are directly impacting the lives of youth.

⚒ Welcome to the Toolkit

⚒ Thought Exercise: A Day in Our Shoes

⚒ WELCOME TO THE TOOLKIT

We're so excited that you are invested in centering youth voice and lived experience in your work as a leader in the behavioral health space. Throughout this toolkit, you'll find tons of tools that YIPPC has put together to support you in this goal.

All of the tools will ultimately help you build authentic youth and adult partnerships so that you can host your own Idea Lab- a space to engage youth and their expertise to transform your community's behavioral health ecosystem for the better.

Scan the QR code to the right to see the Idea Lab that we hosted. This could be the next youth-led event in your community!

⚒ EXERCISE: A DAY IN OUR SHOES

Imagine you are a youth (or maybe you are one!) waking up to start your day. What's your routine look like throughout the day?

You probably got out of bed, brushed your teeth, changed out of your PJs, walked to school, etc. Do you find it easy to get out of bed in the morning to get to school at 8 AM? Can you focus on what your teacher is talking about that early? Do you have uniforms? How do you feel about them? There are many actions in your day where the decisions were already made for you.

Make a list of 10 decisions that have been made for you in this day. How could you change any of these decisions to improve their impact on you? Now change this to a context that you navigate everyday. This exercise can help you uncover the power of sharing decision making power with those directly impacted by the problems that you are trying to solve on your own!

POST-EXERCISE REFLECTION:

1. Where do you see an unmet need concerning youth?

2. Are you part of a system that is missing an opportunity to involve youth leadership?

3. Is this happening at a local or statewide level?

4. Who do you know that can help you reach youth in a meaningful way?

5. Who are those youth that are most impacted by the problem that you are trying to solve?

6. Why aren't they already at the table?

The exercise that you just did above is a great exercise to start with youth who you are trying to problem solve with. Youth hold so much wisdom through their lived experience, and that's something we'll bring up over and over again throughout this toolkit!

YOUTH + ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

If you are working on any program, project, or policy that will impact young people, getting their input is an essential part of the process. Building authentic relationships with young people is fundamental to any youth and adult partnerships. Unfortunately, adults often fail to meaningfully engage young people in opportunities either because adults do not know how to reach them, or do not understand how to be effective adult allies in the process.

If you have worked with youth for a long time, it is easy to assume you know a lot about them. However, it is important to recognize what it means to be a young person in today's world. While there are many advantages youth have today over previous generations, youth today are processing a greater understanding of the existential threats of climate change, civil and political unrest, the ever presence of gun violence, the mental and emotional impacts of social media, a societal dependence on technology, and being the first youth in a century to navigate a pandemic.

To be a faithful adult ally, it is essential to approach young people with a sense of humility based on the recognition that youth have invaluable expertise on their needs and how the challenges and opportunities they face at school, at home, or in their community impact them and their peers. Being an adult ally is recognizing all of this, and knowing that in order to better support or serve youth, earnestly listening and learning is the first step.

⚒ Exercise: Looking Within

⚒ Video: Learning from Experts

"One of the most important parts of being an adult ally is making a commitment to centering the lived experiences of youth in our communities. They are the experts of their experiences. We need to listen to what they need as we work with youth and families to effectively transform our systems of care."

-Adult ally in Los Angeles County

⚒ EXERCISE: LOOKING WITHIN

Take out a notebook or piece of paper. Write down your reasons for why you want to be an adult ally. For example:

- To invest in the leadership development of young people

- Because it will make your program, project, or policy stronger

- To provide direct services to young people

- To ensure that your work is not doing harm to young people

- You care about young people who are our present and future, and want to better understand the challenges they are facing
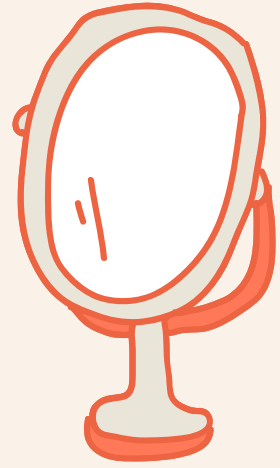
POST-EXERCISE REFLECTION:

Working with adults can be nerve-wracking for young people. Some may have negative associations with working with adults because of a lack of positive or stable adult relationships in their lives. Better understanding your goals of building youth and adult partnerships, while also being mindful of the power dynamics (real or perceived) your presence can have around youth, will create a more fruitful pathway for you to meet young people where they are at and support them on their path to developing as young leaders.

As you read your list of reasons why you want to work with youth from the activity above, consider whether these reasons are clear and authentic enough to confidently communicate to the young people you wish to work with. Does your list of reasons center the lives of youth?

⚒ VIDEO: LEARNING FROM EXPERTS

Part of being an expert in working with young people is understanding that you always have something to learn about being a better adult ally. Please scan the QR code to watch a video from a youth leader discussing the importance of investing in youth and adult partnerships.

The Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee asked a variety of their favorite adult allies across the state, "What is the most important thing about being an adult ally?"

We were able to collect some very insightful quotes below as a result. Which one speaks the most to you and the project that you are currently working on to empower youth?

QUOTES ABOUT YOUTH + ADULT PARTNERSHIP:

"It's so important that youth who are receiving services meant for youth are included as part of the development of those services." - Sharmil Shah, Chief of Program Operations at the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC)

"Not only is it possible for adult allies to bring youth expertise to the table, but it's preferential. It's what we should be doing. It's the best practice. And we will get farther, further, and be more effective as we continue in this way." - Jennifer Lopez, MPA, LSSBB, and Adult Ally to the Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee

"Young people are already the experts in their community, and young people are the ones already leading change in their communities." - Montzerrat Garcia Bedolla, Southern California Director of Programs at Youth Leadership Institute (YLI)

ADULT ALLY STARTER KIT

Youth are innovative and creative leaders. They can bring fresh ideas and innovative solutions to your work. As a stakeholder wanting to involve youth in a project you must take careful consideration of how you plan to engage them.

Unfortunately, youth are often brought into decision-making spaces and planning processes with very little intentionality. In worst case scenarios, youth can be manipulated, tokenized, and used as decorations.

That's why the Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee has laid out this road map for you to create effective, empowering, and meaningful opportunities for youth. Take some time to use the tools in this module to ensure that your youth engagement strategies truly center youth voice!

- Adult Ally Capacity Check-In
- Hart's Ladder of Participation
- Youth Engagement Checklist

ADULT ALLY CAPACITY CHECK-IN

1. What programs or projects could benefit from youth expertise?
(Tip: Consider programs or projects that are for youth but have historically not been created in collaboration with youth.)

2. How much time and resources can you or your organization dedicate to supporting youth involvement?
- How many staff members can lead these efforts?
- How many meetings a month can your team organize to support the youth's work?
- What kind of trainings or professional development skills can your organization provide to ensure successful youth engagement?
- Is there any organizational funding available to provide stipends, transportation, snacks or food, and a meeting space?

3. Decide: Are you ready to involve youth in a meaningful way?

| No: *"It's not the best time to involve youth, but we are dedicated to building up our capacity to do it right. We will return to this guide once we are ready!"*	Yes: *"We are ready to involve youth! We have the capacity, resources, and time to involve youth in a meaningful way and we are ready to move through this toolkit!"*

⚒ HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

As we begin to involve youth in programming or projects it is important to recognize the power structures that exist between youth and adults. Oftentimes, adult allies involve youth in projects but don't fully trust or listen to the ideas and expertise youth are bringing to the table.

When we are not sharing our power and trusting youth as experts, we create unsafe, tokenizing environments. On the flip side, we can take steps toward engaging youth in more healthy and empowering ways. Hart's Ladder is a tool to help us take those steps to move toward empowering youth-led engagement.

Review the steps below and identify which steps you're at, and which steps you'd like to see in your youth work.
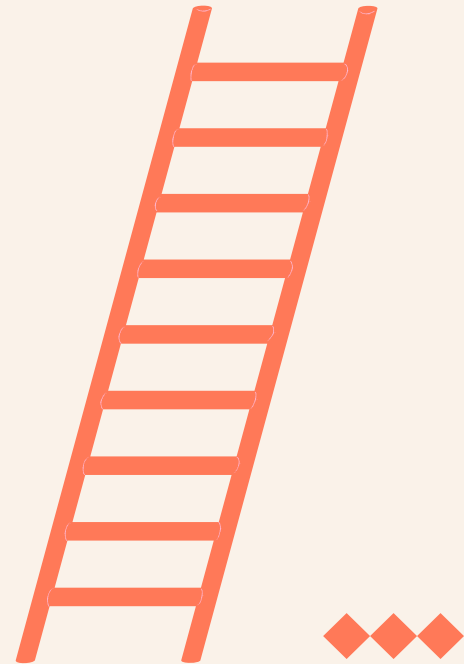
WHAT STEPS HAS YOUR YOUTH WORK TAKEN ON IN THE PAST?

STEP 9. Youth and Adult Initiated and Directed
Designed and run by youth and adults in full partnership.

STEP 8. Youth-Initiated, Shared Decision Making With Adults:
Designed and run by youth who share decisions with adults.

STEP 7. Youth-Initiated + Directed:
Designed and run by youth and decisions made by youth.

STEP 6. Adult-Initiated, Shared Decision Making With Youth:
Designed and run by adults who share decision-making with youth.

STEP 5. Consulted + Informed:
Designed and run by adults who consult with youth as experts.

STEP 4. Assigned + Informed:
Youth did not initiate, but understand and have some sense of ownership.

STEP 3. Tokenism:
Symbolic representation by few. May be asked to speak on behalf of a group.

STEP 2. Decoration:
Youth are only used as the face of a project and do not have a real role.

STEP 1. Manipulation:
Youth are misled to contribute solely to the cause of adults' messages.

9. YOUTH AND ADULT INITIATED AND DIRECTED

8. YOUTH-INITIATED, SHARED DECISION MAKING WITH ADULTS

7. YOUTH-INITIATED AND DIRECTED

6. ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISION MAKING WITH YOUTH

5. CONSULTED + INFORMED

4. ASSIGNED + INFORMED

3. TOKENISM

2. DECORATION

1. MANIPULATION
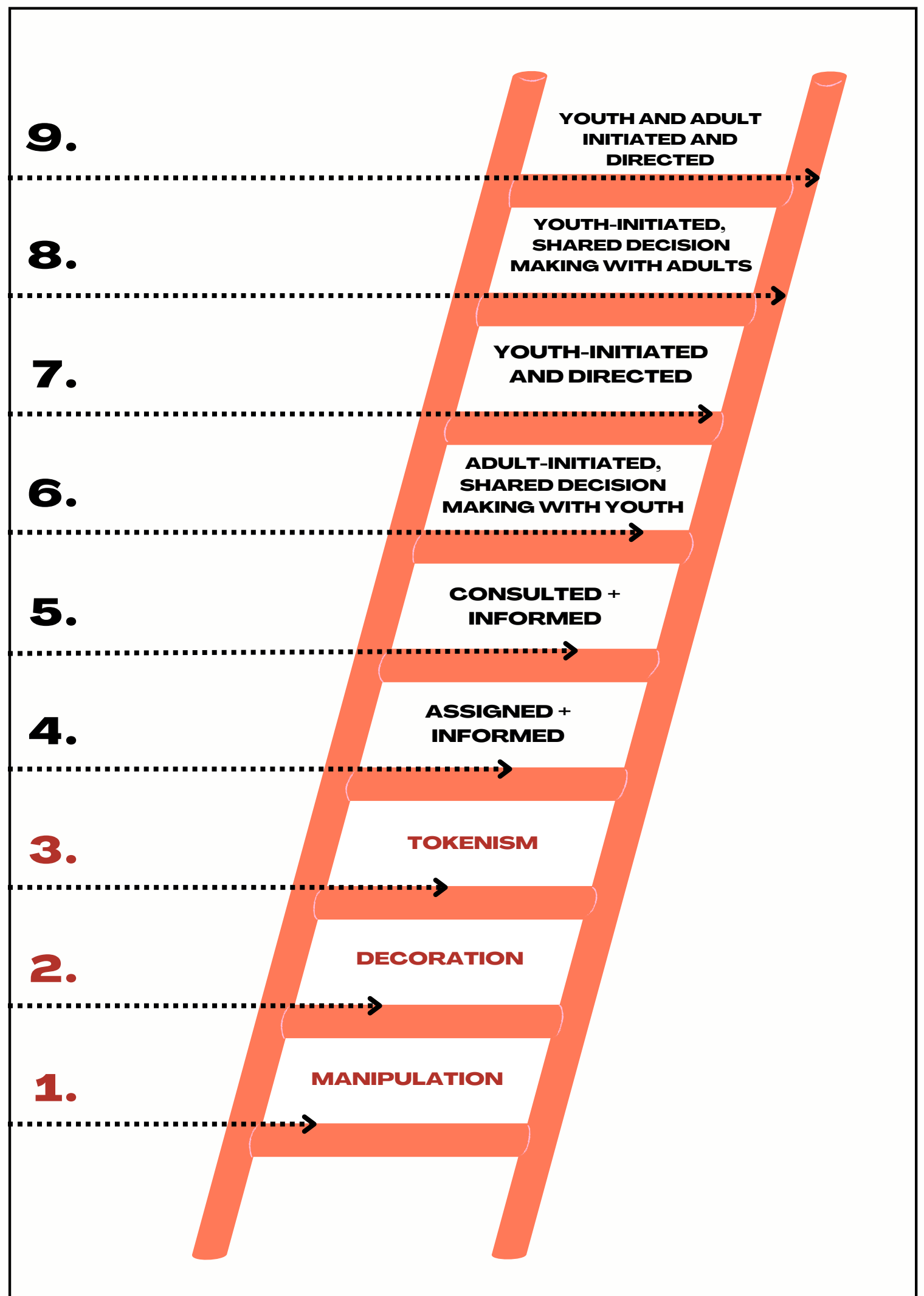
⚒ YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Engaging youth in programs and organizational projects comes with the responsibility of understanding the special circumstances and needs of youth during this point of their life. Youth involvement means ensuring ample support, mentorship, and resources in order to ensure their success.

Some youth may not have professional experience, transportation, and the financial needs necessary for their engagement. That is why it is crucial to strategically take the time to plan youth involvement for your organization or projects.

Use the list below to see if you are ready to engage with youth in a meaningful way, or if you still need to spend time at the drawing board and building resources.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT OUTLINE:

MISSION: Guiding principles of either organization or youth project.

GOAL: What is the goal of the youth's engagement? Be clear and specific.

RECRUITMENT: How many youth will you recruit? What type of representation is needed? What ages? What lived experiences?

BACKGROUND: What context do the youth need to effectively engage with the project?

TRAINING: What training or professional development will need to be in place to ensure that the youth are successful in their efforts?

COMPENSATION: How much will you budget for stipends? Or for gift cards? Prizes?

TIMELINE: Lay out a detailed timeline for youth that includes expected project start and end dates, key milestones, and how much time they are expected to commit.

ENGAGEMENT: What roles can youth fulfill? Clearly define expectations for each role.

ACCOUNTABILITY: How will you track the youth's contributions and compensation?

RELATIONSHIPS: Develop intentional relationships between youth and relevant adult allies.

YOUTH LEADER STARTER KIT

Youth provide unique lived experiences that are essential to furthering behavioral health initiatives. We know this process can be extremely overwhelming. On top of a young person's other responsibilities, learning advocacy skills can seem daunting. We made this module to provide accessible and manageable tools for getting youth involved in behavioral health advocacy. To advocate for others, youth must be supported in being able to advocate for themselves.

Youth's passion for mental health is admirable at a time when they need it most. Young people understand the increasing prevalence of mental health conditions through their lived experiences. As youth diagnoses increase, we recognize a need for comprehensive, culturally competent, and equitable mental health services. Youth already possess the skills for successful advocacy, but we hope this module provides them with the tools for initiation and partnership with adult allies.

In this module, we will begin with assessing readiness for advocacy. Next, we will review resources to increase youth self-advocacy. Youth will receive a communication template for reaching out to organizations and mental health leaders. If you have already established a partnership with an organization or an adult, you can complete a tokenism assessment. We will provide you with community examples to envision equitable youth partnerships with adults in mental health. Finally, we will gather demographics, contact information, and feedback on using this template.

⚒ Assessment of Readiness

⚒ Resources for Youth

⚒ ASSESSMENT OF READINESS

This assessment of readiness serves as a guideline for making sure that youth are supported in their advocacy. This is a section that you can walk through with youth, or print out for them to complete on their own. This section contains follow-up information and resources that you can use to support youth who identify gaps in their preparation. Treat this section as a way to consider what skills and resources you may want to focus on supporting youth with building as you prepare to work with them as an adult ally.

SUPPORT ASSESSMENT:

Support is necessary for our mental health and advocacy. Support can be professional or social. Professional support is necessary to further our advocacy goals, while social support helps our emotional well-being.

Do not worry if the items involving working with an adult or organization do not apply to you yet, as we will review facilitating these partnerships later on. Based on your experience, please check all the apply:

☑ **Support**
☑ Knowledge
☑ Infrastructure
☑ Skills

☐ My advocacy is supported by a knowledgeable adult.

☐ I know how to reach out to knowledgeable adults.

☐ I feel like my input is taken into account when working with this adult.

☐ I have a social support system I can reach out to if I am discouraged or need input.

☐ I know like-minded peers who would be willing to work on a project with me.

KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT:

Knowledge enables us to effectively advocate for those in need. Being informed about various mental health conditions and barriers of treatment will enable you to provide appropriate and culturally-sensitive advocacy. You may possess lived experiences surrounding mental health.

☑ Support
☑ **Knowledge**
☑ Infrastructure
☑ Skills

Sharing these experiences can be very difficult, so it is completely understandable if you are not comfortable sharing these. Sometimes sharing these experiences can help you relate to others and also be therapeutic. Based on your experience, please check all the apply:

☐ I have an understanding of various mental health conditions.

☐ I am informed about barriers to mental health treatment.

☐ I know how to articulate my lived experiences.

☐ I know how to articulate my skills.

☐ I know how to assess whether an organization or an adult partnership aligns with my goals.

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT:

It is important to consider the infrastructure of the organization you are working with. Attitudes and perceptions regarding youth involvement will directly affect your role in advocacy. Based on your experience, please check all the apply:

☑ Support
☑ Knowledge
☑ **Infrastructure**
☑ Skills

☐ Does the organization/adult I am interested in working with allow youth participation?

☐ How does the organization/adult incorporate youth input?

☐ How open is the organization/adult to youth participation?

SKILLS ASSESSMENT:

These skills can facilitate success in advocacy, but they are not required. We understand that people have differing abilities and some of the tasks listed may not be obtainable. In this case, ensure that alternatives are available for communication and comprehension.

The adults you work with must provide you with necessary accommodations. Based on your experience, please check all that apply:

☑ Support
☑ Knowledge
☑ Infrastructure
☑ **Skills**

☐ I can confidently speak in front of a group of people.

☐ I can type and take detailed notes during meetings.

☐ I enjoy breaking down academic information and research.

☐ I am comfortable working in group settings and teams.

☐ I am comfortable working individually or independently.

A note from a member of the Youth innovation Project Planning Committee to youth: "If I completed this checklist when I first started advocating for mental health, I would have checked very few boxes.

Please take a look at your readiness assessment. The areas that are not checked can become opportunities for you to receive support from an adult ally.

Becoming a leader is a process and therefore this assessment is not intended to discourage you. If you need more resources on social support, mental health conditions, barriers to treatment, and public speaking please continue to the next section."

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

SOCIAL SUPPORT

 "Social support is defined as the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations" (Taylor, 2011, p. 192). A common misconception is that social support must be provided by same-age friends. However, social support comes in many forms, including your "partner, relatives, friends, coworkers, social and community ties, and even a devoted pet" (Taylor, 2011, p. 192).

Social support is divided into 3 different categories (Taylor, 2011). Informational support involves one person helping another through a stressful event and determining strategies to overcome it. Instrumental support involves tangible resources to help others. Emotional support affirms the value of a person through providing warmth and care.

Social support results in mental and physical health benefits (Taylor, 2011). Social support reduces psychological distress during stressful times. Social support helps adjustment to chronic health conditions. Social contacts even predicted a longer lifespan in a longitudinal study. It can even prevent illness and further recovery.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

This link provides a comprehensive overview of various mental health conditions, detailing symptoms, types of disorders, causes, diagnosis, and treatment ("Mental Health Conditions", 2022).

BARRIERS TO TREATMENT: RESEARCH PAPER

This study provides a rationale for healthcare access, demographics, and statistical analysis of barriers to healthcare (Coombs et al., 2021).

BARRIERS TO TREATMENT: BLOG POST

This link details additional barriers to treatment (Heath, 2019).

PUBLIC SPEAKING: VIDEO

This link provides public speaking strategies (Treasure, 2014).

RESOURCES TO INCREASE SELF-ADVOCACY

PLEASE SCAN OR CLICK QR CODES

Unicef provides an online youth advocacy guide in the form of a pdf (Voices of Youth, 2022). This guide discusses terminology, considering your role, finding facts, understanding policy, networking, conferences, building momentum, developing an advocacy plan, thinking beyond advocacy, maintaining mental wellness, and feeling stuck.

Healthy Gen provides online youth advocacy training regarding policy-making. The training is brief and includes telling your story, preparing yourself, presenting to lawmakers, and following up (Stewart, 2017).

PACE provides a toolkit for policy advocacy, communication, and storytelling. This toolkit is formatted in interactive pdfs (Houston, 2022).

Kids Helpline provides information regarding the importance of self-care and different methods to achieve self-care. Exercise, sleep, nutrition, and rest are included and discussed in detail ("Self-Care...", 2021).

This resource defines self-advocacy and describes steps for increasing self-advocacy (Partners Resource Network, 2019).

RESOURCES TO INCREASE SELF-ADVOCACY (CONT.)

This resource is a list of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) coordinators across California, organized by county. MHSA Coordinators serve as a point person for youth and community members to influence public programs and services that are funded by the MHSA. Scroll to the bottom of the page linked in this QR code for the full list.

This resource informs youth on how to find their passion, taking them step-by-step through the process (Youth in Progress, n.d.).

This resource allows you to evaluate the reliability of a source (Sam M. Walton College of Business, 2019).

This website describes various modern-day mental health treatments ("Mental Health Treatments", n.d.).

This describes how to utilize social media for advocacy (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2020).

HOSTING AN IDEA LAB

In this module, we break down the steps to conducting an Idea Lab. Think of the Idea Lab as an event where you have the opportunity to generate and jump start youth-led, innovative approaches to improving your community's mental health ecosystem. This isn't a space where we just talk ideas, but we also envision the ways that we can effectively support youth with turning these ideas into reality.

Rather than diving into the intricacies of how to run a public-facing event, we are going to focus on sharing tangible tools and approaches that you can embed into an event agenda to host your own Idea Lab.

We will give guidance around: (a) agenda building, (b) facilitating Idea Lab activities, and (c) key steps to supporting youth before and after the Idea Lab. By the end of this module, we want you to feel confident in planning your own Idea Lab that reflects the culture and practices of your community.

⚒ **Sample Agenda & Key Objectives**

⚒ **Idea Lab Activities**

⚒ **So You Want to Host an Idea Lab?**

⚒ SAMPLE AGENDA & KEY OBJECTIVES

In this part of the toolkit, we cover the key objectives and agenda that the Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee used for our Idea Lab. As you go through this section, think about what an idea lab might look like in your community!

1. Welcome
2. Advocacy Gallery Walk
3. Youth and Adult Ally Panel
4. Break/lunch
5. Sprouted Concept Activity
6. Break
7. Group Shareout
8. Call to Action

⚒ SAMPLE AGENDA & KEY OBJECTIVES

1. Welcome
2. Advocacy Gallery Walk
3. Youth and Adult Ally Panel
4. Break/lunch
5. Sprouted Concept Activity
6. Break
7. Group Shareout
8. Call to Action

WELCOME   01.

The welcome is a time to set the tone of your event and identify the shared vision of the space. Some important things to go over during this time is the agenda for the day, the roles of key point people leading the event, and community agreements that you co-create with the audience. This is also a key opportunity to discuss the importance of youth leadership and what adult allyship should look like to best support the youth in attendance.

ADVOCACY GALLERY WALK   02.

This is a portion of the event where we display art pieces created by youth that each highlight different innovative solution to addressing the mental health needs of youth. We call these art pieces multi-media voice pieces as they can be any form of expression, such as poetry, photography, illustration, and morel

In the Innovation Lab hosted by the Youth Innovation Committee, we collected pieces from youth in specific counties so that we could identify more specific, rather than broad needs. This is important so that youth are able to identify specific solutions to specific community-level issues.

As attendees walk around and view the multi-media voice pieces, they will choose which innovative solution they are most interested in brainstorming through for the rest of the innovation lab.

The image to the right is an example of a multi media voice piece about youth homelessness.

EXAMPLE OF MULTI-MEDIA VOICE PIECE

Multi-media voice pieces can be created using any form of expression. The youth create the pieces to answer these four questions:

1. How would you describe your piece?
2. What issue does your piece symbolize?
3. How does this impact youth?
4. What is a solution you'd like to propose?
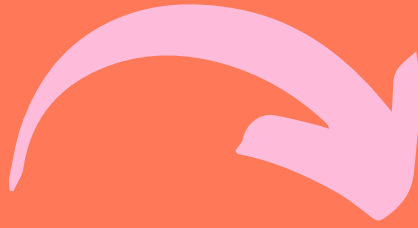
YOUTH + ADULT ALLY PANEL

03.

This is a panel discussion hosted after the gallery walk to demonstrate youth and adult partnership. The panelists are made up of youth leaders and adult allies who offer a live, collaborative brainstorm around a multi-media voice piece. They will discuss the issue that is portrayed in the piece while exploring how the solution could be developed in their community.

LUNCH BREAK

04.

Our total Idea Lab Agenda took half a day to facilitate, so an important consideration for the event was to provide sufficient breaks and nourishment to attendees. Additionally, having a lunch break provides opportunities for youth leaders to mingle or network with adult allies. This is also a great time for the facilitation team to regroup and prepare for the next phase of the event

An important consideration to make for the lunch break is to prepare meal options that account for various dietary restrictions. It is also helpful to order food options that can be easily packed and taken home by attendees if there are leftovers or extras.

SPROUTED CONCEPT ACTIVITY

05.

The Sprouted Concept Activity is a group brainstorm activity in which youth leaders and adult allies will be grouped together based on the Multi-media Voice Piece they selected during the Gallery Walk.

Each group of youth leaders and adult allies will explore the challenge and solution that is identified in the Multi-Media Voice Piece that they chose. As a team, they will brainstorm through the opportunities and barriers associated with bringing the innovative solution to life in their communities.

The ultimate goal is to develop actionable next steps for the youth leaders and adult allies to continue collaborative efforts towards the identified solution after the Idea lab. Specifics for how the Sprouted Concept Activity can be facilitated are described in the following section.

WELLNESS BREAK

06.

We embedded another small break after the braintorm activity to provide some brief rest and fun for participants. This can be a 5 to 10 minute activity such as a guided meditation or stretching break.

A good way to decide what to do for the wellness break is to consult with youth in the planning phase of your idea lab so you can choose an activity that speaks to them!

Ideas: meditation, stretching, dance, breath work, drawing, or simple group games..

GROUP SHAREOUT

07.

This portion of the Idea Lab provides each team of youth leaders and adult allies with an opportunity to share their group's brain storm and next steps with the rest of the attendees.

Members of the audience are invited to share their reactions and feedback to the ideas that have been generated from each group in the Sprouted Concept Activity.

The Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee had a youth artist doing live drawings and notes to capture the ideas developed in each group.

We will break down this activity in the next section as well as provide an image of the live drawings and notes that were created by the youth artist who we worked with.

CALL TO ACTION

08.

In the closing of the Idea Lab, we have our youth leaders provide a closing statement to sum up the event. This includes a statement of thanks to all of the youth attendees, adult allies, and any special acknowledgements that should be made.

This is also an opportunity to reiterate the calls to action identified in each of the group brainstorms. And last but not least, we provide a reminder to all attendees to continue modeling authentic youth and adult partnership in their lives and unique roles outside of the Idea Lab space.

⚒ SAMPLE AGENDA & KEY OBJECTIVES

KEY OBJECTIVES:

Now that you have seen the agenda for our Idea Lab, we want to share these objectives or goals to build an understanding of the WHY behind the Idea Lab. These objectives helped us to determine how we built out the agenda and the key actiities of the Idea Lab.

A. SHARED INTENTION

Participants will engage in a safe, creative environment that will unite, empower and create collaboration.

B. YOUTH + ADULT PARTNERSHIP

Participants will cultivate quality youth and adult partnerships that ultimately uplift youth voice.

- **Youth** will be able to workshop their ideas with the support of an adult ally who serves in their local community

- **Adult allies** will offer a follow-up connection opportunity to continue building youth and adult partnerships and creating opportunity for youth leadership and youth input.

C. EMPOWERMENT

Youth and adult participants will walk away with the tools and motivation to propose a youth-led system-wide change that will increase or improve preventative mental health services in the community.

Ultimately, the Idea Lab is a space to model authentic youth and adult partnerships that can continue to grow in your community after this event is held.

⚒ IDEA LAB ACTIVITIES

The idea lab that the Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee led consisted of these 4 key activities. We have written this next section to share how you can facilitate each of these activities so that you can also build out your own idea lab agenda! Each of these activity can also be led as their own activities to engage with youth outside of an Idea Lab!

1. Advocacy Gallery Walk
2. Youth and Adult Ally Panel
3. Sprouted Concept Activity
4. Group Shareout

ADVOCACY GALLERY WALK

SETTING UP   01.

Setting up for the gallery walk requires the following materials:

- Multi-media voice pieces printed out
- 1 easel for each multi-media voice piece
- Name tags for all attendees
- Stickers: 2 unique colors. One color of stickers to represent youth (gold) and another to represent adult allies (blue)
- Time: 30 minutes for attendees to browse and select pieces

BONUS TIP   03.

This activity can be used as a stand alone activity without the stickers to highlight youth advocacy in a public setting such as a gala, forum, or community town hall.

SELECTING PIECES   02.

1. When signing attendees into the event, provide them each with a name tag and a sticker that represents their status as a youth leader or adult ally.
2. Invite attendees to view each of the multi-media voice pieces.
3. Attendees place their stickers on the piece that they are interested in most.
4. Based on the number of attendees at your event, set a max number of youth and adults who can be assigned to each multi-media voice piece. For example, you may set a max number of 5 youth stickers and 2 adult stickers per piece.
5. The activity is complete when everyone has selected a piece. The attendees can now be grouped in teams of youth and adult allies based on the multi-media voice piece that they share interest in.

YOUTH AND ADULT ALLY PANEL

CHOOSING PANELISTS 01.

This panel is an opportunity to model youth and adult partnerships to the attendees at the Idea Lab. Individuals on the panel will do a live brainstorm that demonstrates the sprouted concept activity. Your panel should include the following individuals:

- 2 youth leaders who come from the community in which the multi-media voice piece was created.
- 2 adult allies who have some sort of power or expertise related to the issue identified in the multi-media voice piece.
- 1 youth moderator whose role is to ask questions and ensure that there is a strong balance of youth and adult perspectives during the panel.

QUESTIONS TO ASK 02.

These are the questions that we used in our iteration of the Idea Lab. It is important to turn to youth first for each question, and then going to the adult allies. This sets the tone for a strong youth and adult partnership in which youth can lead.

1. How do you understand the issue in the multi media voice piece being displayed? And how is this issue impacting youth?
2. The multi-media voice piece suggests a solution. What barriers do you think we will face in bringing this solution to life?
3. What resources or support do we need to effectively implement this solution?
4. What are important next steps we should take to work towards the solution? What role would you like to play in this?

SPROUTED CONCEPT ACTIVITY

MATERIALS 01.

- Large Post-It Board or White Board
  - This will be used to capture the group's brainstorm process
- Writing utensils for each participant
- Sticky notes in 4 different colors
- Facilitator (1 person per group)
  - lead people through questions
  - help youth bring ideas to table
  - help adults support youth without taking up too much space
- Scribe (1 person per group)
  - help capture brainstorm
  - take notes on discussion
  - summarize team's works
- Time: 1.5 hours

KEY TERMS 02.

<u>Proposed Solution:</u> This refers to the solution that is identified in each of the multi-media voice pieces to improve youth mental health
<u>Weeds</u>: This refers to the challenges that youth and adults may face in bringing the proposed solution to life
<u>Rich Soil:</u> This refers to opportunities like funding, expertise,
<u>Sprouted Concept:</u> An iteration of the proposed solution that incorporates the brainstorm done by the group. The idea that youth want to bring into their community with the support of adult allies

FACILITATING 03.

The facilitator will lead the group through the following questions. The group should write their answers on a sticky note, place it on the shared post-it, and discuss their answers as a group. You should spend about 20 minutes exploring each question.

1. What lived experience, knowledge, and skills do you bring to the table?
   - Note: validate youth's expertise, especially their lived experiences
2. <u>Weeds</u>: What barriers do we need to consider to bring the proposed solution to life in your community?

3. <u>Rich Soil:</u> What opportunities can we take advantage of to bring the proposed solution to life? Are you connected to any decision makers, organizations, funding, expertise, or knowledge that could help?
4. <u>Sprouted Concept:</u> Taking our discussion into account, is there any changes you would make to the proposed solution? Note the changes you would suggest and write down a statement to capture your vision for the proposed solution in your community.

GROUP SHARE OUT

FACILITATING 01.

This is an opportunity to hear from each group that participated in the sprouted concept activity. Provide each group with up to five minutes to report out on their groups discussion. Identify one of the youth to report out for the group for this activity. One adult ally can be identified to follow up with any details or additional insight that they would like to share for the group.

- Make sure to capture the key next steps from each of the groups. What steps do the youth want to see happen in their community after this Idea Lab?
- Follow up with decision makers and youth to actionize on next steps
- Help adults to be clear on how to work with youth using Hart's Ladder
- Consider time and resources needed

YOUTH ROLE 02.

- Youth always start out the process of summarizing and sharing with the group to center youth voices
- Share about the issue and refined solution that their group has discussed in the Sprouted Concept activity
- Discuss the opportunities and barriers
- Discuss key next steps and their roles
- Catalyze excitment and energy towards the solutions that youth want to see

ADULT ALLY ROLE 03.

- Support youth by following up with insights from adult perspective
- Is there additional context they can add about opportunities and barriers
- What role can they play and what are specific avenues of support they can follow up with after event
- Demonstrate concrete action and commitment to youth partnerships

⚒ SO YOU WANT TO HOST AN IDEA LAB?

Now that you've seen an example of an Idea Lab agenda as well as the breakdown of the key activities that we hosted in our version of the Idea Lab, you might be thinking about what this could look like in your community. Check out this video with one of our Youth Innovation Project Planning Committee members for some important things to consider as you plan. **Please contact YLI at training@YLI.org if you are interested in receiving technical assistance to develop an Idea Lab in your community!**

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THANK YOU

PLEASE SHARE THIS TOOLKIT WITH OTHER LEADERS WHO ARE INVESTED IN BUILDING REAL YOUTH AND ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. THANK YOU TO THE DEDICATION AND WORK OF YIPPC FOR BRINGING THIS TOOLKIT TO LIFE!