Nothing About Us Without Us: DC Youth Advisory Committee

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Why are there so many sexual health education programs implemented youth without youth input?
Youth Sexual Health Project (2009)

Goal of developing youth-inspired sexual health programming strategies

Focus groups, key informant interviews, youth surveys and media assessments

Five guiding principles developed to drive sexual health programming for youth in DC
Youth Advisory Committee

• **Mission**: to develop a cadre of young leaders with critical-thinking skills who will share their knowledge and expertise around adolescent health issues
Youth Advisory Committee Structure
Youth Advisory Committee Structure, *cont.*
Youth Leadership

A Spectrum of Youth Leadership

Youth organizations can be described by the degree to which youth are empowered to participate and lead.

Youth as Clients
Youth are "served" by adults and have no input into program decision making

Youth Participation
Youth input into program decision making is occasionally solicited by adult workers

Youth Involvement
Youth provide regular input into program decision making

Youth Driven
Youth have substantive, meaningful roles in leadership positions, including governance and programming

Youth Run
Youth fill a majority of staff positions and manage the day-to-day operations of the organization

Youth Led
Youth are in all major leadership roles, including executive director, and have majority membership on boards of directors, with appropriate support from adult allies

http://movementbuilding.movementstrategy.org/media/docs/1892_MSMC.pdf
Key Program Components

- **POLICY** to initiate the program
- **FUNDING** for stipends, materials, sponsorships
- **PARTNERSHIPS** for training and outreach opportunities
- **AGENCY** buy-in to ensure sustainability
- **YOUTH** to participate and recruit additional members
YAC Recruitment Process
Health Outreach - Making Packets
Youth Pride Day!
Student Condom Availability Program
Other YAC Projects
Incorporation of Youth Voice

- Topics addressed
- Outreach locations
- Activities and partnerships
- Recruitment of new members
- Our team/agency programming
- Partner programming, initiatives and legislation
Example of YAC Input
Best Practices

• Interactive trainings and activities
• Incorporating youth voice - all around
  – Brainstorm, plan then implement!
• Boundaries and rule-setting
  – Emphasize real-world application
• Youth voice at EVERY level
• Have fun!
Challenges Faced

• New agency policy regarding communication
• Processing of youth stipends
• Limitations around usage of funds
• Youth retention / outside life experiences
Concluding statements
We cannot always build the future for our youth. But we can always build our youth for the future.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
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