



Cares for,
Involves and
Works with
Families
and Community

TRAINING
MODULE



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Many staff from the members of the National Collaboration for Youth worked to determine the core competencies necessary for frontline youth workers. This work occurred over a number of years by reviewing existing competencies and finding the commonalities that pulled them all together while struggling to ensure a document that was simple and clear. This work provided the foundation that enabled the development of these training modules.

This work would not have been possible without the generous funding from the Lilly Endowment. The findings and conclusions presented here are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Lilly Endowment.

I am grateful to the Advisory Group who provided guidance, support and encouragement to this work in spite of their busy schedules.

Thanks also to the staff and consultants who focused their time and expertise on ensuring this was a high-quality and useable publication.

- Pam Wilson, who wrote and revised the work based on the advisory group input into something that youth workers can use across the nation.
- Shawn Newton, who designed the modules to make them visibly appealing and easy to use.

I am grateful to this excellent team of people. Together I hope we have been able to provide you with useful training tools to improve the skills of your frontline youth worker.

With much appreciation,

Pam Garza
National Youth Development Learning Network
National Collaboration for Youth



The three training modules in this series are developed for use by youth workers responsible for the professional development and training of front-line youth workers (both paid and volunteers). They are designed to prepare frontline youth workers to effectively learn three of the ten core competencies approved by the National Collaboration for Youth (NCY).

What are Frontline Youth Development Worker Competencies?

In March 2004, The National Collaboration for Youth approved a set of core competencies for paid and volunteer staff who work with youth. The ten core competencies include knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed by entry-level youth development workers for effective youth development practice. Youth Development core competencies are the “demonstrated capacities” that form a foundation for high-quality performance in the workplace, contribute to the mission of the organization and allow a youth development worker to be a resource to youth, organizations and communities. The competencies identify those elements common to virtually all youth-serving agencies. The list of ten competencies applies to front-line youth development staff that may be fulltime or work as little as two hours a week. Go to <http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/Competencies.pdf> to view the Youth Development Worker Competencies.

Determining Priorities

These core competencies were used as a base for a survey conducted with youth workers from both youth development and faith-based agencies. Overall, 1,322 people participated in the survey administered by National Collaboration for Youth and Search Institute. In addition, American Camp Association adapted the survey for use through their camps and an additional 305 participants completed the survey. Based on this survey, there seemed to be significant common ground across sectors and settings about the essential and important nature of these ten competencies. In addition, when asked how much they would be interested in training, resources, and/or educational opportunities related to each competency, youth workers in both sectors were equally interested in training a professional development on specific competencies. For more information on this survey and its findings go to *Is There Common Ground?* at <http://www.nydic.org/nydic/staffing/workforce/istherecommonground.html>

Developing Training Modules

The development of the first three training modules came from multiple requests from youth workers for training modules and began with the three competencies identified as priorities for additional training, resources and educational opportunities. The survey respondents were clear:

- Involving and empowering youth
- Cares for, involves and works with families and communities
- Communicates and develops positive relationships with youth

Each of these modules contains activities that address the staff knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are needed for the specific youth development worker competency area. The modules are intended to be an additional resource for program directors, trainers, and others who are responsible for supporting the staff development of youth workers. It is possible to use all of the activities in the module to design a full day of training or to use selected activities to meet specific staffing needs. When doing a full day of training with youth workers who are not already members of a cohesive team, trainers must build in the standard kinds of opening activities to help participants get to know each other and create safe space for learning new information, exploring attitudes, and enhancing professional skills. The modules are available to all youth workers free of charge online at (nydic address for each module).

Other NCY Competency Tools

In addition to the training module, there are other tools to be used with the NCY Core Competencies. First, questions to use when interviewing a new staff person based on the core competencies and second two observation assessment tools.

Interview Questions

The interview questions were based on suggestions from 130 youth workers. They begin with some general questions you might want to ask of candidates followed by questions specific to the NCY competencies for youth workers. The questions appear in a Professional Development Series on Recruitment and Selection of staff at:

http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/Prof_Series_2_3-19.pdf

Observation Assessment Tools

The longer tool can be used in multiple ways, for example, as a training outline to assist trainers in describing an organization's expectations for youth worker behavior and attitudes. The second tool is short—designed to be carried around and used on the job.

View the long version of the Observation Assessment Tool by

<http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/Tool%20FINAL.pdf>.

View the short version of the Observation Assessment Tool by

<http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/CompetCards%20for%20webNCY.pdf>.

Resources from the National Human Services Assembly Family Strengthening Policy Center

In addition to work on youth worker competencies, readers may be interested in The Family Strengthening Policy Center which serves as a focal point for research, information dissemination, and advocacy on place-based, practice-driven family strengthening practices, programs, and policy. A central information tool of the Center are policy briefs. These practice-driven policy briefs highlight emerging, promising, and proven practices in the field of family strengthening. Developed in close collaboration with human service practitioners, advocates, community builders and researchers, these briefs are intended to serve as a tool for advancing the family strengthening approach as a model that works and produces meaningful results for families and communities. More information can be found at: <http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/practice/practices.html>





What's the Connection?

60 minutes



Purpose: To help participants identify the ways in which they work with youth, their families and communities, and the connections or intersections of that work.

Materials:

- Newsprint (one half sheet for each participant)
- Drawing materials: Markers, crayons, magazines featuring diverse families, scissors, chalk, etc.
- Masking tape
- Handout, *Family Engagement Scale*

Trainer Notes:

1. Note that there is not a great deal of time allotted for the creative part of the activity; it is meant to be a trigger for the discussion that follows. Help participants recognize it as such and work rather quickly to create their visual representations so they can move on to sharing their experiences.
2. If you have an uneven number of participants, you will need to create a sketch of your own work with youth/families/communities so you can partner with the remaining participant for the discussion.
3. If a member of your group uses a wheelchair, ensure that there is enough space for him/her to post their drawing on the wall and to participate in the gallery walk in Step 4.

Time: 60 minutes

Procedure:

1. (Introduction/Overview—5 minutes) *Introduce the first activity of this module by making the following points:*

- As you know, when we work with youth in our agencies we don't work with them simply as individuals; we work within a complex system that includes their families and communities.
- Family and community are both factors that can have an immense positive influence on youth and, at the same time, can present serious challenges to healthy development.



- When we create positive connections between ourselves as individuals and young people’s families and communities, we increase the likelihood that they will have more of a positive influence.
- The word “families,” in this work, is used to refer to individuals with whom youth have a more emotional connection than others. Families can include people who are related by blood or marriage, as well as others who live in the same home or are highly valued by a young person such as friends, neighbors, and/or adults who provide support and counsel. Each young person must be allowed to define his or her family in their own way.
- The word “communities,” in this work, is used to refer to groups of people with whom youth share geographic location, characteristics, qualities, experiences, etc.
- This first activity will give you an opportunity to reflect on your own experiences in your work with families and communities, and share what you have learned with one another.

2. (PICTURE YOUR WORK—15 minutes) *Distribute newsprint and drawing materials so that they are available to all participants. Explain the activity and go over instructions:*

- Your task is to create a visual depiction of how your work with youth connects, intersects or overlaps with your work involving their families and/or communities.
- Begin by thinking about all three components—working with youth, involving families, and involving communities. Using images, drawings, symbols, etc., represent your primary audience—youth—and the ways in which you and your agency work with them. Try to use words as little as possible on your drawing.
- Once you have depicted your work with youth, go on to depict the work you do with families and communities. Take care to show the ways that your work with families and communities connects, intersects or overlaps with what you do with youth. Draw what actually happens in your agency as opposed to agency policy or philosophy.
- You will have about 10 minutes. Be creative but don’t worry about artistic ability. The point is to somehow depict the ways that you are working with these 3 populations.

When everyone understands, have participants begin drawing. Circulate and provide assistance, if necessary. Give a 5-minute warning.

3. (SHARE PICTURES—15 minutes) *When most people have completed their drawings, ask them to find a partner they don’t know well. Give these instructions:*

- Explain to each other what you drew, what the various symbols represent, and any other clarification about what happens in your program.



- Each of you should take about five minutes.
- When you're finished, tape your drawing on the wall anywhere in the room.

4. (FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SCALE—5 minutes) *Distribute the Family Engagement Scales and two different colored markers or crayons to each participant. Guide participants through the following tasks:*

- Reflect on what you just did and try to quantify how much you are involving young people's families and communities in your work.
- Draw a line on the scale to indicate how high your level of engagement is with young people's families. Put an F for "families" beside it, keeping in mind the following measures:
 - a. 0% - 10% – No engagement
 - b. 11% - 30% – Little engagement
 - c. 31% - 70% – Some engagement
 - d. 71% - 100% – High level of engagement
- Use a different marker to indicate your level of engagement to young people's communities. Write a C for "communities" beside the line. Then, get up and tape the thermometer to your drawing.

5. (GALLERY WALK—10 minutes) *Give instructions for the gallery walk:*

- Stand in front of your own drawing. Move to the drawing to the right of your own and look at it the way you would look at a portrait in an art gallery. Note anything that you find particularly interesting or significant.
- Move to your right continuing the same process. When you get back to your own drawing, take your seat.

6. (DISCUSSION—15 minutes) *Lead a large group discussion using the questions below:*

- What themes did you see as looked at all the drawings during the gallery walk?
- How do you feel about your current levels of family and community engagement?
- What is and isn't working for you?





FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SCALE

"F"

Draw your line to indicate level of engagement with young people's families.

0-10%

NO ENGAGEMENT
No contact with their parents.
Only signed permission form.

11-30%

LITTLE ENGAGEMENT
See parents when they pick up their children.
Parents receive a newsletter.

31-70%

SOME ENGAGEMENT
Have a family night each quarter.
There are always some family members leading activities or doing presentations as volunteers.

71-100%

HIGH LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
Make a point of contacting parents when youth do something good.
Activities are specifically conducted that include youth & families together.

"C"

Draw your line to indicate level of engagement with young people's communities.





Identifying Benefits & Challenges

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60 minutes

Purpose: To identify the benefits of family engagement in youth programs; to identify issues or concerns on the part of youth workers and parents that pose challenges to an agency's ability to successfully engage families.

Materials:

- 2 sheets of chart papers and 2 markers
- Handout, *Issues and Concerns of Youth Workers*
- Handout, *Issues and Concerns of Parents*

Trainer Notes:

1. The purpose of this activity is to identify benefits as well as challenges to family engagement. Much of the factual information comes from an article, "Improve Family Engagement in After-School Programs," written for PTA magazine (www.pta.org/pr_magazine_article_details_1166223635406.html) by Harvard Family Research Project staffers Ellen Mayer and Holly M. Kreider.
2. The activity is intended to help participants to get in touch with their own emotions and values around working with families. Encourage participants to be introspective and to explore whether any of their issues/concerns might result from assumptions, stereotypes and misunderstandings.

Time: 60 minutes

Procedure:

1. **(BENEFITS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT—15 minutes)** *Begin the activity by explaining that there are many powerful reasons to make a focused effort to get parents and other family members involved in their children's after-school programs. Ask participants to name some and supplement their responses with the following:*
 - According to the Harvard Family Research Project, family engagement in after-school time activities is associated with:
 - Increased family involvement in a child's education and schooling (attending conferences, volunteering, and helping children with homework)



- Improved parent-child relationships as a result of spending more time together in the non school hours
- Better after-school programs which tend to run more smoothly and show improved program outcomes when a family engagement component is present.
- In order to be successful from birth through adolescence, youth need to be surrounded by an array of learning supports, such as families, after-school programs, libraries, museums, and health and social service agencies.
- Ideally, these various supports should connect with each other to form a network of support around children and youth.

2. (BRAINSTORMING CHALLENGES—20 minutes) *Give an overview of the next activity:*

- Although there are many benefits, we know that engaging families is challenging. The next activity will help you identify your issues and concerns. You will examine your own attitudes and perceptions about parents and other family members.
- It will also give you an opportunity to step into parents' shoes and consider the attitudes and perceptions they might have of you and your agency.
- We will do this in two groups. Half of you will brainstorm concerns that staff might have about parents and the other half will brainstorm concerns parents might have about staff and the overall organization.

Divide participants into two groups. Instead of having them count off, have them say: staff, parents, staff, parents, staff, parents. Ask the staff group to sit in one part of the room and the parent group to sit in a different part. Give each group the handout that gives additional instructions for their task. Make sure they choose a group leader, a timekeeper, a recorder, and a reporter.

Circulate to provide additional assistance if required. Give a 5-minute warning.

3. (REPORTS—10 minutes) *Reconvene the large group. Ask the recorder in each group to stand and report out the issues/concerns that came up in their group's brainstorming. List all responses on chart paper divided into two columns, one for Youth Workers' Responses, the other for Family Members' Responses.*



4. (DISCUSSION—15 minutes) *Lead a discussion of the two groups' brainstorming results using the following questions:*

- When you look at the two lists of issues/concerns generated by our two groups, what do you see?
- What conclusions can you draw from the similarities and/or differences in the lists?
- Those of you who are parents/aunts or uncles/other caregivers, how realistic do you find the list of issues/concerns generated by the “parent” group?
- How many of you have had an actual experience working with a parent or other family member that supports one or more of these issues/concerns? Please share your example.
- What is one way you've found to successfully work with parents and families?





ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF YOUTH WORKERS

You will be identifying issues or concerns that youth workers might have as they think about interacting with families of youth in their programs.

Instructions:

Your group has 15 minutes to brainstorm issues/concerns that youth workers often have when they think about working with families and communities. Your timekeeper needs to start the clock when you finish going over these instructions with your group.

In order to help your group focus on the task, your reporter will read the guided imagery on the bottom of this handout aloud to the group.

Your recorder will record your group's responses on newsprint.

Let the trainer know when you have finished.

Guided Imagery

“Imagine that you are yourself, in your real job as a youth worker, in your own organization. Your Executive Director has decided to hold a “Family Feedback Dinner” and has invited parents and other family members to meet with staff to offer feedback on current programming and offer advice about how to spend the money from a new grant. The meeting will begin with a home-cooked dinner being prepared by a very popular family caterer in town.

It's the day of the meeting and people have been setting up all day. As you get mentally prepared for the dinner, think about the youth in your program and the family members you have and have not met. What are the strongest images that pop into your mind?

What are your expectations about who will come to the meeting and what they will say? What expectations do you think your colleagues have about the parents?

Which family members are you looking forward to seeing? Are there any that you might even dread seeing or feel some concerns about?”





ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

Instructions:

Your group has 15 minutes to brainstorm issues/concerns that family members are likely to have when they think about working with their children's youth organizations. Your timekeeper needs to start the clock when you finish going over these instructions with your group.

In order to help your group focus on the task, your reporter will read the appropriate guided imagery at the bottom of this handout aloud to your group.

Your recorder will write your group's responses on newsprint.

Let the trainer know when you have finished.

Guided Imagery

"Imagine that you have a child, grandchild, or niece or nephew who participates in one of the programs offered by your youth organization. Close your eyes and try to really imagine being in this role. Imagine that a few weeks ago you got a phone call from a staff member at the program inviting you to come to a "Family Feedback Dinner." The person said that they were going to be serving a home-cooked meal and then they wanted to get your feedback on the programs your child has been attending.

What is your gut reaction to the invitation? How do you feel about going to the meeting? What will it take for you to get to the meeting?

How do you think the staff view you and what you have to offer at the meeting? How do you view the staff members and what they have to offer you and your child?

What other issues or concerns are on your mind as you consider whether to go to the meeting and interacting with staff from the youth program?"





Family & Community Friendliness

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60 minutes

Purpose: To enable participants to assess the “friendliness” of their agency with regard to working with families and communities.

Materials:

- Trainer Resource, *Family & Community Friendliness Assessment*
- Four small placards or posters on which you have written the following:
 1. Haven’t thought about it/completely disagree
 2. Started to think about it/not much progress
 3. Made some good efforts/more work needed
 4. Have successfully done it/completely agree
- Tape

Trainer Notes:

1. When you conduct this activity, you will need enough space for the entire group to stand and move back and forth along a continuum. Use one side of your meeting room or move out into a hallway if your group will not interrupt, nor be overheard by, others.
2. Tape the placards/posters along one wall in sequence, spaced several feet apart.
3. Review the Trainer Resource, *Family & Community Friendliness Assessment* so you will be familiar with the items.
4. Put the incomplete sentences from Step 3 of the Procedure on a chart.

Time: 60 minutes

Procedure:

1. **(INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW—5 minutes)** *Introduce this activity with the following points:*

There are many kinds of challenges that limit a youth organization’s ability to involve families and communities. Examples include:



- A lack of agency support and commitment to family engagement
- Staff are overtaxed with busy schedules
- Staff don't recognize what parents might offer the program
- Family members are overtaxed and/or don't perceive agency as welcoming or accessible

This activity provides you with an opportunity to do your own self-assessment of how family-and-community-friendly your organization is.

2. (INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT—10 minutes) *Distribute and review the handout, Family & Community Friendliness Assessment, and ask participants to complete it individually. Tell them they will share their responses in a movement activity. Call time when it is obvious everyone has finished.*

3. (GROUP ASSESSMENT—30 minutes) *Review these instructions:*

- I'll read each of the qualities aloud and ask you to go stand in the position that you chose for your organization: (1) Haven't thought about it/completely disagree; (2) started to think about it/not much progress; (3) have made some good efforts/more work needed; or (4) have successfully done it/completely agree.
- There are a few important ground rules:
 - There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise.
 - Do not try to influence where anyone else is moving.
 - It's OK if a colleague moves to a different position than you. Remember, our perception is our reality and it isn't ever right or wrong.
- When everyone has moved to one of the posters, I will ask one or two volunteers to share why they chose their position.

Read the first category and the first item. Ask participants to move to their positions and then call on a few volunteers to say why they chose the position they took. Encourage the participants who rate their agencies as "3" and "4" to share their success strategies with those who are at "1" and "2."

Go on to the next category and follow this process until you have completed the entire assessment. Then ask participants to return to their seats.



4. (DISCUSSION—10 minutes) *Display the chart you made of the following incomplete sentences. Have participants choose any one of the sentences and complete it, then share the reasons for their their comment.*

- From participating in this activity I learned...
- I was surprised to learn that...
- When I think about my own organization's family and community friendliness, I feel...
- Now that we've done this assessment I hope...

Conclude the activity by commenting on the work of the group, the family and community friendliness of their organizations, and your hope that they will move forward in the direction of increased family and community friendliness.





FAMILY & COMMUNITY FRIENDLINESS ASSESSMENT

Directions: Use the following scale to rate your organization on each of the qualities included in the assessment:

1. We haven't even thought about it/completely disagree with statement
2. We've started to think about this but haven't made much progress
3. We've made some good efforts but still have some work to do
4. We have successfully completed this step/completely agree with statement

How much support is there within our organization for family and community involvement?

___ Involving families and communities is clearly spelled out in our agency's mission.

___ We have a clearly established family engagement program.

___ Literature and publicity about the organization reflect a commitment to working with youth within the context of their families and communities.

___ We are recognized by community partners as an agency that works with youth within the context of their families and communities.

___ One staff member has been designated to manage or coordinate the agency's family engagement activities.

___ All staff have been specifically trained in family and community engagement.



To what extent do staff attitudes and behaviors reflect a commitment to family and community involvement?

- ___ Staff view families as assets who can benefit their children’s lives as well as youth programs.
- ___ Staff greet family and community members warmly when they enter the building for any reason.
- ___ Staff make a special effort to reach hard-to-engage families.
- ___ Staff communicate regularly with family members about the strengths, successes, and achievements of their child(ren).
- ___ Staff regularly invite family and community members to be involved in programs and activities.
- ___ Staff respond to family and community members’ questions and concerns in a timely fashion.
- ___ Staff interact with family and community members in a style that demonstrates respect, empathy and a sincere appreciation of their diversity.

How inviting and welcoming is the environment for family and community members?

- ___ Staff have knowledge and understanding of each young person’s culture, family background, and community (e.g., regularly read membership/registration forms of each young person they work with).
- ___ Programs, services, and resources are linguistically and culturally accessible to diverse families in the community.
- ___ Positive and diverse images of youth and families are displayed.
- ___ Staff members reflect the diversity of youth and families they serve.
- ___ Literature is available in languages spoken by families and communities served.





Skill-Building Role Plays

75 minutes

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Purpose: To have participants identify strategies and then practice specific behaviors that can enhance their family and community engagement activities.

Materials:

- Handout, *Four Strategies for Engaging Families*
- Trainer Resource, *Role-Play Scenarios* (one copy for each triad)
- A paper bag or other container for each triad
- Trainer Resource, *Process Questions for Specific Role-Play Scenarios*

Trainer Notes:

1. The goal of this activity is to have youth workers practice using skills and strategies that can make their work with families and communities easier and more effective. Participants will write brief scripts for situations involving interaction with families, and model what they would say and do in those situations to create a positive relationship with family members.
2. Look over the Role-Play Scenarios and be sure all scenarios seem appropriate for use with your group. Feel free to create additional scenarios of your own that reflect actual situations you have faced in your organization.
3. Make a copy of the scenarios for each triad. Cut the scenarios into strips, fold them, and place them in a paper bag or other container.
4. Make a chart of the role-play de-brief process from step 2 of the procedure.

Time: 75 minutes

Procedure:

1. **(IDENTIFY STRATEGIES—15 minutes)** *Tell participants that it is time for them to consider what they can do to overcome challenges and implement strategies to enhance their family engagement focus. Distribute the handout, *Four Strategies for Engaging Families*. Review the 4 strategies briefly. Give the following instructions:*

- Count off 1, 2, 3, 4, but don't separate into groups. You just need to be assigned a number.



- Those of you who are 1's, look at the first strategy and come up with a specific example of how you do (or could) implement this strategy in your program.
- Those of you who are 2's will work on the second strategy; 3's will look at the third strategy; and 4's will work on the fourth strategy.
- Here's a possible example for strategy #1—supporting families: Make yourself available to discuss parents' personal concerns such as child custody, finances, or immigration.
- You will have 3 minutes and then we will whip around the room and hear each of your examples.

When everyone understands the task, give them 3 minutes, then beginning with strategy #1, whip around the room and hear all the examples. If someone's example has already been said, they can pass. Continue with this format for the remaining 3 strategies.

2. (INSTRUCTIONS FOR ROLE-PLAYS—5 minutes) *Invite participants to do some role-playing so they can practice using some of the strategies they just discussed. Divide participants into small groups of three people and give these instructions:*

- You will act out your role-plays in triads (teams of three) consisting of 3 roles: the youth worker, the parent or family member, and the coach.
- In your teams you will have 3 different scenarios to role-play. Each of you will have an opportunity to play all three roles.
 - Youth Worker: Communicate positively with the parent and try to forge or deepen a trusting relationship.
 - Parent: Get into role and be realistic.
 - Coach: Observe the communication and note anything the worker does that either helps or hurts the development of a trusting relationship. If you see that the worker needs help, do some coaching—offer something to say to move the conversation along positively.
- The coach should pick a scenario card and read the scenario to the group.
- Once you know the situation, take a minute or two to think about your roles. The role-plays should be short—no more than 2-3 minutes. The coach and youth worker should put their heads together to decide on the best way to approach the parent.
- Get started with your role-play as soon as possible. When it is finished, use this process (on a chart) to debrief:



- Parent explains how s/he experienced the communication and says whether s/he would feel comfortable seeking out the youth worker in the future.
 - Youth worker says what s/he thinks went well and what s/he would do differently next time.
 - Coach gives feedback on what the youth worker did well and any suggestions.
- When you finish discussing the first role-play, switch roles and go on to the second scenario. The parent becomes the youth worker; the coach becomes the parent; and the youth worker becomes the coach. The coach draws a new scenario and reads it to the team. Then you go through the whole process all over again.
 - For the third role-play, follow the same process, and take the role that you have not yet played. In the final role-play follow the same process, with each person assuming the role s/he has not yet played

3. (ROLE-PLAYS—30 minutes) *Distribute a paper bag containing the scenarios to each triad. Circulate during this activity to make sure the triads are on track and get started with their role-plays as soon as possible. Make sure they keep moving along through the three scenarios and give support as required.*

4. (DISCUSSION—20 minutes) *Ask the teams to pull their chairs back together in a group formation, but to stay together in their triads. Lead a discussion of the activity using the following questions:*

- What did you think of this activity? What scenarios did you role-play?
- Which were most challenging and why? (Discuss the ways that youth workers handled some of the specific scenarios by asking some of the questions from Trainer Resource, *Process Questions for Specific Role-Play Scenarios*.)
- What guidelines exist in your organization for interacting with families: (1) getting back to a parent or family member who calls; (2) making initial contact with the parent of a newly registered youth; (3) routinely communicating with families about the achievements, successes, and/or challenges you have observed with their children.
- What did you see or hear in this activity that will be useful in future interactions with families of youth you serve?





FOUR STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES*

Family engagement is much more than getting parents involved in doing something at the program site. Consider the following four over-arching strategies:

1. Support Families

- Focus on family assets—what families can do and share with children and programs rather than family shortcomings.
- Try to respond to the concerns and needs of youth and their families.
- Solicit feedback from family members on current programming and ideas for new programs.

2. Communicate and Build Trusting Relationships

- Let families know they are welcome and use a variety of communication strategies.
- Be there for families.
- Communicate frequently and in positive ways.
- Provide leadership opportunities for parents.

3. Hire and Develop a Family-focused Staff (Staff are the Key)

- Designate a staff member who is responsible for family engagement but make it clear that creating positive connections with families is a critical part of everyone's job.

* *Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School*, February 2006, Zenub Kakli, Holly Kreider & Priscilla Little, Harvard Family Research Project, Tania Buck & Maryellen Coffey, *Build the Out-of-School Time Network (BOSTnet)*



- When hiring, look for staff with family engagement experience as well as those who share parents' perspectives and backgrounds.
- Learn from other youth programs with experience and commitment to family engagement.

4. Build Connections with Individuals and Organizations

- Collaborate with local organizations.
- Act as a liaison between families and their children's schools.
- Help parents develop skills to advocate for themselves and their children.





ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS

1. A father has stopped by the Center to pick up his 12-year-old daughter. Greet the dad and try to engage him in a brief positive conversation.
2. You've been working with one young person for over a year but you have never met a parent or other family member. Make a phone call home to speak to a parent or another of the child's caregivers.
3. A youth's grandmother has just volunteered to organize a Christmas exchange and you know all the youth in the program are not Christian. What do you say to her?
4. A youth in your program says to you, "My mom wants you to call her. She wants to know if I can bring my little brother with me tomorrow because she has to work overtime. He's four years old." Make the call to the mother.
5. Think of any young person you are currently working with. Call his/her home and give a family member an update on the youth's experience in the program.
6. The child of a recently immigrated family comes back to the Center without permission to go on an upcoming field trip. He is the only child who won't be able to go. When the mother comes to pick up the child later in the day, bring up the subject and try to provide information that might allow her to change her mind.





SCENARIO-SPECIFIC PROCESS QUESTIONS

1. A father has stopped by the Center to pick up his/her 12-year-old daughter. Greet the dad and try to engage him in a brief positive conversation.

QUESTION: What did you say to connect with the father? How did it work? In general, are there any specific issues or considerations when it comes to engaging fathers vs. mothers?

2. You've been working with one young person for over a year but you have never met a parent or other family member. Make a phone call home to speak to a parent or another of the child's caregivers.

QUESTION: What did you say to engage the parent? What was the tone of your call? What kind of feedback did you give about the child: positive, negative, mixed?

3. A youth's grandmother has just volunteered to organize a Christmas exchange and you know all the youth in the program are not Christian. What do you say to her?

QUESTION: How did you show appreciation for the grandmother's offer? How did you let her know about the diversity in your group?

4. A young man says to you, "My mom wants you to call her. She wants to know if I can bring my little brother with me tomorrow because she has to work overtime. He's four years old." Make the call to the mother.

QUESTION: How did you respond? What did you say that would help keep the lines of communication open? Was there mention of agency policies and procedures and, if so, what did you say?

5. Think of any young person you are currently working with. Call his/her home and give a family member an update on the youth's experience in the program.

QUESTION: What kind of feedback did you give: positive, negative, mixed? How did the call impact the relationship between you and the parent?

6. The child of a recently immigrated family comes back to the Center without permission to go on an upcoming field trip. He is the only child who won't be able to go. When the mother comes to pick up the child later in the day, bring up the subject and try to provide information that might allow her to change her mind.

QUESTION: What approach did you take with the mother? What was her reaction? How did you try to bridge any cultural gaps?





Action Planning for Behavior Change

45 minutes

Purpose: To have participants identify areas in which they can improve their behavior and identify steps they can take to apply what they have learned in this workshop.

Materials:

- Handout, *Action-Planning Worksheet*

Trainer Notes:

1. If you have an uneven number of participants you will need to partner with the remaining person and complete the action planning with them.

Time: 45 minutes

Procedure:

1. **(INSTRUCTIONS/OVERVIEW—5 minutes)** *Let participants know that the workshop is coming to a close and that you want them to spend some time reflecting on what they have learned in order to create an action plan for behavior change. Explain that individually they will identify an area of behavior they wish to improve upon and then work with a partner, preferably someone from their agency if possible, to develop a plan for taking action.*
2. **(ACTION PLANNING IN PAIRS—25 minutes)** *Distribute the Action-Planning handouts, then go over the instructions below:*
 - When you get into pairs, take 2-3 minutes individually identify a goal—something you want to do to become more effective with family and community involvement. Write your goal statement at the top of your Action-Planning worksheet.
 - Exchange Action-Planning worksheets with your partner and decide who will go first. The person going first will act as the “boss” who is creating an action plan. The partner will act as “secretary” and will take notes for the “boss.” Both of you will get a chance to be “boss” and “secretary.”



- “Secretaries,” take your “boss” through the action-planning steps on the handout. Read each of the steps and record your boss’s responses on his or her worksheet. Ask clarifying questions if appropriate.
- When the worksheet is complete, exchange roles and repeat the process.

Have participants begin the process. Circulate to provide assistance as needed. Give the pairs a 5-minute warning.

3. (REVIEW OF ACTION PLANS—15 minutes) *Bring everyone back together and ask for general reactions to the “boss/secretary” action planning experience.*

Invite several volunteers to share their action plans with the group. Have participants listen carefully and offer any suggestions they have for refining an action plan after they have heard it. Add suggestions of your own if appropriate.

When everyone who volunteered has had an opportunity to share their action plans, thank everyone for their hard work in the session.





ACTION-PLANNING WORKSHEET

DEFINE YOUR GOAL. Look back at your completed Family and Community Friendliness Assessment and the Handout, Four Strategies for Engaging Families. Identify one goal that you have for your own behavior to become more effective in engaging families and communities. Choose a goal that is:

- Under your control—you have the power to make it happen;
- Achievable; and
- Clearly defined with a specific plan of action.

GOAL: (Write your goal statement here)

1. **Outline the actions** you have to take to achieve your goal.

Action _____

Action _____

Action _____

2. **List possible challenges** to achieving your goal and **ways of overcoming them.**

CHALLENGE

HOW TO OVERCOME IT

3. **Set realistic deadlines.**

By _____, I will _____

By _____, I will _____

By _____, I will _____

Adapted from Elkind + Sweet Communications/ Live Wire Media





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