

REMOVING COMMON BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN YOUR GROUP

Including youth in your Suicide Prevention efforts takes planning to recognize youth culture, experience, and needs. Young adults are at the table because of an interest, passion, or firsthand experience. Unlike many professional partners, they are volunteering their time and may not have the same access to resources or knowledge about systems, language, or professional culture.

So...why involve them? Their perspective resides in the current reality for youth!

Before you swing the doors to your group open, take some time to work through potential barriers. Develop plans for how your group will overcome common barriers to youth involvement. Under each barrier, discuss your group's reality, outline any existing solutions, and action plan for new remedies. Your group must develop a plan unique to your needs.

COMMON BARRIERS: Common barriers are provided as starters. Use the additional spaces to add unique barriers or develop a list of barriers first. This document serves only as a guide.

LACK OF TRANSPORTATION: Getting to and from meetings requires access to reliable transportation and the ability to afford fuel. This is not always available to all youth.

YOUTH ARE VOLUNTEERS: Unlike many of their professional counterparts, youth's membership is rarely part of their job, meaning attendance requires time off of work and/or school. Do opportunities for stipends or school credit exist?

INSTITUTIONAL/STATE POLICIES/PRACTICES: Policies may present additional roadblocks to involvement such as restrictions on minors traveling to conference or involvement of youth without certain grades or standing. Time, location, and structure of the meeting may make the space unfriendly to youth and their school schedules.

STAFFING SUPPORT: Growing youth involvement takes time and attention, which often requires someone driving the efforts. Champions to reach out and support the youth in orienting, acclimating, and continuing in the group is helpful.

RISK OF THE UNKNOWN: Youth may be hesitant about their abilities to excel alongside prestigious members. Professional members may lack appropriate knowledge to support youth members. Training or orientation may be needed.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING COSTS: Resources to develop or staff recruiting and orientation, purchasing of coffee/meals or reimbursing mileage to orientations, briefings, or trainings may be needed.

POWER: Adults inherently hold more power in a youth–adult relationship. The number of influential adults serving on a group verse one or two youth furthers the power differential. Youths' skills, assets, and perspectives must be encouraged and valued in tangible and meaningful ways.

TRAUMA: Youth may be passionate because of first-hand experience. Their expertise is personal experience, not professional knowledge. Steps to prepare youth for strategic sharing, to prepare adults to be compassionate, and to access resources should be considered.

Barrier:		
Our Reality:		Existing Solutions: 1. 2. 3.
Potential Remedy	Action Step	Due Date and Lead Person

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