Youth Development Institute
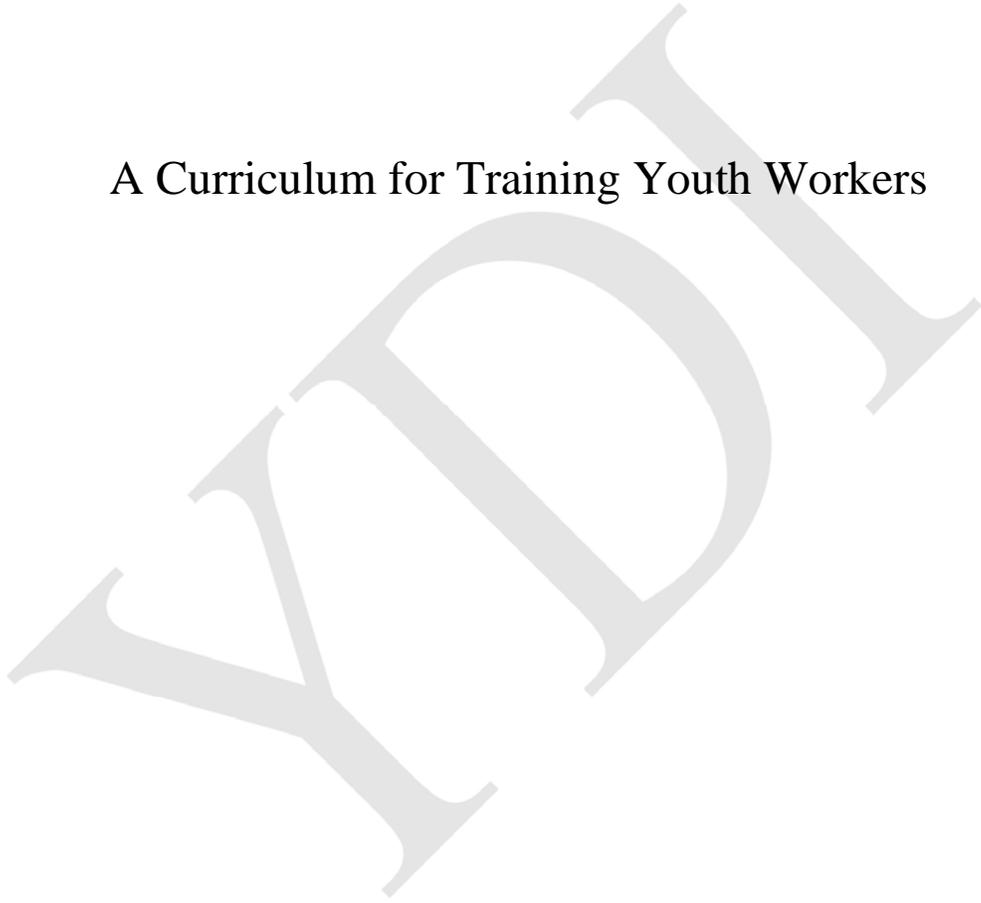
Advancing Youth Development

A Curriculum for Training Youth Workers

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

ADVANCING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTLINE OF SESSIONS

<u>Session I</u>

Setting the stage: The Field of Youth Development

Goals: *Participants will gain an understanding of the youth development training program: the rationale for the training program both conceptually and structurally and be introduced to the conceptual framework of youth development. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the importance of defining positive youth outcomes in our work with young people.*

<u>Objectives:</u>

Participants will be able to:
- Identify and describe key concepts in youth development
- Identify the competencies needed by young people to be successful
- Articulate the implications of defining youth outcomes primarily in terms of treatment or prevention goals versus developmental goals
- Understand the public policy context for youth development

<u>Key Concepts</u>:
   Main focus of youth work is to promote the development of **all** young people while recognizing that individual youth experience the world differently; development is the most effective strategy for preventing problem behaviors

   Youth development is an approach to youth programming and policy that has preparation and development rather than prevention, deterrence and deficit reduction as its ultimate goal –" problem free is not fully prepared"

   It is important that youth workers (and other adults in the lives of youth) identify and promote positive outcomes for youth rather than focus on the problems that we would like to prevent.

Youth Workers as the Key to Support and Opportunities for Young People

Goals: *Participants will demonstrate ability to articulate the specific types of experiences that help young people achieve positive outcomes*

Objectives:

Participants will be able to
- Identify and understand the role of services
- Answer the question what do young people need for positive youth development
- Identify opportunities and supports that promote positive outcomes among young people
- Identify optimal characteristics of settings that support youth development

Key Concepts:

It is important to differentiate between (1) services (those things that are done to or for young people—like mental health, rehabilitation, substance abuse, education, employment services), (2) opportunities (activities, roles, responsibilities taken on and done by the young person) and (3) supports (those things done with the young person). Services are essential but not enough.

Youth will always try to meet their needs for: safety and structure, belonging and membership, self worth and ability to contribute, self awareness and the ability to reflect and assess, independence and control over one's life, closeness with at least one lasting relationship with an adult, competency and mastery.

Lessons from resiliency research and evaluation of successful prevention programs have identified the following core components of settings which promote development and enable young people to meet their needs: opportunities for contribution, caring and trusting relationships, high expectations, engaging activities, factors that promote continuity for youth in the program - *Networks* has added the concepts of supportive organizational structure and welcoming environment.

Core Competencies of Youth Workers

Goals: *Participants should determine the core competencies needed by youth workers to effectively work with young people and to build a professional development strategy to build upon and strengthen their competencies.*

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:
- Identify the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes they have that contribute to their success as youth workers
- Identify the strategies they have employed to gain their youth worker knowledge, skill, and personal attributes
- Relate the knowledge, skills, and personal attribute they have to their work with youth
- Learn how to effectively market core competencies of youth workers

Key Concepts

Core competencies are the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes needed by youth workers. They derive from many different sources: life experiences, natural abilities, training, on-the-job training, internships, formal education, supervision, etc.

Funders and organizations should promote staff development strategies to support the youth development core competencies of staff.

Core competencies should be translated into performance indicators as a way of articulating the role youth workers play in young people's lives, as a means of evaluation and assessment and as a way of demonstrating that the youth development field is built on competency and mastery.

Youth in Context

Goals: *Strengthen youth worker competency*

Objectives

Participants will be able to:
- Identify invalid assumptions and the dysfunctional responses to those assumptions
- Identify common assumptions about young people and how these assumptions influence the development of young people

Key Concepts:

Intolerance—be it sexism, racism, homophobia, etc. - - is when we treat an individual or group based on negative stereotypes/assumptions about a certain population ("social addresses"). Multiculturalism is when we treat individuals and groups in a way that appreciates and values difference and which leads to sharing of power.

Cultural competency is a core competency of youth workers.

Forms of intolerance are often responded to with "internalized oppression". There are personal, programmatic and systemic strategies that can be developed to confront forms of intolerance.

Session V

Youth Participation

Goals: *Understand "youth participation and contribution" as one of the strongest strategies to promote youth development of young people.*

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:
• Identify practical strategies for youth participation and contribution that they can implement in their programs.
• Contribute to ongoing organizational discussions on diversity by incorporating youth participation and cultural competency

Key Concepts:

Youth Participation/contribution is one of the strongest strategies to promote the development of young people.

Increasing youth participation in an organization will create discomfort as areas of responsibility and authority change. Youth Workers need organizational support to facilitate the strengthening of youth participation

Youth Participation includes responsibility for planning and implementing programs as well as responsibility for planning and choosing one's own activities and setting goals.

<u>Session VI</u>

Principles of Practice

Goals: *Identify how the youth development approach guides practice. Particular attention is paid to the principles which underlie a youth worker's approach to youth development work with young people and the organizational support that is necessary.*

<u>Objectives:</u>

Participants will be able to:
- Identify and describe the principles of practice which underlie quality youth work
- Describe ways in which the principles of practice can be used as a guide for their work with young people
- Examine agency's mission and understand the principles and organizational supports which guide the agency
- Describe ways in which the principles of practice can be used as a guide for their agency's operations

<u>Key Concepts:</u>

Premises are underlying beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that we hold about people, systems and society - they are not necessarily valid. Principles serve as the guidelines about the implementation of practice. Practices are specific actions.

The goal is for all staff in an organization to share the same principles. Youth benefit from consistency.

Principles of youth development:
- Development is linked to opportunities for exploration, learning and individual paced growth
- Development only occurs when young people are actively engaged
- Engagement occurs through relationships with people
- Development is profoundly influenced by environmental contexts and a diversity of physical, cultural philosophical and social factors
- Development occurs within multiple contexts: youth, family, youth and civic organizations, community

<u>Session VII</u>

Evaluating the Past and Creating a Vision for the Future

Goals: *Provision of an opportunity to assess the training program, to demonstrate and reflect upon the learning of the training program and to outline personal and organizational implications.*

<u>Objectives:</u>

Participants will be able to:
- Review and discuss information on the youth development approach, as covered throughout the training program with their colleagues
- Describe the implications of the training program, both its content and process, in relation to their roles as youth workers and their roles as members of society in which young people play an integral role
- Articulate organization principles and practices needed, to support strong youth workers