Effective Practices for Engaging and Utilizing Youth Voice
What is Youth Voice?

Identifying Youth who have a unique perspective on services and care

- Utilizing their own lived experiences
- Empowering them to speak out and reflect on reform and improvement to Youth Services
- Welcoming them as valued partners and respecting their time, effort, and input
Utilizing Lived Experience

Identify Transition aged youth who have a lived perspective

These perspectives include Mental Health Issues, Physical Disabilities, Foster Care Placement, Out Of Home Placement, PRTF/ Residential Placement, Substance Misuse, Behavioral Health/ Juvenile Justice, Neglect And Abuse, Identifying As LGBTQ+, Bullying/ Suicide Ideation, Etc.

Prepare them to be an effective advocate

- Invest in development of Presentation/ Effective storytelling training
- Make sure they feel comfortable and safe when presenting
- They are the master of their own story- don’t “adultsplain”
What are PRTF’s?

• A Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) provides longer term inpatient facility care for individuals with a mental illness or substance misuse, and who need 24-hour supervision and specialized interventions.

• Youth can stay multiple months at a time in PRTF’s

• Release is dependent on Youth’s progress
What do Youth want you to know about PRTF’s?

• “It’s scary in here”

  - Trauma can happen within the PRTF

• “I feel alone and neglected”

  - I miss my friends, my family, and I this makes me sad and anxious

• “This isn’t my fault- when will I get out?”

  - I feel like a prisoner who committed no crime- I have an undetermined sentence and that stresses me out
Challenges for Youth In PRTF’s

• Youth don’t have a say in their placements
  -This leads to a lack of empowerment and autonomy

• Youth are separated from family and friends for months at a time
  -This can lead to depression and anxiety.

• Youth are often confused, exhausted, or even angry after PRTF stays
  -A lack of trust and resentment towards caregivers and support staff can be caustic.
Youth Advocacy  
Speak up and Speak out!

Provide platforms for youth to utilize their lived experience

Panel discussions at events, roles on Governing Boards, Youth Advisory Counsels are all great ways to engage youth as advocates.

Allow Youth to be candid and provide insight

-Identify obstacles that stand in the Youth’s way
-Identify and allocate resources that the youth feel they need to overcome obstacles
-Instill practices to sustain their successes
Youth Advocacy
Speak up and Speak out!

Incorporate Professional/Workforce development
-Value their time and effort- COMPENSATION IS KEY
-Don’t Tokenize them- they should be treated as a partner, not a box to check off
-Treat them with respect and dignity
-Strengthen partnerships between state employees and agency personnel

Develop Independent living skills
-Sustain participation by helping them transition into adulthood
-Expect proper dress, grooming/hygiene, and appearance – but also demonstrate empathy
-Offer advice and wisdom- as long as it is welcomed. Don’t be overbearing, but encourage them to come to you as needed
Overcoming Challenges to Engaging Youth

• Give Youth opportunities for their concerns and voices to be heard
  
  - Youth Empowerment is ESSENTIAL to engaging youth— they need to be heard and respected

• Be available to the Youth
  
  - This is the most difficult time of their lives— be empathetic, understanding, and be the support they need!

• Offer Peer to Peer Support and Youth Empowerment Organizations
  
  - A lack of trust between the youth and caregivers/Support Staff can delay engagement.
  Peer to Peer Support, R.E.N.E.W. and Youth Move, as well as other Youth Empowerment organizations provide youth with space to feel comfortable talking about their experiences in the PRTF’s
Why does Our Voice Matter?

• Youth Empowerment WORKS!

• Gives Meaning and Purpose to the challenges of youth

• Allows Youth to be candid and provide insight

• Identify obstacles that stand in the Youth’s way

• Identify and allocate resources that the youth feel they need to overcome obstacles

• Instill practices to sustain their successes
Why does Our Voice Matter?

• Identifying Youth who have a unique perspective on services and care
  - Utilizing their own lived experiences
  - Empowering them to speak out and reflect on reform and improvement to Youth Services
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What Is YOUTH MOVE?

• Youth Motivating Others through Voices of Experience

• Youth MOVE is a Youth Empowerment Organization

• Utilizes the Lived Experience and Perspective of Young People

• These perspectives include Mental Health Issues, Physical Disabilities, Foster Care Placement, Out Of Home Placement, PRTF/ Residential Placement, Substance Misuse, Behavioral Health/ Juvenile Justice, Neglect And Abuse, Identifying As LGBTQ+, Bullying/ Suicide Ideation, Etc.
What does Youth MOVE do?

- Public Speaking at the local, state, and national level
- Advocacy for the rights of our young adults
- Youth Peer to Peer Trainings
- Annual Youth Leadership Series
- Transition Mentoring Support
- Technical Assistance to New Chapters
- Annual Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day celebrations
- Attending workgroups and committee meetings to advise on youth perspectives on various topics
Youth MOVE in North Carolina

- Youth MOVE NC is the youth partner of our statewide chapter of the National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health called, North Carolina Families United.

- Our funding is through the Mental Health Block Grant and the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration.

- Youth MOVE NC became the official Statewide chapter in 2010.
Requirements for Membership

• Complete a Young Adult Leadership Series (to become an elected officer)

• Be a youth or emerging young adult age 14-26

• Be committed to making a difference!

• Be respectful and compassionate of others, no matter age, race, culture, religion, sexuality, or ability.

• Have fun!
Local Chapters of Youth Move NC

• Regional areas of NC can have their own Chapter

• Locally run and governed

• Require some adult support

• Local Chapter members are encouraged to attend Leadership Training and other Youth MOVE NC events

• Youth MOVE NC will provide technical Assistance and support
Contact Us

For more information on Youth M.O.V.E. North Carolina, or the annual Youth Leadership Series, please contact:

Kylejreece@gmail.com

Follow Us on Facebook and Twitter @youthmovenc

www.youthmovenc.org

Phone: (336) 395-8828