



Merging Youth Development Theory with Health Unit Practices – When Two Worlds Collide

Objectives

Organizational readiness is critical in merging a youth development model with health unit practices to create a successful employment experience.

Objectives:

- ◆ Increase knowledge of important organizational factors to consider in creating a youth-friendly working environments within health units
- ◆ Enhance awareness of some of the unique opportunities and challenges present when in employing youth in a health unit setting

Smoke Free Ontario (SFO) Strategy

- ◆ Comprehensive tobacco control strategy
- ◆ Youth programming has become one of the focal points
- ◆ Youth action alliances are the corner stone of the community based youth programs
- ◆ Program is designed to provide youth with:
 - ◆ The capacity to engage in policy related tobacco control issues
 - ◆ The advocacy skills to create awareness and positive change in their communities



Youth Development and Youth Engagement

- ◆ Importance of youth participation
- ◆ Active roles in organizations and communities helps create youth who:
 - ◆ experience fewer problems
 - ◆ have improved skills
 - ◆ become lifelong citizens
- ◆ Triggered by engagement



Basic Inputs that Promote Youth Development and Engagement

- ◆ Stable Places
- ◆ Basic Care and Services
- ◆ Healthy Relationships with Peers and Adults
- ◆ High Expectations and Standards
- ◆ Role Model, Resources and Networks
- ◆ Challenging Experiences/ Opportunities to Participate and Contribute
- ◆ High Quality Instruction and Training

Stable Places

Stable places which are theirs and which they feel safe.



Stable Places

Considerations:

- ◆ Development of youth friendly guidelines and parameters
- ◆ Environment/equipment/space
- ◆ Work/school/life balance

Challenges/Opportunities:

- ◆ Blending HU parameters with youth led framework.
- ◆ Positive reflection of public health work
- ◆ Understanding of adult work world
- ◆ Adds stability in one area of a peer leader's life, where it may be lacking in other areas

Access to Basic Care and Services

Young people need to access basic care and services that are appropriate, affordable and, if necessary confidential.



Access to Basic Care and Services

Considerations:

- ◆ Youth access to internal health unit support programs
- ◆ HU needs understanding of legislation as it relates to peer leaders

Challenges/Opportunities:

- ◆ Supporting youth in maintaining confidentiality agreements
- ◆ Balance managing the issues of youth with higher needs, while still achieving outcomes of the program

Healthy Relationships with Peers and Adults



Young people have to have the opportunity to develop sustaining and caring relationships.

Healthy Relationships with Peers and Adults

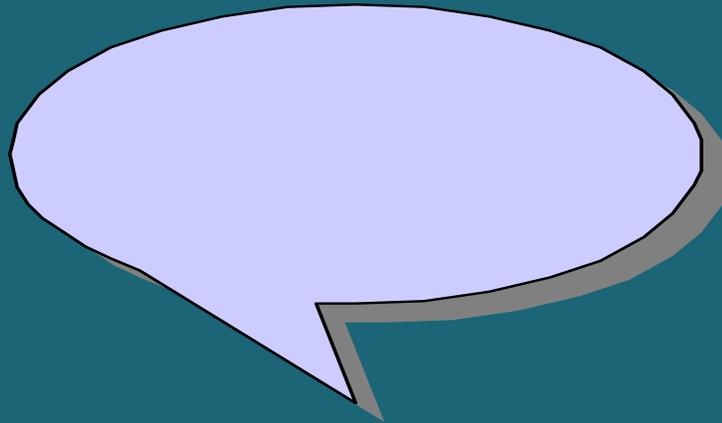
Considerations:

- ◆ HU staff aware of peer leaders presence and purpose
- ◆ Working with the broader team meaningfully
- ◆ Supportive environment

Challenges/Opportunities:

- ◆ Balancing being a friendly mentor to youth while still maintaining professionalism
- ◆ Managing group dynamics

Quotes



“Not only was article 4 a team to me, but a family outside of my home. My youth advisor, team and other health unit employees have been so supportive and inspiring and have helped me grow in many ways that will serve me well in the future” – Courtney

High Expectations and Standards



Youth typically want high standards and clear, age appropriate expectations and youth should be directly involved with setting those standards.

High Expectations and Standards

Considerations:

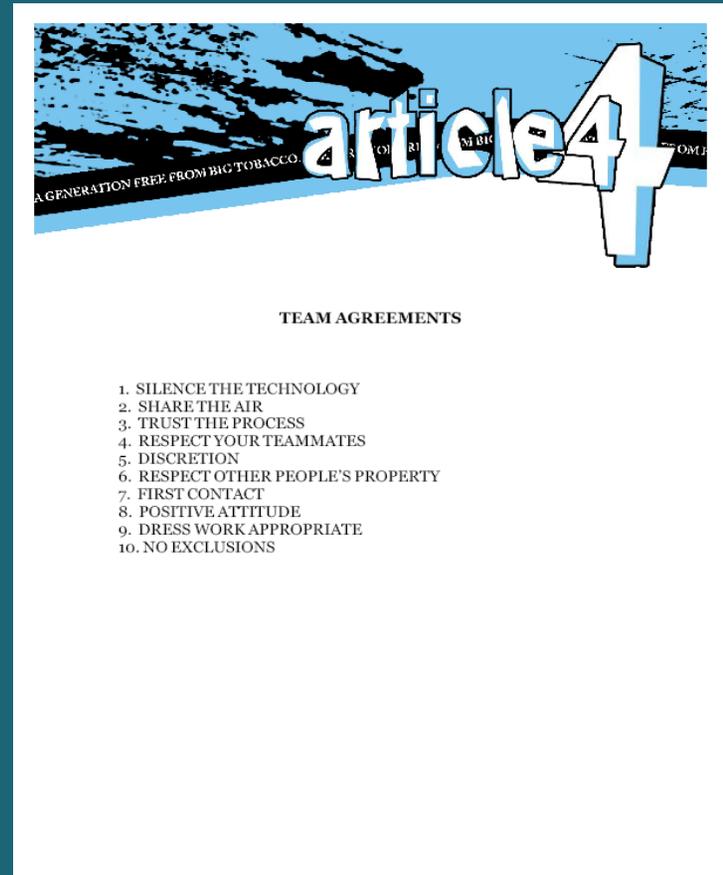
- ◆ Developmental readiness
- ◆ Flexibility of policy and procedures
- ◆ Youth setting own group agreements and complying with them

Challenges/Opportunities:

- ◆ Bridging the gap between a typical youth employment and project/advocacy work
- ◆ Reflect realistically on job performance, and using the opportunity for learning

article4 Agreements

1. *SILENCE THE TECHNOLOGY*
2. *SHARE THE AIR*
3. *TRUST THE PROCESS*
4. *RESPECT YOUR TEAMMATES*
5. *DISCRETION*
6. *RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S PROPERTY*
7. *FIRST CONTACT*
8. *POSITIVE ATTITUDE*
9. *DRESS WORK APPROPRIATE*
10. *NO EXCLUSIONS*



Role Model, Resources and Networks

- ◆ **Places, services and instruction.**
- ◆ **Sustained, caring relationships and social and strategic networks.**



Role Model, Resources and Networks

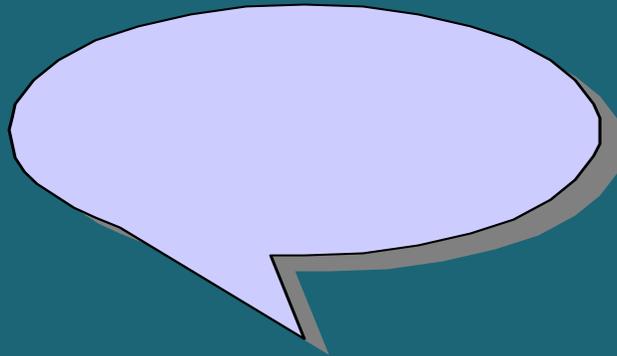
Considerations:

- ◆ Strengths of youth/youth culture while supporting their development to become well functioning adults
- ◆ Same access/training to all health unit resources that adults can access
- ◆ Guidelines in place to support work

Challenges/Opportunities:

- ◆ Older youth may not always be *positive* role models
- ◆ Education and time to train youth to use resources

Quote



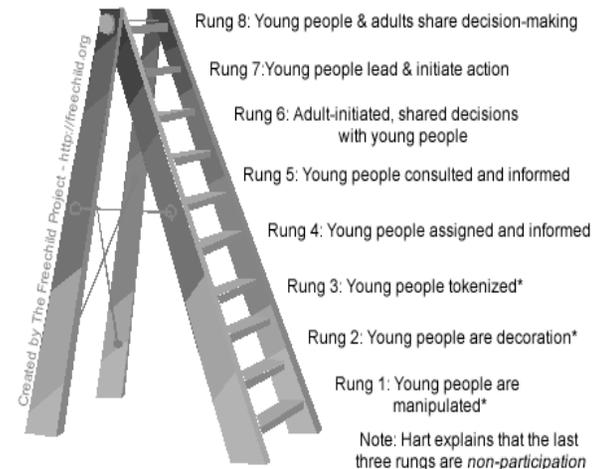
“It is incredible to see a 15 year old chairing a teleconference with youth across Ontario. What an amazing opportunity for that youth to gain skills that some of us don’t develop until after we leave university and begin our first job.” - Youth advisor.

Challenging Experiences and Opportunities to Participate and Contribute

**Challenging experiences that
are appropriate
and diverse.**

**Opportunities for real
participation and involvement.**

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*.
Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Challenging Experiences and Opportunities to Participate and Contribute

Considerations:

- ◆ Youth involvement in other health unit programming work
- ◆ Degree of adult involvement required
- ◆ Qualified staff in youth advisor position

Challenges/Opportunities:

- ◆ Youth and adult partnership important
- ◆ “Youth-led” initiatives may be a new approach for youth
- ◆ Learning critical “higher level” employment skills
- ◆ Theory of Youth Development can be challenging to implement

Who Is Bill?



High Quality Instruction and Training

- ◆ **Formal and informal instruction and training**
- ◆ **Offer opportunities for;**
 - ◆ **exploration and reflection**
 - ◆ **skill building**
 - ◆ **expression and creativity**
 - ◆ **leisure and play**



High Quality Instruction and Training

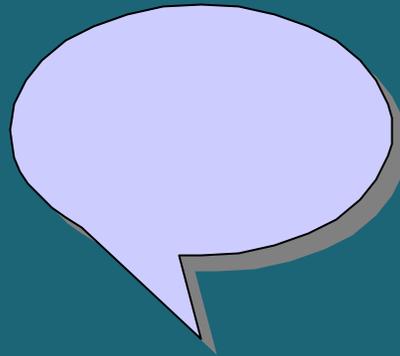
Considerations:

- ◆ Training must take place at youth appropriate times
- ◆ Information/presentations adapted to be age appropriate and interactive
- ◆ Training of the same quality as adult training

Opportunities/Challenges:

- ◆ Scheduling of training opportunities can be complicated
- ◆ Need to be sensitive to the needs of the youth and those supporting the youth
- ◆ Help develop youth's own training/facilitations skills

Quote



“The opportunities I have received here and things that I have learned have proven invaluable. Thank you for providing a professional yet comfortable workplace and so many excellent experiences. I always felt that there was no limit to the things that the team could accomplish, and that I was very lucky to be apart of it.” –Vanessa

From Theory to Practice

**Our worlds sometimes collided but together
we have become stronger**

- ◆ Experienced challenges and numerous learning opportunities
- ◆ Health Unit's ability and responsibility to do this work
- ◆ Healthy communities start with our children and youth