

# ELEVATING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR GUIDE



## TRACK 3, MODULE 3.3: PARTNERSHIP TO ACTION

#### **ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children and youth by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

#### **ABOUT THE CURRICULUM**

This curriculum was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private, nonpartisan philanthropic organization. It is intended as an educational resource for young people with foster care experience and the adult supporters who work with them to improve services, systems and opportunities. In accordance with federal law and the Foundation's policy, this curriculum does not support or endorse specific legislation, political candidates or partisan viewpoints or encourage any lobbying activity.

Handouts, case scenarios and examples included in the Elevating Youth Engagement curriculum are provided as educational resources only and do not represent the views of the Foundation or its Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® and its network site partners.

#### **©2025 THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND**

Permission to copy, disseminate or otherwise use information from this series is granted with appropriate acknowledgment. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org/copyright](http://www.aecf.org/copyright).



# ELEVATING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR GUIDE

*Elevating Youth Engagement* is a training series for young adults and their adult partners to prepare for collaboration. **The trainings teach the philosophy and practice of authentically engaging young adults in partnerships that promote codesign and leadership development.** The approaches and best practices discussed can be applied to systems-change work, policy and practice advocacy, and other opportunities for young people with foster care experience to use their expertise to inspire change. It contains lessons developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® and Cetera Inc.

The training is divided into three tracks. Each track contains a set of modules, and each module includes a slide deck, facilitator guide and handouts.

The *Elevating Youth Engagement* training series helps organizations adopt a tested approach for meaningful youth involvement, whether new to youth engagement work or looking to improve existing efforts. The training series also helps young leaders advance their advocacy skills and grow professionally.

Many adult-led organizations involve young people as advocates or partners. These trainings will provide fundamentals of codesign and help adult supporters engage and encourage young leaders as partners while acknowledging and addressing their professional aspirations and developmental needs.

*Elevating Youth Engagement* begins with the assumption that including young people who have experienced foster care in advocacy and systems-change efforts is necessary. Their ideas and perspectives lead to policy and practice improvements that ensure a better future for young people in foster care and transitioning from foster care into adulthood.

This guide is intended to help prepare facilitators to deliver the *Elevating Youth Engagement* training. The three tracks can be delivered as a comprehensive series or divided into smaller presentations by topic or audience. Facilitators are encouraged to use the materials in the way that best suits their needs and community.

## TO LEARN MORE

For more information about the *Elevating Youth Engagement* training series, please contact: [webmail@aecf.org](mailto:webmail@aecf.org).

# OVERVIEW OF ELEVATING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TRAINING MODULES

## Track 1: Youth Engagement for Adult Supporters

<b>Module 1.1</b>	Foundations of Authentic Youth Engagement	This module focuses on the benefits of engaging young people and committing to actions that will increase authentic youth engagement.
<b>Module 1.2</b>	Coaching as a Youth Engagement Practice	This module focuses on a coaching approach to advance the professional and personal development of young people who have experienced foster care.

## Track 2: Youth Engagement for Young Leaders

<b>Module 2.1</b>	Youth Advocacy 101	This module focuses on building skills to advocate for oneself and others, understanding how child welfare policy and practices are developed and the types of advocacy, and using personal storytelling to influence and educate decision makers.
<b>Module 2.2</b>	Wellness and Advocacy for Young Leaders	This module focuses on the connection between self-awareness, personal wellness and advocacy, and offers tools for young leaders to manage their well-being to minimize harm when advocating.

## Track 3: Youth Engagement for Adult Supporters and Young Leaders

<b>Module 3.1</b>	Values and Authentic Youth Engagement	This module focuses on how individual values contribute to self-identity, decision making, relating to others and determining team values.
<b>Module 3.2</b>	Youth-Adult Partnerships and Adolescent Brain Development	This module focuses on how the experience of foster care affects the adolescent brain and how to incorporate insights about adolescent brain development in youth engagement work.
 <b>Module 3.3</b>	Authentic Youth Engagement: Partnership to Action	This module focuses on the elements of authentic youth engagement, practices that increase authentic youth engagement and tools to support young people's leadership development and advocacy skills.
<b>Module 3.4</b>	Action Planning for Authentic Youth Engagement	This module focuses on the Emergent Learning process, and how to inform a youth engagement strategy and develop an action plan.

## AUDIENCES FOR THE ELEVATING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TRAINING SERIES

The Casey Foundation developed the *Elevating Youth Engagement* training series for the following audiences:

- Jim Casey Initiative sites and Jim Casey Initiative network partners;
- youth and young adults with experience in foster care;
- child welfare leaders and staff; and
- professionals, community leaders, mentors and advocates within organizations and other groups that influence or affect outcomes for youth who have experienced foster care, especially those who currently partner with young people in program, practice and policy-level systems-change efforts — or aspire to.

## OUTCOMES FOR THE ELEVATING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TRAINING SERIES

This training series is intended to strengthen participants' technical knowledge and skills as well as increase their understanding of the importance of shared decision making.

### TECHNICAL LEARNING RESULTS

Participants will gain knowledge of:

- authentic youth engagement and its purpose, guiding values, principles and priorities;
- science related to adolescent brain development;
- the definition and characteristics of authentic youth engagement; and
- practices that increase authentic youth engagement in their work.

### ADAPTIVE LEARNING RESULTS

Participants will better understand:

- reasons to practice authentic youth engagement in all areas of their work;
- the ways that experiencing foster care can affect adolescent brain development;
- how authentic youth engagement provides opportunities for leadership development and policy advocacy;
- why it's important to manage well-being as an advocate; and
- how authentic youth-adult partnerships can advance goals to best serve young people with the greatest need within systems-change efforts.

## PREPARING FOR THE ELEVATING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TRAININGS

### WHO SHOULD FACILITATE?

Facilitators should be comfortable and experienced speaking in front of groups and be willing and able to:

- describe and promote youth-adult partnerships as a critical strategy to improve older youth outcomes;
- use disaggregated data and provide local examples of youth-adult partnerships; and
- speak to all learning results of this training.

### Recommendations:

- Young adults and adult system partners should co-facilitate. Co-facilitation is an opportunity to model the philosophies and practices taught during the training in real time. Co-facilitation is also an excellent opportunity for young people to develop leadership skills and, if comfortable, give real-life examples to participants throughout the training.
- Read the brief *Authentic Youth Engagement: Youth-Adult Partnerships* in preparation for this training for background and literature on engaging youth in authentic, meaningful ways.
- Prepare anecdotal examples related to local demographics, policies and the state of child welfare, for relevance.

### TIME CONSIDERATIONS

Each *Elevating Youth Engagement* training module can take up to two hours to deliver. To maximize knowledge retention, facilitators are encouraged to offer one or two modules at a time in a session with a break in between. Some modules contain two parts and will need 60 to 90 minutes per part. If it's not feasible to deliver both parts of the training on the same day, it is recommended to deliver part two no more than a week after delivering part one to ensure participant retention.

Plan to take one to two breaks during each module to keep people engaged in the material. Facilitators are encouraged to use their best judgment in deciding break times.

**Note:** Sample discussion questions are provided in several modules to encourage audience engagement. Facilitators are welcome to include additional discussion questions relevant to the material throughout the training as deemed necessary. Adding discussion questions may increase the length of the training.

### Below are additional resources that can provide facilitators and participants with deeper context related to:

#### CASEY'S APPROACH TO YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP

- *A Framework for Effectively Partnering With Young People*
- *In-Depth Case Studies of Authentic Youth Engagement in Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Sites*

#### ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- *The Road to Adulthood: Aligning Child Welfare Practice With Adolescent Brain Development*
- *Brain Frames: Short Tools for Positive Interactions With Youth in Foster Care*
- Video: *Why the Teenage Brain Has an Evolutionary Advantage*
- Video: *Promoting Brain Gains for Youth Emerging From Foster Care*
- Video: *The Stages of Adolescent Brain Development*

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR DELIVERING THE TRAINING IN PERSON

**Before the training:** Set the room to allow small and large group discussions. Avoid a setup with rows where all participants face the front and away from one another. A U-shape, square or several round tables can accomplish this.

**During the training:** Provide small fidget toys or snacks.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR DELIVERING THE TRAINING VIRTUALLY

**Before the training:** Provide participants with links or access to a folder that contains the handouts for the module.

**During the training:** Welcoming participants to the training should include providing training and tech logistics for Zoom or other virtual platforms, such as how to use “Raise Hand,” chat and mute and unmute features. Instruct participants to use a “Raise Hand” feature to ask questions or share during an activity. Participants may be instructed to drop their answers in the chat at the discretion of the facilitator.

**During the discussions:** Remember to present in gallery mode so that participation is more interactive.

### Facilitator Checklist of Materials for Partnership to Action

- ☒ Notebook (recommended: for facilitator notes)
- ☒ Journals (recommended: one per participant to complete reflections and take notes)
- ☒ Pens and pencils (recommended: several per participant table)
- ☒ Markers (recommended: several per participant table)
- ☒ Highlighters (recommended: several per participant table)
- ☒ Fidget toys
- ☒ Snacks
- ☒ Sticky note notepads (recommended: several per participant table)
- ☒ Flip chart and tape (recommended: several around the room for participant exercises)
- ☒ Chart paper for related questions and ideas to be captured.  
Often referred to as “Parking Lot” or a “Garden” board.
- ☒ Computer/projector (for presentation)
- ☒ Handouts to print in advance or email
  - ☒ Effective Preparation and Support in Practice checklist
  - ☒ Authentic Youth Engagement and Coaching Crosswalk

# PARTNERSHIP TO ACTION PRESENTATION SUMMARY

The sample agenda below is designed for a two-hour training, but facilitators should feel free to adjust time allotted based on their style, the group and breaks needed.

Activity	Topic	Time Estimate
Presentation	Welcome	 4 minutes
Presentation	Agenda	 2 minutes
Presentation	Module Results	 2 minutes
Discussion	Check In	 10 minutes
Presentation	Module Context	 2 minutes
Presentation	Defining Authentic Youth Engagement	 3 minutes
Presentation	The Characteristics of Authentic Youth Engagement	 3 minutes
Presentation	Adolescent Brain Science	 3 minutes
Presentation	Achieving Authentic Youth Engagement	 5 minutes
Presentation	Change the Narrative From Impulsive to Creative Contributors	 5 minutes
Presentation and Exercise	Adolescent Brain Science	 15 minutes
Presentation	Partnership and Authentic Youth Engagement	 1 minute
Presentation	Using the Spectrum of Youth Participation	 10 minutes
Presentation	What Partnership Looks Like	 5 minutes
Presentation and Discussion	Benefits of Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships	 10 minutes
Presentation and Exercise	Youth-Adult Partnership Scenarios	 10 minutes
Presentation	Authentic Youth Engagement in Action	 1 minute
Presentation	The Elements of Authentic Youth Engagement	 5 minutes
Presentation	Creating Opportunities	 5 minutes
Presentation	Benefits of Creating Opportunities	 5 minutes
Presentation	Six Steps: Effective Preparation and Support in Practice	 5 minutes
Presentation	Effective Preparation Checklist	 8 minutes
Presentation	Effective Support Checklist	 8 minutes
Discussion	Check Out	 10 minutes
TOTAL TIME ESTIMATE		ABOUT 2 HOURS





## PRESENTATION: WELCOME

4 minutes

**Do:** Introduce yourself briefly — just your name and title or role — and provide any necessary, brief background about the training. Provide basic information necessary to ensure participants' comfort (food, parking, location of restrooms, breaks).

The sample talking points below are provided as a guide, but facilitators should feel free to add examples relevant to their work and express points in their own words.



### Talking Points:

- *Hello everyone! My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I have the pleasure of providing you with tools and resources for putting partnership into action!*

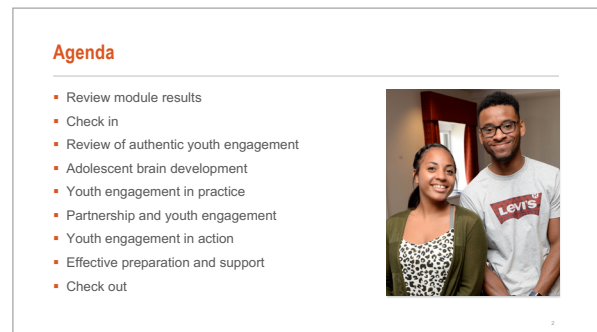
## PRESENTATION: AGENDA

2 minutes

**Do:** Provide a high-level overview of the agenda and briefly describe the flow of the day.

### Talking Points:

- *For today's module, we are going to start with a review of results, check in and set some context. We're then going to review how we define authentic youth engagement.*
- *We will go over the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® approach to authentic youth engagement, which is a field-tested approach.*
- *We will briefly highlight key concepts of adolescent brain development and how it applies to authentic youth engagement.*
- *Then, we will focus on how young leaders who have experienced foster care and adult supporters can partner together to create policies and practices that support positive outcomes for children, youth and families.*
- *We'll wrap up by sharing a tool for effective preparation and support for partnership, then we will discuss our learnings and check out for the day.*





## PRESENTATION: MODULE RESULTS

2 minutes

**Do:** Read results and hold space for any questions or clarity needed.

### Talking Points:

- *The results for this session are as follows:*
  - *Participants will gain knowledge of the elements of authentic youth engagement.*
  - *Participants will deepen their knowledge of practices that increase authentic youth engagement in their work.*
  - *Participants will gain tools to support young people in opportunities for leadership development and policy advocacy.*

### Module Results

#### Participants will:

- gain knowledge of the elements of authentic youth engagement;
- deepen their knowledge of practices that increase authentic youth engagement in their work; and
- gain tools to support young people in opportunities for leadership development and policy advocacy.



3



## DISCUSSION: CHECK IN

10 minutes

**Do:** Invite participants to introduce themselves and answer the check-in question. Choose whether you will call on participants or ask participants to speak and then call on another person.

### Talking Points:

- *We want to invite you to check in so we can all get to know one another a little better.*
- *When you introduce yourself, please say your name, where you're from (could be the state, city or community you live in) and your role. Please also answer our check-in question: What is one characteristic of partnership that is important to you?*

### Check In

- Name
- Location, Role
- What is one characteristic of partnership that is important to you?



4



## PRESENTATION: MODULE CONTEXT

2 minutes

**Do:** Read the module context.

### Talking Points:

- *This module focuses on:*
  - *brain development and authentic youth engagement; and*
  - *practices and benefits of youth-adult partnership.*
- *For this training, we are working from the assumption that all participants here today have a shared value that including young people who have experienced foster care is necessary to improve system policy and practice.*

### Module Context

#### FOCUS:

- Brain development and authentic youth engagement
- Practices and benefits of youth-adult partnerships

#### ASSUMPTION:

- Participants agree that including young people who have experienced foster care is necessary to improve system policy and practice.

5

## PRESENTATION: DEFINING AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

3 minutes

**Do:** Read the definition of authentic youth engagement. This definition comes from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### Talking Points:

- *Authentic youth engagement is an approach that values the wisdom and expertise of young people. It brings to life a philosophical and strategic approach built on the belief that policies and practices will be fundamentally better if we partner with young people who have experienced the foster care system.*

### Definition of Authentic Youth Engagement

- It is a philosophical and strategic approach to working with young people.
- Through this signature practice, young people use their individual and collective power and expertise in helping to shape a better future for those in and transitioning from foster care into adulthood.



## PRESENTATION: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

3 minutes

**Do:** Elevate the importance of authentic youth engagement and review the characteristics.

### Talking Points:

- *Authentic youth engagement values young people's meaningful contribution and recognizes opportunities for professional development.*
- *In other words, authentic youth engagement means providing opportunities for meaningful contributions by young people and intentionally building their professional skills through their leadership and advocacy experiences.*
- *System reform efforts benefit from the ideas of young people, and the work benefits the personal and professional development of the youth.*
- *The characteristics of this type of work include:*
  - *As equal partners, young people build self-esteem and practice problem-solving and leadership skills they will need in adulthood.*
  - *Young people gain access to information, develop new skills and contribute to strategy development. Adults gain insights from the experience and expertise of those most affected and can make better decisions.*
  - *Young people and adults lead together.*

### Characteristics of Authentic Youth Engagement

This approach prioritizes young people's expertise and ability to help shape solutions. It also provides **meaningful opportunities** for **professional development**.





## PRESENTATION: ADOLESCENT BRAIN SCIENCE

3 minutes

**Do:** Review the highlights of adolescent brain development and its connection to authentic youth engagement.

### Talking Points:

- *Understanding adolescent brain development provides a rationale for why we should engage youth as partners in our work.*
- *Let's review how the adolescent brain is working during this time in life.*
  - *We now know the brain continues to develop through the late 20s.*
  - *Adolescence marks a time of significant and rapid brain development similar to early childhood.*
  - *Neuroplasticity and pruning are the ability of the brain to alter its structure in response to experience; the process by which the brain forms new neural pathways, removes old ones and alters the strength of existing connections. This is an active process during this time. The brain is adapting, changing and molding in real time to the experiences it is having.*
  - *Adolescence affects many of the behaviors and learning that occur during the teen and young adult years.*
  - *There is a large amount of dopamine flooding adolescent brains — more than any other time in life.*
- *When it comes to authentic youth engagement and adolescent brain development, engaging youth as partners and sharing decision making create opportunities to participate in experiences that literally shape and wire the brain with lifelong knowledge and skills.*

### Adolescent Brain Science

#### Key points and highlights

- This is a developmental window that is similar in milestones to the one in early childhood.
- Different parts of the brain are integrating for more efficient information flow, meaning less reliance on the emotional center of the brain for decision making.
- A surge in the brain's "neuroplasticity" and "pruning" means new neural pathways are formed, old pathways are removed and existing connections are strengthened.
- It's sometimes the most exciting and memorable phase throughout the lifespan.



## PRESENTATION: ACHIEVING AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

5 minutes

**Do:** Provide an overview of what authentic youth engagement looks like in practice using the Jim Casey Initiative Framework.

### Talking Points:

- *Adolescent brain development reminds us that young people need opportunities to take risks, try new things, fail, recover and learn in a supportive environment that fosters growth and resiliency. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed a four-part framework rooted in adolescent brain development to put authentic youth engagement into action.*
- *As previously mentioned, authentic youth engagement requires true partnerships between youth and adults, opportunities for young people, preparation and support.*
  - **Youth-adult partnership** is true partnering between young people and adults that enables young people to build self-esteem, practice problem-solving skills and build leadership skills they will need in adulthood. These partnerships give them the chance to strengthen the parts of the brain that drive those skills.

### Achieving Authentic Youth Engagement

#### How it looks in practice

Implement these four practices in partnership with each other and in the context of adolescent brain development to achieve authentic youth engagement:

- Youth-adult partnership
- Opportunity
- Preparation
- Support



- **Opportunity** promotes optimal growth and development, experiential learning, healthy risk taking and participation in normal everyday activities that contribute to social confidence and positive identity formation.
- **Preparation** empowers youth to make informed decisions about matters that impact their lives.
- **Support** can be physical and/or emotional and is tailored to meet the unique needs of the young person. It also includes financial support in recognizing the expertise, time and talent that young people bring to our work and their communities.

## PRESENTATION: CHANGE THE NARRATIVE: FROM IMPULSIVE TO CREATIVE CONTRIBUTORS

5 minutes

**Do:** Review the importance of challenging and shifting narratives about adolescents.

### Talking Points:

- *Think back to what you have learned about adolescent brain development, the foster care experience and adapting in environments of chronic stress and frequent transitions.*
- *To authentically and effectively engage young people, it's important that we both understand "what's going on in there" and support a positive and strengths-based narrative of young people.*
- *Adults should challenge and change the narrative: Instead of labeling young people as defiant, lazy or annoying, we recognize that they are growing individuals who are motivated by exciting things and this is normal at their age.*
- *Young people are:*
  - *uniquely primed for learning;*
  - *more sensitive and receptive to the influence of others; and*
  - *motivated by curiosity, passion and excitement.*
- *Adults should also reinforce "stretch opportunities" — young people need to take on challenges or opportunities to build and reinforce skills. These experiences should be slightly beyond their current capability but not unattainable. Opportunities to learn through doing (opportunities to manage money, work after-school jobs, make decisions about the future) support adolescent brain development.*

### Change the Narrative From Impulsive to Creative Contributors

#### Young people are:

- wired for learning and taking on opportunities that challenge them;
- more sensitive and receptive to the influence of others; and
- motivated by curiosity, passion and excitement.

#### Young people need opportunities to:

- try new things;
- take on consistent responsibilities; and
- learn through relationships.

15

## PRESENTATION AND EXERCISE: ADOLESCENT BRAIN SCIENCE

15 minutes

**Do:** Invite the participants to reflect and share in group discussion.

### PART 1: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Let the participants know they have two to three minutes for individual reflection and will then break into small groups for discussion before a large group discussion.

**Ask each participant to answer the question:** *In your role, how are the cornerstones of adolescent brain development incorporated into your work? You will answer the small group discussion question later — please focus on the individual reflection question for now.*

### PART 2: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**Ask participants to get into small groups to discuss:** *In groups of three to four, you'll have about seven minutes for each person to participate in discussion: Identify new opportunities in your work to partner with young people to encourage healthy wiring of the brain. A few groups will be asked to share with the entire group.*

### PART 3: LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

**Ask if anyone would like to report out for their small group:** *We would like to hear highlights from your small group discussions. Please feel free to share your ideas.*

**Note (if presenting virtually):** Use breakout rooms for small group discussion.

**Bonus:** Challenge the group to select one person with whom you can share adolescent brain science to influence policy and practice change for young people in foster care.

**After discussion is complete:** *As we move forward, keep these concepts in mind, especially as we talk about ways to engage young people in meaningful opportunities.*

#### Adolescent Brain Science

##### Individual Reflection

- In your role, how are the cornerstones of adolescent brain development incorporated into your work?

##### Small Group Discussion

- Identify new opportunities in your work to partner with young people to encourage healthy wiring of the brain.

##### Bonus

- Select one person with whom you can share adolescent brain science to influence policy and practice change for young people from foster care.

## PRESENTATION: PARTNERSHIP AND AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

1 minute

**Do:** Shift the conversation to authentic youth engagement in practice.

### Talking Points:

- *Now that we've spent some time exploring the philosophy and approach to authentic youth engagement, we are going to shift to what it looks like in practice in policy and advocacy spaces. We will outline how adult allies and young leaders can team together to embrace authentically partnering and moving to action.*

#### Partnership and Authentic Youth Engagement



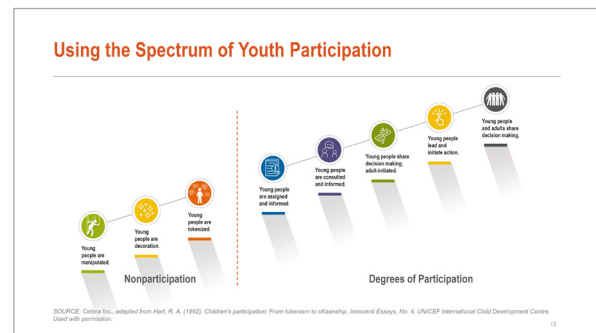
# PRESENTATION: USING THE SPECTRUM OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

10 minutes

**Do:** Review the Spectrum of Youth Participation, sharing the various levels of youth engagement.

## Talking Points:

- You may have seen this image before.
- The Spectrum of Youth Participation is one tool that helps organizations and their staff members identify how they may already be engaging young people in community change efforts. It also helps identify what level is best for your work, so that you can begin action to get to the highest level possible as it makes sense for your organization.
- Examples of nonparticipation include:
  - Manipulation:** Young people give feedback on a new youth center design. Adults use that feedback to create a new idea and design, never consulting the young people again. The adults call this a youth-driven design.
  - Decoration:** Adults promise young people a free dinner in exchange for handing out programs at a benefit dinner. They don't provide any information to the young people about the dinner or its causes.
  - Tokenism:** Telling young people what they should believe about a new policy without teaching about the policy or its implications. The adults then place young people on a panel to share that viewpoint.
- Now, let's discuss ways that we CAN engage young people. Young people are more meaningfully engaged as partners as we move up the levels.
  - Young people are **assigned and informed**, which is the absolute least you can do to engage youth meaningfully. It can look something like this: Youth are assigned as peer leaders to younger youth at a conference. They are given instructions and prepared with specific questions to ask their young peers. They understand their role but do not have a role in creating the specifics.
  - Young people are **consulted and informed**, which can look like this: Young people provide feedback on a proposed life skills class. The adults take that feedback, make changes and bring the new life skills class proposal back to the same young people for more feedback.
  - Young people **sharing decision making initiated by adults** can look like this: A work group is created to explore the safety of children in group placements. After the group has been formed, young people who have experienced group care are invited to join. After joining, they have the same authority as the rest of the group members related to the recommendations the group creates.
  - Young people **leading and initiating action** can look like this: A group of young people create a private group chat to organize a march in a local community. Adults in the community are not included because the young people do not trust adults to take them seriously.
- Today, we want to highlight the most meaningful way to engage young people: when young people and adults share decision making. Shared decision making may look like this: A group of young people begin planning a demonstration on Capitol Hill to protest limits to transitional living programming. They ask the local child welfare agency directors to join them in planning the protest to support a unified message to legislators.
- We invite you to not get too caught up in placing values on the levels, however, we don't want to do the bottom rungs. Be intentional about what level works best for your work and get to the highest level possible as it makes sense in your work.



**Ask (optional):** Which of these levels of engagement on the spectrum aligns with recommendations for supporting adolescent brain development and partnership?



## PRESENTATION: WHAT PARTNERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

5 minutes

**Do:** Review what partnership looks like in practice.

### Talking Points:

- *Now, let's move into what partnership looks like in practice.*
- *Doing with is when young people share leadership roles and decision making as much as possible.*
- *Doing for means the young person is a bystander while the adult leads.*
- *Doing to means the young person is not present at all.*
- *Include youth in all activities and organizational decisions. Don't just ask for feedback, but genuinely listen and seek ways to include feedback into programming and policy decisions.*
- *Adult supporters should use skills such as empathy, active listening and respect for youth viewpoints to build trust.*
  - *Watch for moments when you might make judgments or assumptions about the youth. This is common. Being present and aware of your thoughts in the moment and challenging them to align with ideas of partnership is required for creating genuine relationships.*
- *Interdependence includes sharing power and mutual reciprocity. This means that youth will learn leadership and interpersonal skills from the relationship, and professionals will gain professional expertise on how to engage youth in authentic partnerships. The relationship is an active space for growth.*
- *Engaging youth in partnerships helps us create authentic relationships, in which opportunities for experiential learning are created.*

### What Partnership Looks Like

#### Partnership is:

- doing "with" not "for" or "to," and
- intentionally engaging as equal partners.

#### Partnership looks like:

- asking for, listening to and incorporating feedback;
- using interpersonal skills for building trust and relationships; and
- integrating youth voice into organizational decisions.

- Partnership requires:**
- self-reflection on personal beliefs and biases; and
  - interdependent relationships between adults and young people.

14

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: BENEFITS OF SUCCESSFUL YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

10 minutes

**Do:** Review the benefits of successful youth-adult partnerships and ask participants to share examples that are relevant to their work and community.

### Talking Points:

- *Partnerships directly contribute to the development of young people's sense of self, skills and ability to use strategies that have lifelong benefits.*
- *Adults benefit from more targeted work that effectively addresses the needs of youth and gain a better understanding of what each youth needs.*
- *When young adults are engaged in meaningful ways, organizations improve their services to address the needs of young people, families and communities, especially those with the greatest need.*

### Benefits of Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships

#### Moving from transactional to relational

Young person	Adult	Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ increases self-efficacy, self-esteem, hope and belonging;</li><li>▪ develops communications skills and leadership experience; and</li><li>▪ strengthens problem-solving skills, such as reasoning, decision making and self-regulation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ increases alignment with youth in case planning and recommended services;</li><li>▪ expands resources and gains thought partners in problem solving; and</li><li>▪ gains insight and understanding of each youth's expertise, competence and needs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ ties policy and practice shifts to frontline experience;</li><li>▪ improves recruitment and retention of young adults in programs; and</li><li>▪ values and includes all young people, families and communities, especially those with the greatest need.</li></ul>

15







**Ask:** What other benefits exist in each of the categories? What benefits have you noticed from partnering with youth?

**Note:** Chart answers on a flip chart. Reinforce answers by linking to partnership strategies and adolescent brain development. Here are additional benefits that might be named during large group discussion:

- **Strengthens community connections:** Young people are involved and have a vested interest in their community.
- **Agency:** Young people have decision making authority and control over issues that impact their lives.
- **Trust:** Enables the development of mutually trusting relationships between youth and adults.
- **Overall:** Improves outcomes and more sustainable strategies.
- **Shifts in policy and practice:** New ideas and perspectives for organizational policies and practice. Norms and traditions change as youth become a standard part of community decision making.
- **Adults:** Opportunity to share leadership.

## PRESENTATION AND EXERCISE: YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP SCENARIOS



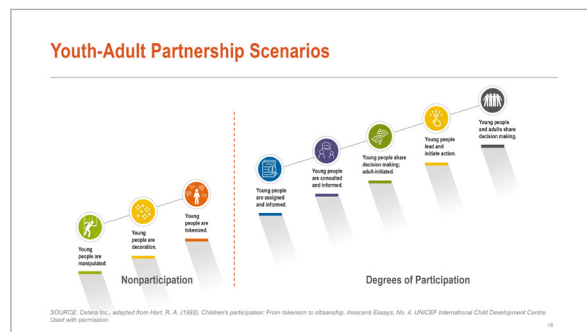
10 minutes



**Do:** Invite the participants to apply the Spectrum of Youth Participation to a case scenario.

### PART 1: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Place participants into three groups and provide a case scenario. Groups should have three to four members. If necessary, more groups can be formed, and case studies can be duplicated for more than one group.



**Ask each group to apply the Spectrum of Youth Participation to their case scenario:** Read your case scenario and think back to the Spectrum of Youth Participation. Consider what this scenario would look like at three different levels of participation: with young people as nonparticipants; with young people consulted and informed; and with young people and adults sharing decision making. Please have someone in your group record the group's answers to all three levels and be prepared to share out.

### PART 2: LARGE GROUP DEBRIEF



**Ask groups to share their answers to the questions. If two groups have the same case study, alternate questions between each group:** We would like to hear your responses. Please read your group's case scenario out loud, then share one to two sentences for how your group answered for each level.



**Note (if presenting virtually):** Use breakout rooms for small group discussion. To ensure participants are able to remember the content of the scenarios, copy and paste them into the chat so the scenarios will be visible in the chat for the breakout rooms. Alternatively, you could add slides to the slide deck with each scenario and ask participants to take a picture of them to discuss in their breakout room.



**Ask (optional):** What are the organizational challenges that might be present in your case scenario if a more partnered relationship is pursued? Where do adults hold authority that can be shared with young people? Where could power be shifted completely to young people? What are next steps to do this work with young people?

## PRESENTATION: AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

1 minute

**Do:** Shift the conversation to tools for authentic youth engagement in practice.

**Talking Points:**

- *Now we will take all our learning and shift our conversation into specific strategies and tools to practice authentic youth engagement.*

### Authentic Youth Engagement in Action

## PRESENTATION: THE ELEMENTS OF AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

5 minutes

**Do:** Review the four components of the Jim Casey Initiative's authentic youth engagement framework.

**Talking Points:**

- *The Jim Casey Initiative's four essential components for authentic youth engagement include: youth-adult partnership, opportunity, preparation and support.*
- *Authentic youth engagement promotes two main strategies within the Jim Casey Initiative: policy advocacy and leadership development.*
- *To build individual leadership and advocacy skills, authentic youth engagement:*
  - *focuses on partnership with young people;*
  - *prepares young people to be active partners;*
  - *supports young people at all stages; and*
  - *provides opportunities for individual growth and policy advocacy.*

### The Elements of Authentic Youth Engagement

To build individual leadership and advocacy skills, authentic youth engagement:

- focuses on partnership with young people;
- prepares young people to be active partners;
- supports young people at all stages; and
- provides opportunities for individual growth and policy advocacy.



## PRESENTATION: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

5 minutes

**Handout:** Participants should have a copy of the Authentic Youth Engagement and Coaching Crosswalk.  
*SOURCE: JLB Training and Consulting. Used with permission.*

**Do:** Share the *Authentic Youth Engagement and Coaching Crosswalk* as a resource.

### Creating Opportunities

To promote learning, growth and skill development:

Identify	Evaluate	Create
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ opportunities that have been presented to you;</li> <li>▪ opportunities that you seek out; and</li> <li>▪ opportunities that young people bring forward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ if the opportunity meets the needs of the young person;</li> <li>▪ if the opportunity contributes to the work; and</li> <li>▪ if there are support structures in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ committees;</li> <li>▪ policy review;</li> <li>▪ panel discussions;</li> <li>▪ presentations and facilitation; and</li> <li>▪ opportunities for advocating and testifying.</li> </ul>



### Talking Points:

- Now we will look at how creating opportunities, both seen and unseen, plays a crucial role in authentic youth engagement.
- The Authentic Youth Engagement and Coaching Crosswalk uses a humanistic coaching strategy to prepare and support young leaders as they engage in advocacy or pursue personal goals related to school, work and relationships.
- With young people, adult supporters should:
  - **identify** opportunities that come to you, opportunities that you can seek out and opportunities that young people bring forward;
  - **evaluate** if the opportunity meets the needs of the young person, if the opportunity contributes to the work and if there are support structures in place; and
  - **create** opportunities through committees, policy review, program and curriculum design, panel discussions, presentations and facilitation, and advocating and sharing stories.

## PRESENTATION: BENEFITS OF CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

5 minutes

**Do:** Review the benefits of creating authentic youth engagement and youth-adult partnership opportunities.

### Talking Points:

- Opportunities that engage youth as partners contribute to the development and well-being of young people.
- As we know from our review of adolescent brain science, these opportunities provide ways to reinforce the neural pathways being developed during this time.
- Remember: Talking about something does not equal doing. For example, a financial literacy class alone does not provide an opportunity to manage money. Opportunities always include an element of skill practice rather than just talking about a skill. Pair classes and information about skills with real-time chances to practice and use skills.
- Young people should have various opportunities:
  - **Financial capability:** For example, having control over their own money while receiving budgeting help from an adult supporter.
  - **Normalcy:** For example, being able to do an internship or have a part-time job.
  - **Positive relationships:** For example, having the chance to spend quality time with friends and family, and opportunities to talk about relationships with a trusted adult supporter.
  - **Take healthy, safe risks:** For example, going out with friends, driving or traveling.
  - **Advocate or lead:** For example, sharing their experiences with the foster care system with others to advance efforts.
  - **Develop a professional network:** For example, attending a networking event where they can build contacts that can help them explore, create and excel in their educational and professional goals.
  - Engaging youth in these opportunities requires preparation both before and during opportunities.

#### Benefits of Creating Opportunities

Create opportunities for young leaders to:

- experience normalcy;
- experience positive relationships;
- take healthy, safe risks;
- advocate and lead; and
- build professional and social networks that help them achieve employment, education and other goals.



25



# PRESENTATION: SIX STEPS: EFFECTIVE PREPARATION AND SUPPORT IN PRACTICE



5 minutes



**Handout:** Participants should have a copy of the Preparation and Support in Practice checklist.



**Do:** Share the Preparation and Support in Practice checklist as a resource. Review the six steps of effective preparation and support in practice.



## Talking Points:

- We've discussed the different types of opportunities that are associated with meaningfully engaging young people.
- While opportunities are situation specific, steps should include:
  - Considering the opportunity
  - Initial preparation for the opportunity
  - Final preparation for the opportunity
  - Showing up for the opportunity
  - Support during the opportunity
  - Support after the opportunity
- The Preparation and Support in Practice checklist can be used to plan how to support a young person before, during and after an opportunity. This checklist is not exhaustive, nor does it contain every step needed to prepare and support youth, but it is a good place to start.

## Six Steps: Effective Preparation and Support in Practice

- 1 Consider the Opportunity
- 2 Initial preparation for opportunity
- 3 Final preparation for opportunity
- 4 Show up for the opportunity
- 5 Support during the opportunity
- 6 Support after opportunity

# PRESENTATION: EFFECTIVE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



8 minutes



**Do:** Review effective preparation and read the examples on the slide under each section.



## Talking Points:

- When young people and adult supporters are preparing for an opportunity or experience, to make sure the young person benefits, you should ask:
  - What is the opportunity?
- Be clear about what the opportunity is, including the results, time commitment (how often and when will the young person need to be available) and length of project.
  - Why this young person?
    - Being able to determine what types of opportunities are correct for which young people requires developing a relationship and learning ahead of time what might work well for some young people versus others. For example, you would not want to ask a young person who grew up in kinship care settings to speak on a panel about group homes.

## Effective Preparation Checklist

Consider the Opportunity	Initial Preparation for Opportunity	Final Preparation for Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ What is the opportunity?</li><li>□ Why this young person?</li><li>□ What are the young person's feelings and thoughts about the ask?</li><li>□ What knowledge and experience does the young person have?</li><li>□ What are the benefits for the young person?</li><li>□ How will the young person be financially compensated?</li><li>□ Are travel or lodging accommodations required?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Schedule conference calls.</li><li>□ Secure and review end results/objectives.</li><li>□ Provide necessary tools/materials/technology.</li><li>□ Work with youth on key messages.</li><li>□ Practice with the young person.</li><li>□ Identify options for financial compensation.</li><li>□ Identify how travel and lodging accommodations will be supported.</li><li>□ Support young person in making child care, pet care or other dependent care plans.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Review expectations.</li><li>□ Review key messages.</li><li>□ Review techniques for managing triggers.</li><li>□ Review techniques for managing the audience.</li><li>□ Check out the physical space.</li><li>□ Conduct a final run-through.</li></ul>

- *What are the young person's feelings and thoughts about the ask?*
  - *This will support informed consent around saying "yes" or "no" to the opportunity.*
- *What knowledge and experience does the young person have?*
  - *Authentic youth-adult partnerships create a context of mutual trust that help young people recognize their strengths, leverage their expertise, assess their level of understanding, address their knowledge deficits and assert their leadership in reaching decisions.*
- *What are the benefits for the young person?*
  - *Leadership development opportunities often create spaces for young people to learn self-advocacy skills, including when and how to seek advice from caring adults in order to be confident in making decisions and charting their future.*
- *How will the young person be financially compensated?*
  - *Young people should be financially compensated for their knowledge, time and contributions as equal partners.*
- *Here are examples of how adult supporters can help a young person during initial preparation:*
  - *Schedule conference calls.*
  - *Secure and review end results/objectives.*
  - *Provide necessary tools, materials, technology.*
  - *Work with youth on key messages.*
  - *Practice, practice, practice with the young person.*
  - *Identify options for financial compensation.*
  - *Identify how travel and lodging accommodations will be supported.*
  - *Support young person in making child care, pet care or other dependent care plans.*
- *Throughout the preparation process, adults can help foster leadership development by encouraging young people to try new things (such as public speaking for the first time) and polish their existing skills while developing soft skills such as asking for help, following through and planning ahead.*
- *Here are examples of how adult supporters can help a young person during final preparation:*
  - *Review expectations.*
  - *Review key messages.*
  - *Review techniques for managing triggers.*
  - *Review techniques for managing the audience.*
  - *Check out the physical space where the opportunity will take place.*
  - *Conduct a final run-through.*



**Ask (optional):** *What are some ways you have prepared young people? What does it mean to prepare? What are some of the things you do to help the young people you work with prepare? How do you determine who's a good fit for an opportunity?*



# PRESENTATION: EFFECTIVE SUPPORT CHECKLIST

8 minutes

**Do:** Review effective support and read the examples on the slide under each section.

## Talking Points:

- *Whether a young person is speaking on a panel, preparing a presentation or providing valuable feedback on a document, every young person should be supported throughout the entire process of every opportunity.*
- *Support systems can be from public and private providers or informal support within young person's natural network of community relationships.*
- *Here are examples of support before and during the opportunity:*
  - *Book flights and arrange transportation.*
    - *Young people should be monetarily compensated for their time, expertise, labor and products that contribute to systems change, program implementation, policy development and information sharing.*
  - *Provide a letter for work and/or school.*
  - *Provide important details and/or help them obtain the information.*
  - *Finalize wellness and basic needs planning.*
    - *Adult supporters and youth can develop self-care strategies for before, during and after advocacy opportunities.*
    - *Young people should have equitable access to services that are culturally competent, outcome-focused and attentive to their overall well-being.*
    - *Use strategic sharing practices to ensure young people are comfortable and their boundaries respected.*
  - *Attend the opportunity with the young person. If attending is not possible, schedule an immediate check in following the event.*
  - *Give nonverbal cues to support timing and self-care.*
  - *Provide encouragement and praise.*
    - *Encourage young people to bring their stories, their recommendations and their content expertise forward during opportunities.*
  - *Provide a key message refresher.*
- *Here are examples of support after the opportunity:*
  - *Debrief.*
    - *Debriefing is a critical component of supporting young people. It is a tool for learning how the experience went for them and any feedback they have for us surrounding support and preparation.*
  - *Give feedback and praise.*
  - *Listen and respond to feedback.*
  - *Answer questions.*
  - *Continue to encourage self-care.*
  - *Follow up on results of the project, meeting and next steps.*
  - *Ensure financial compensation was issued based on initial agreements.*

## Effective Support Checklist

Show Up for Opportunity	Support During Opportunity	Support After Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Book flights and arrange transportation.</li> <li>❑ Provide a letter for work and/or school.</li> <li>❑ Provide important details and/or help them obtain the information.</li> <li>❑ Finalize wellness and basic needs planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Attend the opportunity with the young person.</li> <li>❑ If attending is not possible, plan to immediately check-in.</li> <li>❑ Use nonverbal cues to support timing and self-care.</li> <li>❑ Provide encouragement and praise.</li> <li>❑ Provide a key message refresher.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Debrief.</li> <li>❑ Provide feedback and praise.</li> <li>❑ Listen and respond to feedback.</li> <li>❑ Answer questions.</li> <li>❑ Continue to encourage self-care.</li> <li>❑ Follow up on results of the project, meeting and next steps.</li> <li>❑ Ensure financial compensation was issued based on initial agreements.</li> </ul>

23

# CHECK OUT

10 minutes

**Do:** Invite participants to share their learnings and name how they want to apply them in the future. Choose whether you will call on participants or ask participants to speak and then call on another person.

**Set up three flip-chart stations around the room. Label one station with “Head,” another with “Heart” and another with “Hands.”**

## PART 1: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Let the participants know they have two to three minutes to individually reflect on each question and record their answers on a sticky note. Ask them to place their sticky notes onto the flip chart when they are done answering all three questions.

**Ask:** *What is one new piece of information you are taking away? What is one new awareness you are taking away? What is one action you commit to doing to increase your youth-adult partnerships?*

## PART 2: LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

**Ask a few participants to share:** *We would like to hear two or three action items!*

**Note:** Remind participants to note their action commitments to take with them after the training.

**Note (if presenting virtually):** Ask participants to share verbally or share their responses in the chat.

### Check Out

#### ACTIVITY: HEAD, HEART, HANDS

**HEAD:** What is one new piece of information you are taking away?

**HEART:** What is one new awareness you are taking away?

**HANDS:** What is one action you commit to doing to increase your youth-adult partnerships?



24