Positive Youth Development Assessment and Resources for TPP Programs

RHNTC
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Positive youth development (PYD) centers on giving youth experiences that contribute to their healthy and successful development. All Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program projects can integrate the eight PYD practices into their programs and their interactions with youth.
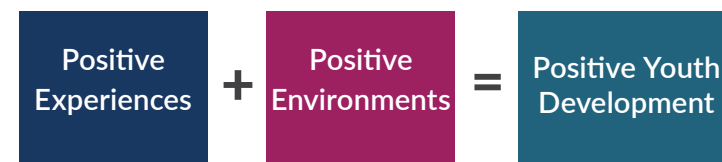
How to use this assessment

Use this assessment to see where your project is already integrating elements of PYD and where you can improve. As needed, consult the resources throughout to learn more about PYD and its practices.

If possible, ask several TPP project staff to fill out the assessment. Then compare and discuss the results and brainstorm strategies for improvement. If items are beyond your project's scope (e.g., education and workforce opportunities), identify community partners that can provide support.

What is positive youth development?

In contrast to approaches that focus on young people's problems and risky behaviors, PYD focuses on young people's strengths and potential. PYD promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and building on their strengths.

| Positive Experiences | + | Positive Environments | = | Positive Youth Development |

Positive youth development can be divided into eight key practices[1]:

1. Protect physical and psychological safety
2. Create the appropriate structure
3. Build supportive relationships
4. Offer opportunities to belong

5. Encourage positive social norms
6. Mentor, build efficacy, and offer opportunities to make a difference
7. Provide opportunities for skill-building
8. Integrate across family, school, and community efforts

Learn more

- Positive Environments: Features of Youth Development Settings (ACT for Youth)
- Positive Youth Development (OPA)
- Positive Youth Development Resources (OPA)
- PYD 101 Online Course (ACT for Youth)
- The Role of Positive Youth Development in Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Programming (FYSB)

[1]Descriptions of the eight PYD practices are adapted from Community Programs to Promote Youth Development. National Research Council's - Institute of Medicine.
https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/10022/community-programs-to-promote-youth-development

1. Protect physical and psychological safety

Assess the degree to which your TPP project provides safe spaces (in person and virtually) and promotes safe interaction among peers. Physical and psychological safety is important for all youth but particularly those who have experienced or may be at risk for experiencing trauma.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Our project policies and staff training indicate that physical and sexual harassment, violence, and bullying are not tolerated.				
Implementation staff makes youth feel comfortable, supported, and safe.				
Implementation staff encourage youth to be respectful of others' sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual and reproductive health and choices.				
Implementation staff are trained on privacy and confidentiality laws in their state, to ensure they appropriately manage the information and feelings youth share.				
Implementation staff are trained in managing group dynamics and creating a safe environment for youth to discuss sensitive sexual and reproductive health topics.				
Implementation staff recognize and prevent bullying situations.				
Implementation staff proactively resolve conflicts among youth.				
Implementation staff receive trauma-informed training and implement trauma-informed practices.				
Implementation staff recognize, prevent, and address all forms of discrimination.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Bringing Content to Life: Techniques for Effective Group Facilitation Video Series (RHNTC)
- Facilitation Tips (ACT for Youth)
- How to Prevent Bullying (StopBullying.gov)
- Tips for TPP Grantees Serving Youth in Foster Care and Congregate Care (RHNTC)
- Understanding Trauma and the Six Core Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach Meeting Package (RHNTC)

2. Create the appropriate structure

Assess the degree to which your TPP project provides clear and consistent rules and expectations, and age-appropriate monitoring.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Implementation staff greet participants warmly and make them feel welcome the moment they enter the program space.				
Our project always has enough adults to supervise activities, keep youth safe, and support positive relationships with youth.				
Our project's group agreements reflect input from youth participants.				
Group agreements clearly state consequences for not following the agreements, and all youth participants agree upon these consequences.				
Implementation staff promote and acknowledge participants' positive behavior.				
When participants' behavior is out of step with group agreements, implementation staff remind them of the group agreements and follow through on the agreed-upon consequences.				
Staff implement our program as intended (this is known as fidelity). Project staff assess fidelity at regular intervals.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Co-Regulation in Practice — Strategies for Practitioners who Serve Youth Aged 14-24: Group Agreement Strategy (Administration for Children and Families)
- Effective Facilitation & Youth Engagement: A Toolkit for Working with Youth (RHNTC)
- Fidelity Monitoring Tip Sheet (OPA)
- Introduction to Fidelity eLearning (RHNTC)
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review (Youth.gov)
- Tips for Building and Managing Positive Group Behavior (RHNTC)

3. Build supportive relationships

Assess the degree to which your TPP project fosters caring relationships, social support, positive communication, guidance, and opportunities for youth to practice decision making.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Youth report that our staff are trustworthy and reliable.				
Implementation staff are comfortable discussing and addressing young people's questions about sexuality and sexual and reproductive health in a nonjudgmentalmanner.				
Our project provides opportunities for youth to interact positively with one another through structured and unstructured activities.				
Implementation staff model healthy relationships and support youth in developing positive relationships, including healthy romantic relationships.				
Implementation staff encourage youth to proactively communicate with their partners about boundaries related to sex.				
Implementation staff work to build on and enhance each young person's unique strengths (e.g., in the arts, music, math, communication).				
Staff are trained and able to proactively engage youth that have different needs and engagement styles without singling anybody out.				
Implementation staff interact with all adolescents in a supportive, affirming, and caring manner. Staff are trained and able to connect with youth while maintaining healthy professional boundaries.				
Our project provides opportunities for youth to practice decision making and problem-solving.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Engaging Parents and Caregivers in Programs For Teen Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health Tip Sheet (OPA)
- Healthy Relationships Program Evaluation Toolkit (OPA)
- Healthy, Safe Relationships: A Pocket Card for Young Adults and Adolescents (Futures Without Violence)
- Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit: Decision Making (ACT for Youth)
- The Healthy Relationship Wheel and Relationship Spectrum (RHNTC)
- Tips for How to Talk to Your Teens About Relationships and Their Sexual Health (OPA)

4. Offer opportunities to belong

Assess the degree to which your TPP project provides opportunities for youth to feel included and form a positive identity, as well as the degree to which it demonstrates cultural humility (staff examine and tackle their implicit biases) and cultural responsiveness (diverse people are seen, valued, and celebrated).

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Our project is inclusive of adolescents from a variety of cultures and backgrounds, including youth experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, youth in juvenile justice, LGBTQ+ youth, youth with disabilities, and expectant and/or parenting teens.				
Each program session has activities that involve opportunities for sharing and listening, such as ice-breakers, scenarios to react to, and/or reflection time.				
Our project provides opportunities for youth to work together to accomplish a goal.				
Our project is branded to help youth feel like they are part of something special.				
When working on activities or projects, our implementation staff give all youth a role, such as timekeeper, notetaker, or spokesperson.				
Our project's activities and materials on display (e.g., posters) are representative of the population we serve.				
Implementation staff receive training in cultural humility and responsiveness, particularly related to ethnicity, sexuality, and gender.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Building Student Resilience Toolkit (RHNTC)
- Reducing the Impact of Unconscious Bias in Family Planning Care eLearning (RHNTC)
  *Note: This resource is marketed to Title X family planning agencies but also applies to TPP grantees
- Inclusion and Accessibility (Youth.gov)
- Gender-Affirming Care and Young People (OPA)
- Understanding LGBTQ Youth & Ensuring Inclusivity in TPP Programs (RHNTC)

5. Encourage positive social norms

Assess the degree to which your TPP project encourages behaviors and values that promote respect. Research finds that positive social norms can be important to adolescent development.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Implementation staff provide clear messages emphasizing that relationship violence of any kind, in any type of relationship, is not acceptable.				
Implementation staff model positive, respectful interactions, especially when discussing topics related to sexual and reproductive health and sexuality, and encourage youth to do the same.				
When discussing sexual and reproductive health, our implementation staff promote positive norms related to healthy decision making. This means helping youth come to decisions on their own while also pointing out how high-risk behavior might have negative consequences.				
Our implementation staff encourage youth to create a positive environment and reject all forms of discrimination within our project and the community.				
Youth help create group agreements that provide the foundation for all project activities.				
Our project teaches youth to think critically about what influences their lives and decisions, such as cultural norms, gender norms, media, and peer pressure.				
Our project gives youth tools to use social media in a safe and positive way, and encourages them to speak to an adult if they feel unsafe about an online interaction.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Dating Violence Prevention Resources (Youth.gov)
- Healthy Relationships in Adolescence (OPA)
- Helping Youth Build Relationship Skills (ACT for Youth)
- Talking with Teens about Relationships (OPA)
- Youth Statistics: Internet and Social Media (ACT for Youth)

6. Mentor, build efficacy, and offer opportunities to make a difference

Assess the degree to which your TPP project supports youth autonomy (making informed decisions for themselves), provides leadership opportunities, and encourages youth to achieve meaningful change in their community.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Our project creates meaningful opportunities for youth participants to lead and take initiative (e.g., involving participants in efforts to encourage other youth in the community to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health).				
Implementation staff help youth see connections between their sexual and contraceptive decisions and their ability to achieve educational and career goals.				
Our project has a youth advisory council and applies the council's recommendations toward meaningful changes in our project and community.				
Our project encourages youth to make a difference in their community. We do this by developing or referring young people to community service learning projects.				
Implementation staff support youth in achieving their education and career goals by creating opportunities for them or by referring them to other organizations that can help.				
Implementation staff receive training and guidance on providing adolescents with leadership opportunities.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Civic Engagement Resources (Youth.gov)
- Mentoring (Youth.gov)

7. Provide opportunities for skill-building

Assess the degree to which your TPP project provides opportunities for adolescents to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills that prepare them to make positive decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, education, and career path.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Our project delivers content using interactive techniques (e.g., role-playing or practicing refusal skills).				
Implementation staff help youth make connections between healthy relationship skills and success in other settings, such as education and work.				
Implementation staff engage youth in setting goals (e.g., abstinence or practicing safer sex) and figuring out how to achieve those goals.				
Implementation staff help youth identify milestones to celebrate as they move toward achieving their goals.				
Our project gives youth opportunities that can help them achieve their goals (e.g., career fairs, college fairs, assistance with scholarships).				
Implementation staff are trained and able to identify real-world opportunities for youth to learn and apply skills (e.g., visiting a clinic to request information about relevant health services).				

Notes:

Resources:

- Employment Resources (Youth.gov)
- Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit: Decision Making (ACT for Youth)
- Transition & Aging Out (Youth.gov)

8. Integrate across family, school, and community efforts

Assess the degree to which your TPP project coordinates and collaborates with family, school, and community partners.

PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Our project links young people to adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services in the community.				
Our project links youth to people and resources unrelated to sexual and reproductive health, as needed (e.g., to potential employers, volunteer opportunities, mental health services, job training programs).				
Our project engages parents and caregivers through family activities, newsletters, websites, or other activities.				
Our project equips parents and caregivers to talk to their adolescents about sexual and reproductive health.				
Our project shares information about sexual and reproductive health and adolescent-friendly support services with the broader community.				
Our project offers professional development that helps implementation staff engage more effectively with families, implementation partners, and other community partners.				
Our project staff are trained in community engagement.				

Notes:

Resources:

- Engaging Parents and Caregivers in Programs For Teen Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health Tip Sheet (OPA)
- Strategies for Engaging Parents and Caregivers in TPP Programming Tip Sheet (OPA)
- Talking with Teens about Sex: Resources for Caregivers (RHNTC)
- For Providers: Teens Visiting a Health Clinic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Inspire Change Through Social Media: A Toolkit for OPA TPP Grantees (RHNTC)
- Improving TPP Program Reach through Recruitment and Retention Toolkit (RHNTC)