



## **Video Transcript: Ask Me Anything: Meaningful Youth Engagement**

**Franky (00:00):** I want young people to feel that it is their project; that we would be missing a key ingredient if they weren't there. That what they feel and think and want and need and desire is exactly what's needed to support themselves and young people in our community.

**Franky (00:23):** Ask Me Anything: Meaningful Youth Engagement. Hi, I'm Franky Heard Hudson from Teen HYPE Youth Development Program in Detroit, and today I'm going to let the RHNTC ask me anything about meaningful youth engagement.

**Franky (00:42):** What is the best part of working on your project? Interacting with the young people in any shape or fashion that is, and whether that's behind the scenes, working with partnerships to advance it or interacting with them one-on-one in the community setting brings me great joy. So that's the best part, just seeing their faces. Tell me about the first time you really felt like you made a meaningful connection with the young person you work with. I've been in this role working in this space for two decades now, and I have so many... moments. One that I recall, however, is when a young person, we were at a youth retreat and a young person stood up and said that our program saved their life, that they would have committed suicide if it wasn't for our space and the connection with their peers and other positive adults with resources and opportunities to grow and be loved and connect. That was pivotal for me when I knew that you got to stick in there, you got to stay in there, you got to make this opportunity available for the young people that it is created and designed to help.

**Franky (02:14):** How are youth involved in planning activities for your project? What I'm most proud of is watching young people in my organization lead the charge for what equity looks like and feels like for them. We have young people who work on our Board of Directors. They inform all of our activities. They have an active voice in it, being a part of that journey, to step back, to allow a young person to have voice and agency in what they want their community to look and feel like and to be able to watch that play out from the time a young person enters our program and exits is something that I feel very, very good and honored to be a part of.

**Franky (03:10):** How are youth involved in making decisions that affect your project? We do satisfaction surveys to get a feel for what young people like and don't like. That input directly impacts what we do in our next round of programming with them. Additionally, when young people are involved in settings, decision-making settings with us, they have voice there. So for instance, in our hiring practices, we have young people sit at the interview tables with us to tell us yes or no, whether or not we should hire a particular staff person. So it's normally in partnership with us or through feedback surveys, focus groups, when we can't have them tangibly into spaces with us. We find ways to allow them to have, decision-making power or voice in our decisions to the best of our ability.

**Franky (04:14):** How are youth involved in implementing project activities? So we hire, three near peers. They are usually seniors or first, second-year college students, and they come back to create our social media content. They shape the way that looks, and that's typically how we disseminate messages that go out to teens. They usually create those based on, the needs we have for our project. So we train these same young people, who are near peers, on the curricula, and then they will either in the summer months or during school time, implement with us either as co-facilitators or lead facilitators, depending on their skill and availability. In the after school time spaces, our young people actually lead all of the activities. So, they lead our icebreakers, they co-create the agenda, and the staff in the space are there mainly as support.

**Franky (05:28):** How do you want young people to feel when they are working as a partner on your project? I want them to feel valued and seen so that one-on-one with an adult, a caring adult that looks at them when they walk through the door. Hey, I see you. You're here. I'm celebrating the fact that you're here in this moment with me. This video was created by the Reproductive Health National Training Center, RHNTC.