

YOUTH MOVE NATIONAL PRESENTS #THINGS2CONSIDER

Working with Faith Communities

Faith communities and youth organizations both hold community wellness in high regard. Partnering with youth and youth organizations helps these faith communities to live out their values of community engagement and supporting the health of youth and young adults. If you want to work with a faith community in your area, consider appealing to these shared values and addressing how collaborating with your youth organization can help everyone reach common goals!

PARTNERSHIP WITH FAITH COMMUNITIES

Partnerships between youth organizations and faith communities should:

- Operate within the context of relationships and are built on a foundation of trust
- Be mutual
- Share common goals
- Specify roles

Before talking with a faith community or their leader, it is important to have a sense of what the faith community believes and values as a part of their mission.

BEFORE YOU REACH OUT

- Research the community on their website, Facebook page, or other social media
- Look for practices of affirmation of the cultural, historical, and gender experiences of youth in your group
- Know what you are asking for and what you offer the community! If you do your research and know what you'd like to work on, many faith communities would be excited to support youth voice
- Check in with youth in your program to learn what is important to them in partnering with faith communities

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Faith communities are multi-generational (all ages) and many can provide warm welcome to youth who are looking for connection. Often, faith leaders (like ministers, imams, and rabbis) have particular insight into who in their organization would like to work with youth. Ask the faith leader about individuals or families in their community who are passionate about your cause!

One of the most helpful, tangible resources many faith communities have to offer is physical space. Many times, faith communities have both a main sanctuary area as well as a large open hall and smaller meeting rooms. When choosing what part of the building to gather in, consider if your youth will feel comfortable in an obviously religious spaces (for example, a space with stained glass windows, pews, or religious symbols) or if a more open and neutral space would be better. When asking to use or rent space be sure to:

- Ask if there is a sliding scale for rental fee
- Mention how you will ensure that their space is cared for while you are using it

You could also ask for help from the faith community itself to help get the word out about what your youth organization is doing. Some strengths that faith communities have may include:

- Fundraising skills and ideas
- Advertising space in their building and on outdoor signage
- Advertising space in bulletins and newsletters, social media, and their website

Remember, faith communities are hubs of resources! Often, they are already partnering with other faith based and non-religious organizations for the benefit of the wider community. Becoming involved with one faith community may help you to network with other faiths as well! Consider asking for a meeting with the faith community's leader or a representative to discuss resources and connections you may both have and can use together to support youth.

Check out these resources on working with youth in faith communities

[Direct Connect Webinar: Learning Community - Convening](#)

[Learn and Connect Faith Communities](#)

[Faith Positions from the Human Rights Campaign](#)

[Institute for Muslim Mental Health](#)

[Open Table Christianity and Welcoming LGBTQ Christians](#)

[Jewish Queer Youth](#)

[United Church of Christ and Mental Health](#)

[Unitarian Universalist Association Welcoming Congregations Program](#)

[Building an Inclusive Church](#)



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