



YOUTH MOVE CHANGE INITIATIVE

Considerations for Youth Peer Support Workers Looking to Implement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into Service Delivery

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This tip sheet was created by youth from diverse backgrounds who have experienced formal and informal youth peer support. Through the Youth MOVE Change Initiative Series focus groups, youth were able to develop tips and advice alongside scenarios that can help guide the work for the youth peer support field.

Familiarize yourself with DEI-informed language and language considerations to be able to better connect with youth and young adults, interact with stakeholders, and advocate for equitable changes in the workplace.

“With something that’s subtly racist, you have to go into detail on why it’s harmful, and then you’re kind of put in this awkward position of having to educate someone when you shouldn’t really need to.”

Teach youth how to think critically about and to develop a supportive network which includes and best utilizes family, friends, mentors, and other important connections.

Instill confidence in sharing feelings (consider weighing the risks and benefits of authentically sharing and offering up a safe space for openly sharing).

“It is so important for someone to be able to identify with themselves, and understand themselves to their entirety before they even start putting themselves into these certain spaces, being able to know who they are, and accept themselves and know who they are is valid.”



Learn about intentional ways of communicating with, and strategies for offering support to youth with different kinds of circumstances (i.e. physical and mental disabilities, gang violence victims, etc.).

Role-play relevant scenarios of microaggressions to help equip youth and young adults with a “toolkit” of knowledge for encountering those situations when they arise.

“[With my therapist] we would do roleplay and switch roles, and ask people in our groups like “oh, how would you have responded?” And I find that hearing the perspective of other people also adds more tools to the toolbox of like “oh, I would have never thought to like say that to him.”

Do not depend on historically marginalized communities to educate you. Be aware of current events: educate yourself and continue to educate yourself through the basis of your own labor and not marginalized communities.

“Recent shootings like Breonna Taylor, or George Floyd, or things like that are major triggers to individuals in the BIPOC community. And so somebody might want to talk to their YPS about it. And if they're like, “oh, well, what happened?” it's also a trigger for them to have to repeat, or share the story.”

Normalize sharing your pronouns with youth, asking youth that you work with for their pronouns and explaining the concept when necessary.

Approach your work and clients with relatability and authenticity, and be kind!

“Something that I've seen happen to friends is kind of like, their experiences they felt were not validated by a YPS worker, and they just dove right into trying to solve the issue, but then it was like ‘okay, wait.’ So I just think we're treating this as a problem and not an actual thing that's happening.”



Encourage and support youth you serve to explore identity struggles through creative expression. This could be through creative thinking or creative endeavors.

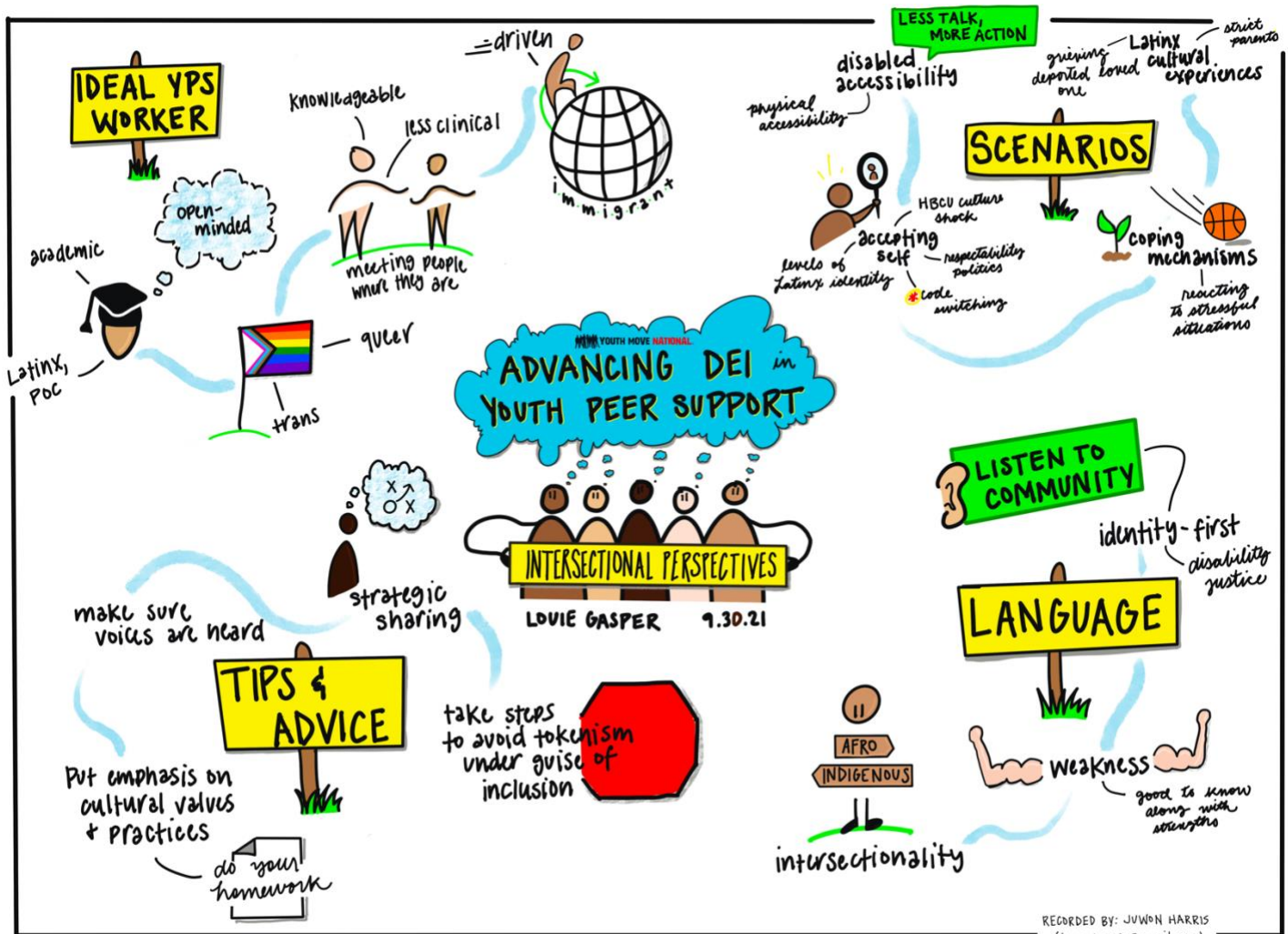
Know how to discuss identity struggles and discoveries as they pertain to your own experience and be an empathetic listener for when they do not.

“Someone who knows how to talk to people about people who struggle with their identities [is helpful] because I think I needed that for the longest time. And I feel like if I definitely had that, with my counselor, or my peer support, it would have helped me out a lot more with what I was going through.”



When creating spaces for youth engagement, actively take steps to avoid tokenistic or decorative practices. Put in the work to ensure diverse voices are heard.

“[Consider the question] ‘Am I actually making attempts to make the space more inclusive?’ Or is the organization broadly that you work for tokenizing young people, right?”



RECORDED BY: JUWON HARRIS (juwonharris@gmail.com)

Put an emphasis on learning and respecting the cultural values and practices of the people that you work with (this could require a little homework).



“Help [youth] explore their culture, what they believe in, what their family believes, and what kind of country they come from, like... what is it that they would like to identify as, or kind of like identity they would like to have, because in the end, they choose who they want to be.”

Challenge the ways that youth may perceive their own weakness by encouraging a growth mindset. It’s important to support youth in identifying areas for personal growth, and acknowledge perceived weakness as an opportunity for personal improvement.

“Knowing yourself, and knowing what you're not great at, is going to be able to improve the way that you operate in different spaces, and the way that you're able to approach different scenarios and situations.”

Assist youth and young adults with identifying triggers and room for improvement for healthier habits and introduce/encourage healthy coping skills.

“Be realistic, push your person to make the right choices, but do not set goals that are too high for the situation at hand.”

Actively incorporating perspectives and feedback from youth with intersectional lived experiences is imperative to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within Youth Peer Support services and beyond. We must elevate these voices across all youth-serving efforts.

What conversations are you having?

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