

LGBTQ+ YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

“Clearing Out the Fog”

**Presented by
Montrose Grace Place
Kenny Easley
Youth Voices Empowered members**



Presentation Overview

This workshop will discuss homelessness through the lens of LGBTQ+ youth and their intersecting identities (e.g. race, foster care experience, juvenile justice, etc.). Presenters will highlight reasons why young people become unhoused, issues unhoused youth face, and how to support the goal of ending LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness through building resilience among these youth, amplifying their voices in decision making, and putting our pride as service providers to the side to create impact.

Speakers:

Courtney Sellers, Executive Director

**Kenny Casley,
Youth Programs Manager**

&

YVE MEMBERS

Nadeem Justice,

Edwin Jones,

**Stephen Navarro,
Brandon Williams**



Grace
Place
FOOD. FRIENDS. HOPE.

Why do young people experience homelessness?



Foster Care



- **Every year in Texas, more than 1,200 young adults age out of the foster care system without being adopted. Rates of a history of foster care were very high among LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness, especially among youth who reported current homelessness.**
- **One quarter end up unhoused LGBTQIA+ youth who reported past housing instability or current homelessness had nearly six times greater odds of reporting that they had been in foster care at any point in their life, compared to LGBTQIA+ youth who did not report any housing instability.**

**Less than 3% graduated
with bachelor's degrees**

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>



Familial Rejection

- **Family conflict about youths' LGBTQIA+ identities was a factor in this housing instability, with 40% of youth who said they had been kicked out and 55% of youth who said they had run away or been abandoned reporting that it had been due to mistreatment or fear of mistreatment related to their LGBTQIA+ identity.**
- **Among those who had experienced housing instability, (54%) reported that they had been homeless in the past, (47%) reported that they had been kicked out, and (56%) reported that they had run away or been abandoned.**
- **LGBTQ youth who reported past housing instability or current homelessness had more than three times greater odds of ever being physically threatened or abused due to their sexual orientation or, among transgender and non-binary identity, gender identity**

Income inequality/Poverty

- **LGBTQIA+ youth of color are at particular risk of family homelessness due to the COVID-19 pandemic, given that Black and Hispanic households are more likely to be behind on housing payments due to pandemic-related economic disruptions.**
- **Secondly, LGBTQIA+ youth already living away from their families are also vulnerable to the economic disaster from the pandemic. Job losses due to the pandemic were concentrated among low-paid industries, eliminating many of the entry-level jobs that young adults rely on to start their careers and maintain stable housing.**
- **Decreased access to jobs that pay a living wage may place LGBTQIA+ youth at increased risk of homelessness.**





What are some issues faced by homeless youth?

Stigma from Society

- **People who experience homelessness endure personal and economic hardship as well as discrimination and exclusion. The stigmas surrounding homelessness are reflected in the way society, lawmakers, police, and the health care system interact with people experiencing homelessness.**
- **People experiencing homelessness are ignored, isolated, exploited, or even become victims of violence. These issues create even more barriers to stable housing and employment and worsen mental health issues. To avoid being stigmatized, some individuals who are experiencing homelessness keep their housing status secret.**
- **There is a belief that people experiencing homelessness had a choice in the matter, and they chose homelessness. Because of this false premise, some areas have passed “anti-homeless” laws that criminalize people sitting or loitering in public spaces. These laws keep homeless people out of sight and deprive them of access to basic medical and social services that could improve their lives.**



Substance use and Abuse

- **Experiencing homelessness or housing instability is associated with a number of safety risks for LGBTQ youth. For example, with the exception of marijuana use, LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to report drug use compared to their straight, cisgender peers experiencing homelessness.**
- **This substance use increases LGBTQ youths' risk of violence. For example, LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness report higher incidences of being injured or having sex when they did not want to because of substance use**
- **Drug use is a common approach to numbing the daily experiences of life on the street and alleviating the stress of street life and the negative emotional effects of traumatic experiences . The stress resulting from sleeping outdoors and in public places may be alleviated or eased by using drugs and alcohol to keep warm and suppress hunger. Some drugs are used to help these young people stay awake for extended periods, especially at night when the chances of victimization increase**

Trafficking & Assault

- **LGBTQ youth who reported past housing instability or current homelessness had more than three times greater odds of being physically threatened or abused due to their sexual orientation in the last year compared to LGBTQ youth with no reported housing instability.**
- **Fourteen percent of transgender and nonbinary respondents who had never experienced housing instability reported being threatened or abused due to their gender identity in the last year, compared to 34% of transgender and nonbinary youth who reported past housing instability and 39% of transgender and nonbinary youth who were currently homeless.**
- **Youth who reported past housing instability or current homelessness had greater odds of being threatened or abused due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, having a history of foster care, and having experienced food insecurity in the last month.**

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>

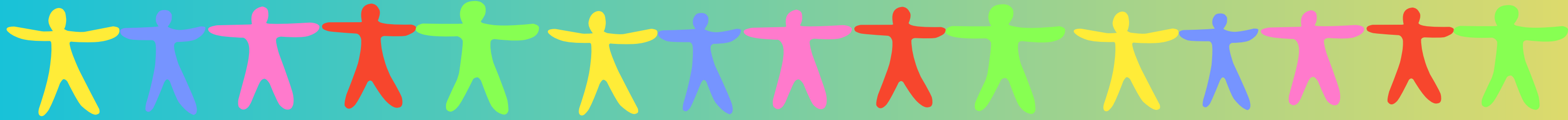


What are ways to help END youth homelessness?

Housing First

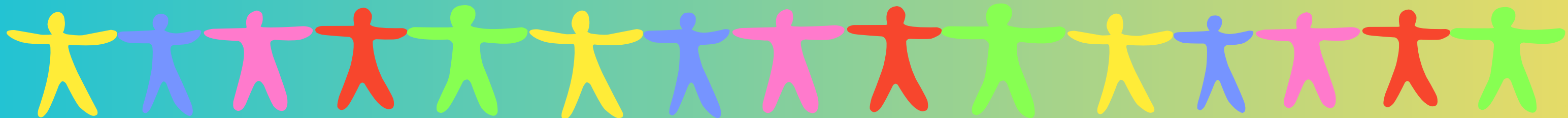
- **More funding should be allocated for safe, low-barrier housing programs which can have an immediate positive impact on LGBTQ youth experiencing housing instability.**
- **Additionally, shelter and housing facilities should provide LGBTQ cultural competency training to all staff to ensure that LGBTQ clients are treated with dignity and respect.**
- **Funding should also be increased for programs such as Section 8, which provides vouchers that can be used to subsidize clients' rent. Section 8 vouchers are in high demand with long wait lists in many American metropolitan areas. Increasing the funding and availability of this program, as well as limiting barriers to accessing these vouchers and also incentivize landlords to accept them, would increase the effectiveness of this popular housing service.**





Prioritizing family Reunification/ Mentorship Opportunities

- **Family conflict around youths' LGBTQ identities is a driving factor in LGBTQ youth homelessness, developing family counseling or mediation programs may be effective at decreasing conflict and keeping LGBTQ youth in their homes and connected to their families. Such programs should be mindful of youths' safety as some families are not open to changing their ideas about LGBTQ people and are not safe to engage in counseling or mediation.**



Prioritizing family Reunification/ Mentorship Opportunities



- **Preserving connections with family networks can help LGBTQIA+ youth maintain stable housing, as they can have more adults to rely on for emotional, logistical, and economic support.**
- **Research from the Family Acceptance Project shows that many parents reject their child's LGBTQIA+ identity because they fear the homophobia and transphobia their child may experience in society (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).**
- **Reaching out to these families to educate them about LGBTQIA+ identities and the safe, fulfilling lives that their children can lead as openly LGBTQIA+ people may help them become more understanding and accepting.**

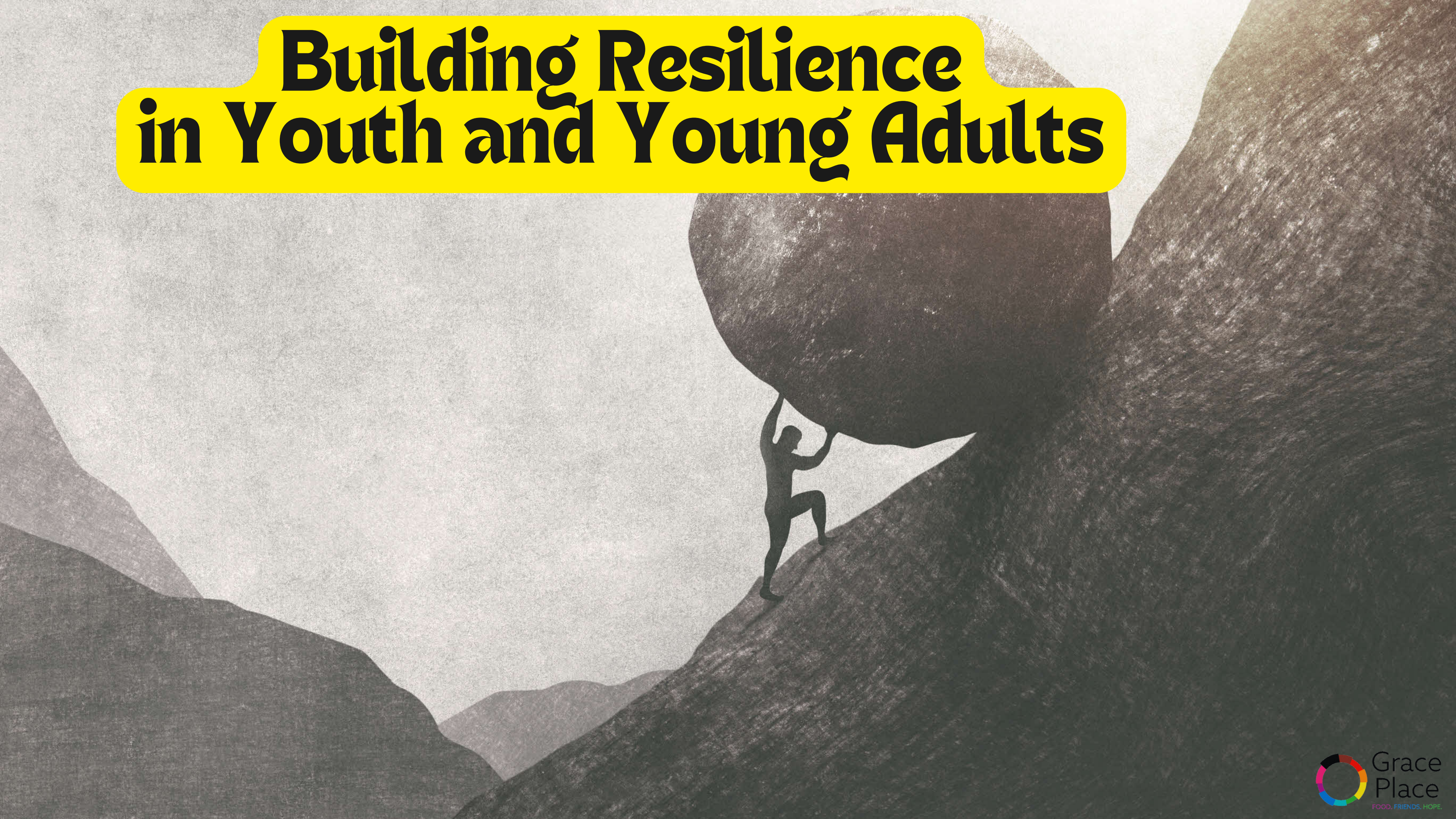


Ensuring Education and Employment Opportunities.



- **It is important to consider ways that LGBTQ youth homelessness can be prevented. Strong anti-discrimination policies in the workplace and strong anti-bullying and harassment policies in schools can be effective in helping LGBTQ youth stay connected to school and employment, increasing their skills and future earnings, and making it easier for them to maintain stable housing.**
- **Entry-level jobs that pay a living wage are particularly important for LGBTQ youth who are more likely to begin their careers without the support of their families. Local, state, and national authorities should also institute policies to increase the stock of affordable housing in their communities and subsidize the construction of new housing or renovation of existing housing properties.**
- **In the area of employment law, beneficial policies can include: requiring employers to pay a living wage, provide health insurance, and offer paid sick leave. Quality jobs with adequate pay and benefits allow people to maintain stable housing and promote better physical and mental health.**

Building Resilience in Youth and Young Adults





Take Action

- **Collecting more accurate data about LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness and housing instability will allow researchers, policymakers, and housing service providers to make more informed decisions about how to prevent and confront LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness.**
- **Providers should also ensure that all mental health services that they offer or refer youth to are LGBTQIA+ culturally competent to ensure that youth will feel comfortable using the services.**
- **Providing in-house mental health services at emergency shelters, offering transportation vouchers to young people to get to mental health appointments, and providing low-cost or free mental health care would decrease these barriers and allow more LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness to benefit from the mental health care that they want.**

Take care of Yourself

- **Practicing self-care can be an antidote to burnout, which is a combination of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion. While employees in many fields experience burnout, social service professionals are particularly susceptible because of the high levels of empathy required by their jobs.**
- **Self-care is a way for social service professionals to balance activities and preserve longevity and happiness in both their relationships and their careers. To do this, they need to accept that it is OK — and actually essential — to put their needs first.**
- **The key to preventing burnout is to reduce the stress levels in your life. One way to do this is by setting short-term goals. Break down your responsibilities to small, attainable chunks or take on a new skill. For social service professionals, the goal is simple: Don't give up on your clients.**

Building Healthy Connections

- **With the help of a peer support specialist youth can learn ways to stay connected with friends and family in a healthy way. Most YYA who have experienced homelessness feel either counted out or given up on. With the youth having access to mental health services and a mentor they can build healthy strong relationships within their lives.**
- **Building resilience in youth can inspire them to advocate for other homeless youth. This practice can lead youth to build relationships with others that may need help as well as helping themselves.**
- **Attentinding mentoring programs help youth point themselves in the right direction and can possibly help start a new career for YYA in the future. These types of outcomes are needed when talking about Youth Voice in social work. Adding youth voice in the work that we do allows us to prepare for innovation and it allows the youth to tell us what they need while feeling support from someone with the same lived experience.**

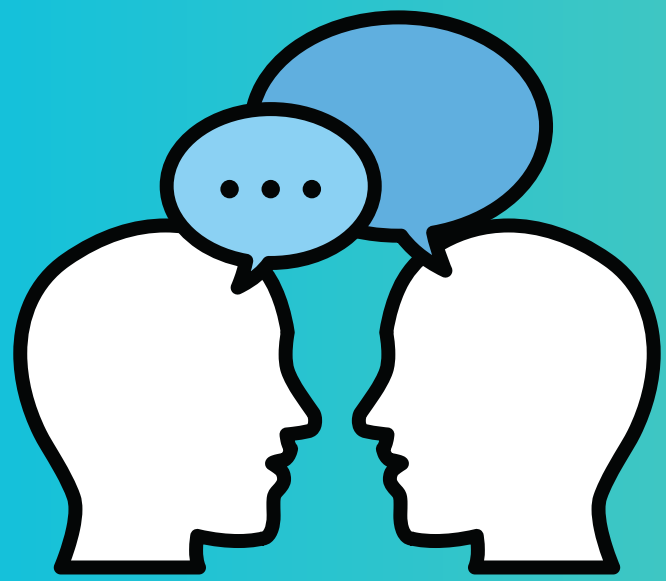


A diverse group of young adults, including men and women of various ethnicities, are standing on a set of stairs. They are all wearing black t-shirts and appear to be singing or shouting with enthusiasm, with their mouths open and eyes closed. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with large windows. A large yellow banner with the text "Amplifying Voices" is overlaid across the center of the image.

Amplifying Voices

Create Youth Advocacy Groups

- **Youth Voice is the knowledge, perspectives and experiences of young people, and is an essential element of any organization that works with youth. When you begin integrating Youth Voice into programming, it is imperative that youth have a safe place to share their thoughts, input and opinions. Listen to their ideas related to projects and activities, and actually use them!**
- **When you are using the Strategic Prevention framework to plan your next prevention project, invite your Youth Advisory Board to join in! Youth can provide valuable feedback and insights related to the project while also gaining knowledge about how to take a project from start to finish.**
- **This is a great way for them to see plans turn into reality! Youth are also excellent resources to help you find additional funding sources to sustain programming as several scholarships and grants ask for youth writers. Have Youth Advisory Board members research funding opportunities and, if appropriate, involve them in the application process. These strategies have helped us to establish an effective, creative and beneficial Youth Advisory Board within our organization.**



Host Listening Sessions

- **Having listening sessions will allow youth to get an understanding of what exactly they are standing for and it will allow them to advocate for themselves and for others.**
- **Allowing youth to participate in listening sessions will put them in a position to do and see more within the community.**

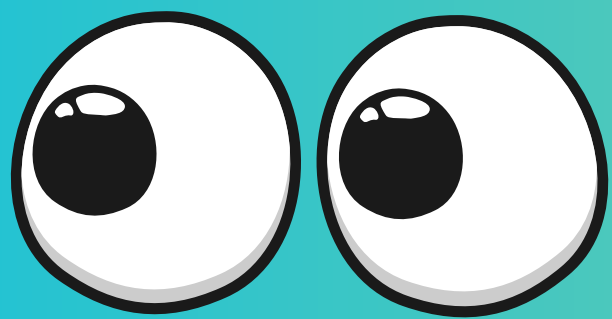


Promote Youth-Led Projects

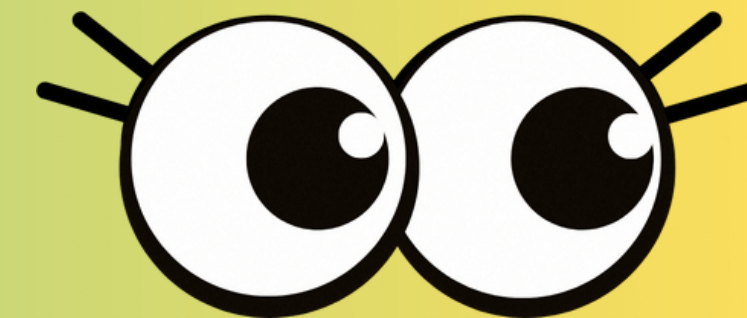
- **Youth involvement can benefit organizations and their programs as well as the youth themselves. Programs that are developed in partnership with youth are more likely to be effective at engaging the population and, therefore, to have a greater impact.**
- **Involving youth as partners in making decisions that affect them increases the likelihood that the decisions will be accepted, adopted, and become part of their everyday lives. In addition, empowering youth to identify and respond to community needs helps them become empathetic, reflective individuals, setting them on a course to potentially continue this important work in their future.**
- **Meaningful youth engagement views youth as equal partners with adults in the decision-making process. Programs and activities are developed with youth, rather than for youth. In this kind of equal partnership, both adults and young people need to be fully engaged, open to change in how things are done, and share a unified vision for the partnership.**

**Pride to the
side...**





Be Aware



- **Collecting more accurate data about LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness and housing instability will allow researchers, policymakers, and housing service providers to make more informed decisions about how to prevent and confront LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness.**
- **Being aware is making sure to meet the youth where they are. It can be hard to fully understand what a youth could be going through. Making sure they have the opportunity to be heard and to be cared for is what makes the youth feel acknowledged and could result in them engaging more.**
- **Showing up and putting pride aside is needed more when working with homeless youth. The youth want to be treated as people with feelings just as any other person would so us as Service Providers need to remember we are working with the future not math problems.**



Ask the right Questions



- **Asking the right questions is essential when it comes to working with YYA. The overall goal is provide resources for the YYA, not to trigger them, make them feel less than, or to exploit them. We have to take the initiative to help be the change YYA want to see.**
- **Making assumptions is not a good idea when dealing with homeless youth. You must be open to hearing different lifestyles while also understanding that everyone is different and not everyone's walk of life is the same.**





Listen don't talk

SHHH!

- **Youth and young adults need to be heard in order for their needs to be met. Listening is very important when trying to understand how to help YYA specific needs. It is possible to get wrapped up in the work, it's just a matter of taking a breath and realizing the end goal.**
- **Allowing YYA to advocate for themselves will help them feel better supported in the things they are doing. Having a support system can take away the anxiety and stigma that was placed on them by society and put them in spaces where they feel appreciated and cared for.**
- **When working with at risk youth it is important to give reassurance when asking questions and talking to them generally.**

SHHH!

Q and A's

