The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Youth Engagement Guidance:

Strategies, Tools, and Tips for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement in Federal Government-Sponsored Meetings and Events

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Youth Engagement Guidance:

Strategies, Tools, and Tips for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement in Federal Government-Sponsored Meetings and Events

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Mental Health Services

Disclaimer
The views, opinions, and content of this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of SAMHSA or HHS. This publication contains non-Federal resources to provide additional information to consumers. The views and content in those resources have not been formally approved by SAMHSA or HHS. Listing of the resources is not an endorsement by HHS or its components.

Public Domain Notice
All material appearing in this report is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA. Citation of the source is appreciated. However, this publication may not be reproduced or distributed for a fee without the specific, written authorization of the Office of Communications, SAMHSA, HHS.

Electronic Access and Printed Copies
This publication may be downloaded or ordered at http://store.samhsa.gov. Or call SAMHSA at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español).

Recommended Citation
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Youth Engagement Guidance: Strategies, Tools, and Tips for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement in Federal Government-Sponsored Meetings and Events. HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4985. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016.

Originating Office
Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857. HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4985. Printed 2016.

Table of Contents

I. Purpose of the Guidance....5

II. Goals and Strategies for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement....6

III. Tools and Resources for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement....7

Youth Engagement Checklist for Government Representative....8
Youth Engagement Agreement....12
Individual Support Plan....15
Strategic Sharing....18
Travel Information Form....19
Travel Guide....22
Youth Feedback Form....23

IV. Tips for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement: Before, During, and After the Event....25

General Tips....25
Tips for Before the Event....26
Tips for During the Event....27
Tips for After the Event....28

V. Appendices....30

Appendix A: Government Representative Checklist....31
Appendix B: Youth Engagement Agreement....35
Appendix C: Individual Support Plan....39
Appendix D: Travel Information Form....44
Appendix E: Youth Feedback Form....48

VI. Acknowledgments....51

I. Purpose of the Guidance

The purpose of this Guidance is to provide federal staff and contractors with strategies, tools, and tips for appropriately engaging youth in government-sponsored events and meetings in order to:

- Help ensure a positive, supportive, and meaningful experience for youth
- Support SAMHSA in gaining valuable input and perspectives from youth
- Demonstrate and role model best practices for engaging youth

Given these three primary objectives, this Guidance has been broken into different sections. Three broad goals are outlined in the first section, including strategies for each goal. The goals and strategies in this section are centered on informing an agency's policies and practices to create an environment where supported youth engagement is a practice. The second section introduces tools and resources for government representatives to fully implement and model youth engagement. These tools were either developed or adapted by SAMHSA staff with the assistance of youth advocates from across the country. They were tailored specifically for use by government representatives who are interested in engaging youth. The third section provides important tips for government representatives to use for successful engagement of youth before, during, and after government-sponsored events.

The appendices provide printable sample documents and resources, including an easy-to-use checklist for government representatives that organizes the resources and provides a step-by-step approach to model effective youth engagement. Government representatives are encouraged to use these documents or adapt them for use when engaging youth. All outside resources are cited and government representatives are encouraged to download these resources for themselves and the youth they are working with.

In line with Youth.gov (the federal website created by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, which is composed of representatives from 18 federal agencies that support programs and services focusing on youth), this Guidance defines youth as young people between the ages of 16 and 24. However, this Guidance can and should also be used when engaging with young adults or those younger than 16.

This Guidance focuses on youth engagement as it pertains to federal government-sponsored meetings, events, and activities. It is important to note that youth engagement encompasses a continuum of intervention, development, collective empowerment, and systemic change. This continuum includes a youth services approach, youth development, youth leadership, civic engagement, and youth organizing. A Forum for Youth Investment paper entitled "The Core Principles for Engaging Young People in Community Change" (2007) provides insight into this continuum. In this paper, three core strengths and eight core principles of youth engagement are proposed. The three core strengths are: (1) Capacity ("knowledge, leadership, and action skills"); (2) Motivation ("understanding and awareness of issues and root causes, systems and strengths for change, commitment, and a sense of responsibility"); and (3) Opportunity ("chances to act on passions, use skills, and generate change through relevant sustained action"). The eight principles are: (1) design an aggressive outreach strategy; (2) create a strong home base; (3) identify core issues; (4) convey an intentional philosophy; (5) create youth/adult teams; (6) build youth and adult capacity; (7) provide individual support; and (8) sustain access and influence.[1]

As the research behind positive youth development and engagement grows, the resources and strategies to fully and effectively engage the youth will likely change. This Guidance includes the best ideas known to SAMHSA as of January 2016.

II. Goals and Strategies for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement

Goal 1: Prioritize gaining youth perspectives to inform programs, policies, and practices.

Strategy 1.A.: All relevant activities, meetings, and events incorporate meaningful youth input.

Strategy 1.B.: All youth-related programs, policies, and practices provide evidence of having been informed by the perspective of youth with relevant life experience.

Goal 2: Develop an agency-wide culture that is inclusive and respectful of youth.

Strategy 2.A.: Youth engagement practices continually incorporate youth feedback and input.

Strategy 2.B.: All relevant activities, meetings, and events use this Guidance and its appended tools and resources during the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases.

Strategy 2.C.: All leadership, staff, and contractors receive copies of this Guidance, including tools and resources, and participate in training events to facilitate agency-wide implementation.

Goal 3: Adopt best practices for youth engagement in activities, meetings, and events. All designated government representatives engaging youth shall:

Strategy 3.A.: Complete the Government Representative Checklist for Youth Engagement beginning no less than two months prior to the activity, meeting, or event and no more than two months after.

Strategy 3.B.: Employ the Youth Engagement Agreement and complete the outlined roles and responsibilities.

Strategy 3.C.: Provide youth with a sample Individual Support Plan and encourage them to use it.

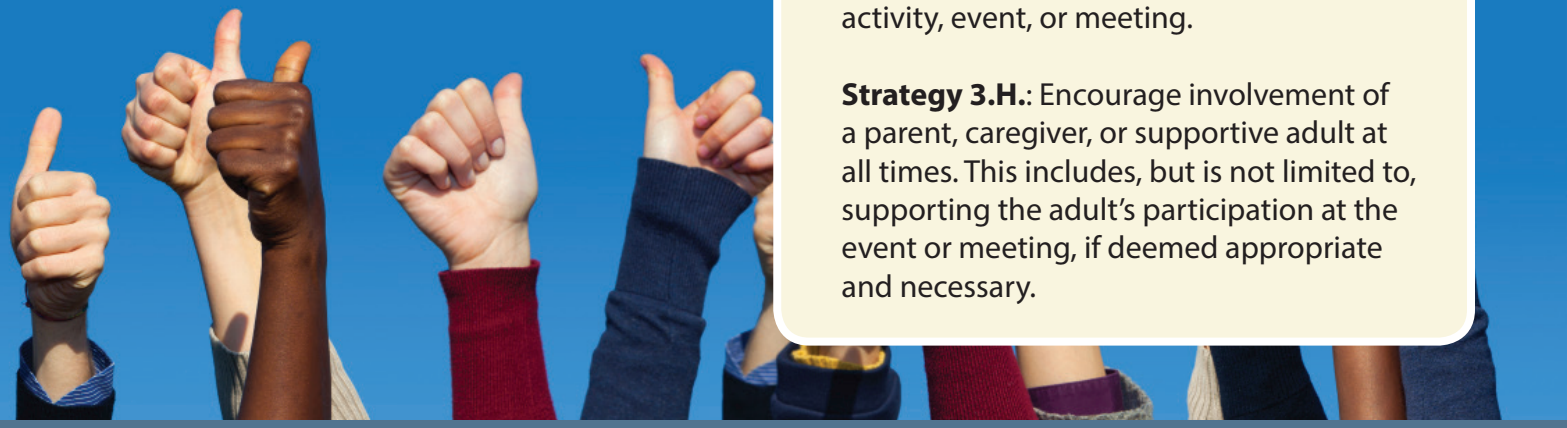
Strategy 3.D.: Inform youth that there may be tax implications for any payments they may receive for their participation and encourage them to speak to a tax professional, if needed.

Strategy 3.E.: Provide youth with resources about Strategic Sharing.

Strategy 3.F.: Provide information and support to make travel arrangements, including an emergency contact should there be any travel-related problems.

Strategy 3.G.: Employ supportive strategies as outlined in this Guidance during the activity, event, or meeting.

Strategy 3.H.: Encourage involvement of a parent, caregiver, or supportive adult at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, supporting the adult's participation at the event or meeting, if deemed appropriate and necessary.

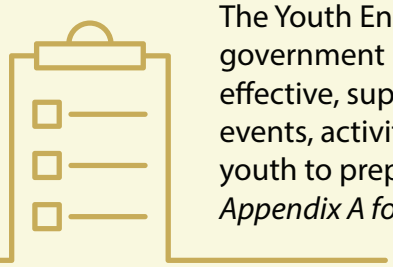


III. Tools and Resources for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement

Engaging youth effectively requires commitment, compassion, and focused attention from the early planning stages through several months following the event. Youth engagement can be one of the most rewarding and professionally enriching experiences a federal employee or contractor can have. Youth sharing their experiences and perspectives can only deepen an agency's understanding of the impact of its work. When youth are brought to the table with decision makers in a meaningful way, they can provide a direct link to how well the agency is addressing the needs of the population it serves. SAMHSA's mission, for example, is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. Through engaging youth consumers, SAMHSA can better identify service access issues, gaps in service delivery, and successful programs, as well as strategies for how to better serve youth to meet its mission.

The following tools and resources are intended to support the government representative in engaging youth. This representative may be a federal employee or contractor, as determined by the meeting planner.

Tool 1: Youth Engagement Checklist for Government Representative



The Youth Engagement Checklist details specific steps in an easy-to-use format for the government representative responsible for engaging youth. The checklist ensures the most effective, supportive, and safe processes for youth engagement in SAMHSA-sponsored events, activities, and meetings. All the recommended steps are covered, including inviting youth to preparing for travel, providing on-site support, and conducting follow-up. *See Appendix A for a printable version of the Government Representative Checklist.*

Youth Engagement Checklist for Government Representative

Before the Event: Invitations and Preparation

Identify and invite youth participants.

- ☑ Identify youth with relevant lived experience and with varied advocacy skill levels (i.e., avoid overburdening experienced speakers with multiple invitations; encourage emerging youth leaders).
- ☑ Identify an adult in each youth's life who can support his or her preparation and who will accompany the youth to the meeting if the youth is under 18 years of age, or if the youth is 18 or over and requests such support.
- ☑ Inform the youth and supportive adult about the meeting's purpose, anticipated audience, draft agenda, location, and dates. Include a clear description of the youth's specific role and other expectations (e.g., attend and respond to other parts of the meeting).
- ☑ Clearly detail why the youth has been invited (e.g., to present his or her personal experience, not just stories, as someone who has been in foster care, has been in juvenile justice, or identifies as LGBTQ; to provide a youth perspective about a policy or practice; to provide recommendations about future actions).

Send a "resource packet" to the youth and the identified adult supporter. Include a:

- ☑ Cover letter summarizing the invitation: youth's role, meeting's purpose, agenda, audience, location, dates, and options for a supportive adult
- ☑ Copy of the *Strategic Sharing Workbook* (2012), produced by the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health and the Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures
- ☑ Copy of the National Resource Center for Youth Development's *Travel Guide* (2011)
- ☑ Copy of the Sample Individual Support Plan
- ☑ Copy of the Youth Engagement Agreement

Convene a telephone call with each identified youth and supportive adult at a time that is convenient to them (i.e., not during school or work hours) and sufficiently far in advance of the meeting or event. During this call:

- ☑ Review the details of the invitation.
- ☑ Reiterate the specific reasons for this invitation and ensure the youth is comfortable sharing his or her life experience publicly.
- ☑ Highlight and review the *Strategic Sharing Workbook*.
- ☑ Facilitate the youth's preparation for the event (e.g., convene a conference call with four youth participants to jointly plan the session, or call each youth individually to discuss the round table process and how they will participate).

- ☑ Highlight and review the *Travel Guide*; assess comfort level and if there are any specific needs.
- ☑ Explain logistical details, to include:
    - Honorarium
        - Ask the youth's preference for how this will be paid (e.g., the youth may not have a bank account and would prefer a gift card)
    - Per diem
    - How and when to make travel arrangements
- ☑ Highlight and review the Individual Support Plan template.
- ☑ Discuss details and youth options in the Youth Engagement Agreement.
- ☑ Answer questions.

Convene a preparation call with all youth participants at a time convenient to them (i.e., not during school or work hours). During this call:

- ☑ Introduce yourself and invite the youth to introduce themselves to one another.
- ☑ Introduce the panel or meeting youth co-facilitator, if there is one.
- ☑ Review, again, the purpose and anticipated audience for the meeting.
- ☑ Review, again, the reason these youth have been invited and their role(s).
- ☑ Review the agenda and each topic area in detail, helping the youth identify issues they may want to raise during the meeting.
- ☑ Invite each youth to share his or her thoughts, ideas, and suggestions for the presentation.
- ☑ Assess the need for and schedule, as needed, follow-up planning calls to ensure the youth are as prepared and comfortable as possible.
- ☑ Describe who might be in the audience (e.g., government officials, treatment and service providers and practitioners, press).
- ☑ Discuss how to dress for the event.
- ☑ Answer any questions related to event, travel arrangements, and other processes.
- ☑ Provide a contact number for questions or concerns that may arise during preparation.

Make all travel arrangements.

- ☑ Advise the youth and supportive adult of deadlines for making travel arrangements, and give them the travel agent's contact information.
- ☑ Provide the travel agent with information about how to reach the youth and supportive adult during non-school or work hours and any relevant details (e.g., they will need a hotel room at the airport the night before an early departure, because they live many hours from the airport; arrange with the hotel to avoid asking for a credit card for incidentals, if needed).
- ☑ Request that the travel agent copy you on reservations for information that is to be included in the Travel Information Form.
- ☑ Arrange and prepay ground transportation between the airport or train station and hotel (the youth may not have a credit card or enough cash to pay for a taxi).
- ☑ Ensure, either directly with the hotel or through the meeting contractor, that the hotel will not require a credit card or debit card for check-in (the meeting contractor or the supportive adult may have to assume responsibility in the event of damages; e.g., someone smokes in the room or breaks a lamp).
- ☑ Secure an emergency contact for the youth and supportive adult in the event one is needed during travel (e.g., missed or cancelled flights, illness).
- ☑ Send the youth and supportive adult their personal logistical information in one combined Travel Information Form.

Upon arrival, convene an informal and comfortable meeting.

- ☑ Check in on the youth's travel experience and respond to any challenges that may have arisen.
- ☑ Provide the youth with per diem in cash equivalent form, if applicable (i.e., American Express gift or Visa cash cards that can be used as cash while they are traveling).
- ☑ Review any changes or updates to the agenda, audience, etc.
- ☑ Review key expectations as articulated in the Youth Engagement Agreement.
- ☑ Discuss specific roles, presentations, anticipated discussions, and any other activities.
- ☑ Help formulate key points the youth wants to make.
- ☑ Provide materials in order for him or her to make notes to use during the meeting.
- ☑ Facilitate discussion about any possible differences or disagreements the youth may have about the issues they will be discussing—make sure these don't catch them by surprise during their presentation. Help them develop strategies for managing their differences or "agreeing to disagree" in ways that preserve everyone's dignity.
- ☑ Address any personal challenges (e.g., anxiety).

Before the presentation or meeting:

- ☑ Take the youth to see the room in which he or she will be presenting.
- ☑ Introduce the youth to audio-visual staff and make sure he or she is comfortable with microphones, lights, laptop, LCD projectors, and so on.
- ☑ Introduce the youth to time keepers and make sure he or she can see the cue cards.
- ☑ Introduce the youth to the session's facilitator.
- ☑ Ensure the youth's supportive adult and/or designated staff are where the youth expects them to be and that they understand cues from one another (e.g., youth should speak louder or youth needs a break).

During the presentation or meeting:

- ☑ Request presenters, facilitators, and participants refrain from using acronyms.
- ☑ Advise facilitators to allow sidebars and avoid calling attention to them. Either sit with the youth or be sure someone is close by who can explain context and answer his or her questions throughout the proceedings.
- ☑ Check in with the youth during breaks to answer questions and respond to his or her needs.

After the presentation or meeting:

- ☑ Help the youth avoid difficult or inappropriate questions (e.g., from audience members, press).
- ☑ Introduce the youth to individuals with whom he or she may network in the future (e.g., to build his or her own skills or to speak at other events).

Before the youth departs for home:

- ☑ Thank the youth for his or her participation, reminding him or her of its value to the meeting participants and to SAMHSA.
- ☑ Provide honorarium or stipend in the requested format.
- ☑ Provide the Youth Feedback Form with pre-addressed, stamped envelope.
- ☑ Ensure the youth has all necessary travel plans and information to travel home.

After the Event

Convene a follow-up call at a convenient time (i.e., not during school or work hours).

- ☑ Provide feedback to the youth presenters, highlighting points they got across and the value they added to the event.
- ☑ Ask for and listen to their feedback, concerns, and recommendations.
- ☑ Help them identify areas for improvement for future presentations.

Provide a letter or certificate of appreciation.

- ☑ Include a thank-you letter or certificate of appreciation with a descriptive paragraph of the youth's contribution (i.e., a descriptive paragraph that might be included in his or her resume).

Tool 2: Youth Engagement Agreement

The Youth Engagement Agreement (YEA) is a non-binding document that clearly outlines the roles, responsibilities, and obligations as agreed upon by the youth and government representative. The YEA offers an opportunity to specify the honorarium or stipend to be paid to the youth for his or her participation; expenses that will be covered (e.g., lodging, ground transportation, meals); and how each will be paid (e.g., hotels directly billed to the contractor, checks issued before or after a meeting, cash provided on site). Further, the YEA is a vehicle to allow the youth to document how his or her name is to be used in any public documentation and the gender by which he or she prefers to be referenced. The YEA can also be referenced, as needed, throughout the engagement to ensure complete understanding of roles and responsibilities and provide a record of important contact information.

It is recommended the government representative complete this with the youth and his or her supportive adult early in the engagement. *See Appendix B for a printable version of the Youth Engagement Agreement.*

Youth Engagement Agreement

An agreement between the youth participant and a government representative, which may be either a SAMHSA employee or contractor, as determined by the meeting planners.

This document represents the agreements made between the youth participant and the government agency/representative for a particular event. Since events often differ it is important to do an agreement for each event separately. The government representative should review with the youth participant the information contained within this agreement.

John King

[Name of Youth or Young Adult]

and

Brad Jones, Government Contractor

[Government Representative and Agency]

for

Youth Summit

[Name of Meeting or Event]

Atlanta, GA - July 7th & 8th

[Location and Dates of Meeting or Event]

Important Note to Youth Participant

This is a nonbinding (i.e., not legal) agreement about your participation in a government-sponsored event. This is a reference document to record the agreements between you and the government representative.

Confidentiality Notice
Information you share during this meeting or in your presentation will not be confidential. Confidential means that something will be kept secret. Carefully consider what information about your life experiences you will share. A guide about strategic sharing will be provided to help you think about this and make careful decisions about what to share. If at any time you feel you do not want to share something, do not. You are not obligated to answer any questions about your personal story.

Ask the government representative for clear details.

- Who will hear what I have to say?
- What recording will be made (e.g., meeting notes, video)?
- What documentation of my participation will exist (e.g., meeting announcements, webinars, agendas, photographs)?

The Agreements
SAMHSA is committed to ensuring that youth who participate in agency-sponsored events have a meaningful and safe experience, and are well informed, logistically supported, and well prepared. In order to achieve this goal, it is suggested that the government representative and the youth participant consider and adhere to the following.

In general, the government representative will:

- Explain the meeting's purpose, agenda, audience, location, and dates
- Explain options for a supportive adult to accompany you
- Provide information to help you prepare, including:
    - Guidance about strategic sharing
    - Guidance about travel
    - An Individual Support Plan template
- Explain how information gathered during the event will be used
- Provide (if requested) your supportive adult with the costs of registration, travel, lodging, and per diem (i.e., money to cover meals and incidental expenses) for the event
- Secure your emergency contact in the event there are problems such as delayed flights
- Provide you with travel, lodging, and per diem (i.e., money to cover meals and incidental expenses) for the event
- Provide you with a stipend or honorarium (i.e., payment for your services) in the amount of $ 500
- Help you prepare to participate by hosting planning calls, sending materials and information about the event, etc.
- Be available to you during the event
- Debrief with you after the event

In general, the youth or participant will:

- Request to have my name listed as J. King, Youth Advocate, both during the event and in documents and reports that could be made available on the Internet
- Request to be referred to as (preferred pronoun) He/Him/His, both during the event and in documents and reports that could be made available on the Internet

- Participate in planning calls with the government representative and any other presenters as requested
- Attend to personal well-being and use an Individual Support Plan (sample template provided)
- Not engage in anything illegal while traveling for and participating in this event
- Show respect for the views and opinions of others and use professional conduct
- Provide feedback to the government representative about the experience after the event is over

Important Contact Information:

Youth Participant's Address, Email, and Phone

John King, 123 Main Street

John.King@email.com

(555) 555-5555

Parent or Legal Guardian's Address, Email, and Phone, if applicable

Mr. Phillip King, 123 Main Street

Phillip.King@email.com

(555) 555-5555

Government Representative's Agency, Name, Address, Email, and Phone

Brad Jones, Government Contractor

Brad.Jones@email.com

(555) 555-1236

Travel Agent's Name, Agency, Address, Email, and Phone

Sherri Smith, Travel One

Sherri.Smith@email.com

(555) 555-0199

Other Relevant Persons' Names, Roles, Addresses, Emails, and Phones

Aunt Jane

Supportive Adult

123 West Avenue

Aunt.Jane@email.com

(555) 555-4567

It is recommended that copies of this completed form be kept by the youth participant, the government representative, and the supportive adult, if applicable.

Tool 3: Individual Support Plan

The Individual Support Plan (ISP) template contains the six essential elements of a safety plan and was developed in collaboration with youth advocates. According to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the six elements that should be included are: (1) known warning signs; (2) known coping strategies; (3) contact information for social relationships that may help to support the youth and/or deter a crisis; (4) contact information for a family member or friend who may help to resolve or de-escalate a crisis; (5) contact information for treatment and service providers and practitioners; and (6) how to maintain a safe environment.

It has become common practice to encourage people with mental and/or substance use disorders to develop safety or support plans in order to proactively prevent or minimize the impact of any emotional crisis. Speaking about one's personal experiences, especially painful ones, or listening to others' experiences can create extreme emotional vulnerability. For example, sharing personal details about one's suicide attempt, talking about experiences of discrimination, or describing one's struggle with sobriety may include memories that are traumatic or may trigger emotional crisis. Public speaking is already considered to be stress inducing for most people, so consider the added pressure youth may experience in addressing such personal and possibly painful topics.

While the youth's use of the ISP template is optional, it is recommended that the government representative provide the youth with a copy and encourage him or her to complete the ISP with his or her parent or supportive adult. *See Appendix C for a printable version of the Individual Support Plan.*

Individual Support Plan

Important Note to Youth Participant
This is an optional but highly recommended tool for you and your parent or supportive adult to use to prevent or resolve any challenges that may occur while traveling or participating in the government-sponsored activity. This plan is intended to help you support and promote your own social and emotional well-being. The information in this plan is strictly for your own use and does not need to be submitted to SAMHSA or any other government agency representative.

My Warning Signs and Coping Strategies
What are my warning signs that tell me my well-being may be of concern? Examples might be feeling anxious, having difficulty breathing, or experiencing disturbing thoughts. What can I or someone else do to help me? Make a list of these signs and strategies below.

My Warning Signs	My Coping Strategies Or Best Ways to Relieve Warning Signs	How Can Someone Else Help Me? Who Can I Reach Out To?
Feeling agitated	Taking a walk	Texting my onsite supportive adult and asking him or her to walk with me
Nervously shaking my leg	Being allowed to leave the situation for a few minutes and talking to my supportive adult	Having the opportunity to call and talk to my peer support provider back home

Who can give me support, hang out with me, or help keep me in a safe environment (e.g., take a walk, watch a movie, stay sober with me)?

Before I travel to the event

Name	Contact
Lisa (friend I trust)	(555) 555-9876 or FaceTime at Lkidstar@email.com
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090
Eric (my peer support provider)	(555) 555-4891

While I am at the event

Name	Contact
Aunt Jane (supportive adult)	(555) 555-4567
Juan (co-presenter)	(555) 555-1347
Lisa (friend I trust)	(555) 555-9876 or FaceTime at Lkidstar@email.com

After I travel home from the event

Name	Contact
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090
Eric (my peer support provider)	(555) 555-4891
Phillip King (father)	(555) 555-5555

Who can help me resolve a crisis?

Before I travel to the event

Name	Contact
Brad Jones (government representative)	(555) 555-1236
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090
Eric (my peer support provider)	(555) 555-4891

While I am at the event

Name	Contact
Aunt Jane (supportive adult)	(555) 555-4567
Eric (my peer support provider)	(555) 555-4891
Lisa (friend I trust)	(555) 555-9876 or FaceTime at Lkidstar@email.com

After I travel home from the event

Name	Contact
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090
Eric (my peer support provider)	(555) 555-4891
Phillip King (father)	(555) 555-5555

Which treatment and service providers or practitioners can I use, if needed?

Before I travel to the event

Name & Agency	Contact
SAMHSA's suicide hotline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090

While I am at the event

Name & Agency	Contact
SAMHSA's suicide hotline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090

After I travel home from the event

Name & Agency	Contact
SAMHSA's suicide hotline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Mr. Anderson (my counselor)	(555) 555-9090

What are important places or experiences for me to avoid in order to protect my well-being (e.g., hotel bar, heavily crowded rooms)?

Before I travel to the event

Places or Experiences to Avoid
Seeing my extended family, as that can be difficult for me and can often cause me to be triggered.

While I am at the event

Places or Experiences to Avoid
Hotel bar or places where peers may be drinking, as I am currently in recovery.

After I travel home from the event

Places or Experiences to Avoid
I should give myself a day to recover and not go straight back to work, as I will likely need a day to rest. I should request this day off in advance.

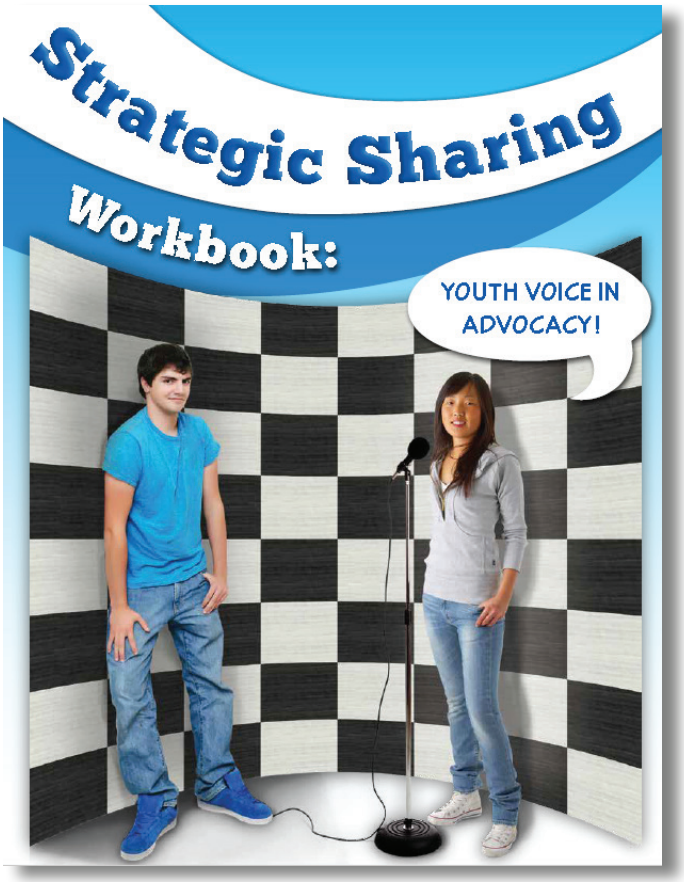
Tool 4: Strategic Sharing

Strategic Sharing is a documented process of how to effectively tell a personal story in a safe and productive manner. The National Foster Youth Advisory Council, a project of the Child Welfare League of America, first developed the concept in 2000. Several guides have been published: the first by Casey Family Programs and Foster Care Alumni of America and another by the National Resource Center for Youth Development in collaboration with Foster Club. The one provided with this packet is called the *Strategic Sharing Workbook*.[2]

This Guidance recommends that the government representative carefully review this easy-to-read workbook to gain deeper insight into the importance of giving the youth sufficient advance notice about a presentation or an event; about helping him or her to prepare; and about steps that can be taken to help the youth have a safe and healthy experience. The workbook also provides ideas about what information can be shared with the youth's co-presenters or presentation facilitators in order to support his or her personal choices about what information he or she is willing to talk about and with whom.

This Guidance also encourages government representatives to provide the youth with a copy of the workbook to review and complete in preparation for the event. The completed booklet is solely for the use and benefit of the youth participant and should not be shared with the government representative.

A copy of this workbook can be found at http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbStrategicSharingGuide.pdf



Tool 5: Travel Information Form

The Travel Information Form, to be completed by the government representative and given to the youth and his or her supportive adult, if necessary, provides an easy-to-use reference document for the youth to carry while traveling. The template details travel reservations and important contacts that may be needed while traveling. *See Appendix D for a printable version of the Travel Information Form.*

Travel Information Form

Important Note to Youth Participant
This is provided for your easy reference. Please be sure to confirm these details with your official travel documents (i.e., airline itinerary, boarding passes, etc.). It is a good idea to carry this with you and to leave a copy with someone at home.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

If you have a problem during travel, such as a cancelled flight, contact:
Name: *Sherri Smith*
Agency: *Travel One*
Phone Number: *(555) 555-0199*
If you have a problem while checking into the hotel, contact:
Name (note: this should be someone who can be onsite, if needed): *Brad Jones*
Agency: *Government Contractor*
Phone Number: *(555) 555-1236*
If you have a problem while at the event, contact:
Government Representative - Name and Number: *Brad Jones (555) 555-1236*
Event Planner - Name and Number: *Jessica Freeman (555) 555-1238*
Co-presenter (1) - Name and Number: *Juan Ortiz (555) 555-1347*
Co-presenter (2) - Name and Number: *Cathy Park (555) 555-1342*

TRAVEL TO THE EVENT

Long-Distance Travel
Airport or Train Station: *Chesapeake International Airport*
Airline or Train Name: *Bay Area Airlines*
Airline or Train Reservation Number: *1200*
Boarding Time: *5:10 p.m.*
Departure Time: *5:40 p.m.*
Arrival Time: *7:10 p.m.*
Connections, if any
Connecting Flight or Train Name and Number: *Northline Air*
Boarding Time: *7:56 p.m.*
Departure Time: *8:26 p.m.*
Arrival Time: *10:42 p.m.*

GROUND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Subway
Subway or Metro Name: *Uptown Line*
Where to Board: *Airport Station*
Where to Get Off: *52nd Street Station*
How to Pay: *Cash per diem*
Cab or Taxi
Where to Board: *Cab pick-up area by Terminal 3*
Where to Get Off: *Hotel address (867 South Hotel Avenue, Atlanta, GA)*
How to Pay: *Visa cash card per diem*
Private Car or Pre-Paid Ride
Who to Meet: *Brad Jones (555) 555-1236*
Where to Meet: *Gate 1 exterior exit doors*

HOTEL

Hotel Name: *City Conference Hotel*	
Address: *867 South Hotel Avenue, Atlanta, GA*	Phone: *(555) 555-1768*
Your Reservation Number: *102-6874-599F*	
Your Room is Being Billed To: *Government Contractor credit card (prepaid)*	
Type of Room Requested: *Two single beds, non-smoking*	

TRAVEL FROM THE EVENT

Long-Distance Travel
Airport or Train Station: *Sunbelt International Airport*
Airline or Train Name: *Northline Air*
Airline or Train Reservation Number: *855*
Boarding Time: *8:00 a.m.*
Departure Time: *8:30 a.m.*
Arrival Time: *10:52 a.m.*
Connections, if any
Connecting Flight or Train Name and Number: *Bay Area Airlines*
Boarding Time: *11:49 a.m.*
Departure Time: *12:19 p.m.*
Arrival Time: *1:56 p.m.*

GROUND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Subway
Subway or Metro Name: *Green Line*
Where to Board: *Airport bus stop by Terminal 1*
Where to Get Off: *Downtown transfer station*
How to Pay: *Cash per diem*
Cab or Taxi
Where to Board: *Cab pick-up area by Terminal 2*
Where to Get Off: *Youth's home address (123 Main Street)*
How to Pay: *Visa cash card per diem*
Private Car or Pre-Paid Ride
Who to Meet: *Express Ride Airport Shuttle*
Where to Meet: *Bay Area Airlines shuttle pick-up area by Terminal 2*

Tool 6: Travel Guide

The *Travel Guide from the Youth Leadership Toolkit*[3] is a comprehensive resource for anyone without extensive travel experience. It covers a wide variety of information, including: what kind of identification to carry, how to pack, what to know about TSA rules and regulations, and how to tip. The guide also includes a useful glossary of terms. The government representative should be familiar with its contents; should give the guide to the youth and supportive adult; and should review relevant components to ensure the youth's complete preparation to travel. *A copy of this workbook can be found at: http://youth.gov/federal-links/youth-leadership-toolkit-travel-guide*

Youth Leadership Toolkit

The **Youth Leadership Toolkit provides the fundamentals of meaningful youth engagement strategies.** Created by the National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) in collaborating with FosterClub, the toolkit stems from the belief that youth should be involved in the design and implementation of programs, policies and practices that impact their lives.

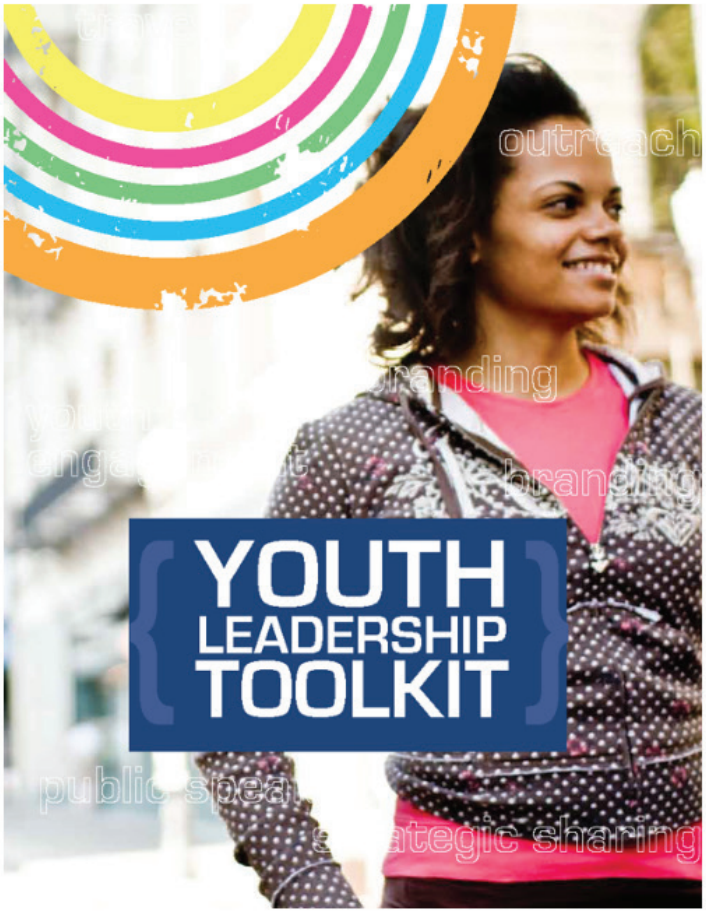
Learn about

- the value of **Youth Engagement**
- **Strategic Sharing** tactics and principles
- **Public Speaking**
- get tips for conducting **Focus Groups**
- **Outreach** tools
- the importance of **Branding**
- traveling with the detailed **Travel Guide**

A free download of the Youth Leadership Toolkit is available now. Download a PDF by clicking the button below.

Free Download

The Youth Leadership Toolkit is a project of the National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD), funded by the Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau, in collaboration with FosterClub, the national network for young people in foster care.



Tool 7: Youth Feedback Form

The Youth Feedback Form can be used to gather information about how prepared and supported the youth participant felt during the event. Use of this optional form can help government representatives improve youth engagement strategies and tools. *See Appendix E for a printable version of the Youth Feedback form.*

Youth Feedback Form

Important Note to Youth Participant
This form is for you to tell us how prepared and supported you felt to participate in this meeting. You are not required to write your name on this form. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity.

Meeting Name:					
Today's Date:					
Check the box that best states how you do or do not agree with each statement. You may add comments at the end of the next page.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does not apply to me
Overall Impressions					
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with this meeting.	*The purpose of this section is to gain feedback from youth participants on how they felt their participation had an impact on the meeting/event. In addition, it also provides some guidance on how we might improve the meeting facilitation, so we can better ensure that youth feel heard and valued.*				
I had the opportunity to participate in discussions.					
I felt my experience and expertise were useful to this meeting.					
I felt I was respected and that the other people listened to me.					
I felt I made a difference in this meeting.					
I learned new information and/or skills during this experience.					
About the Resource Packet and Preparation					
I was given enough information and help preparing for this meeting.	*This section will help provide feedback on how the government representative did in providing the youth with the resources they needed, and if any gaps might exist.*				
The government representative clearly explained my role to me.					
The resource packet was useful to me.					
Youth Engagement Agreement					
The government representative clearly explained the agreement to me before I signed it.	*This section will capture the feedback on how well the information was conveyed to the youth participant about expectations and responsibilities.*				
The government representative clearly explained what was expected of me in this meeting.					
I had a chance to ask questions about the agreement and about what was expected of me.					

Individual Support Plan Template	
The government representative clearly explained how to use the Individual Support Plan.	*Though not a requirement, the Support Plan Template is a very useful tool in ensuring that the youth has a safe and meaningful participation experience. This section allows us to review how well this tool was explained to the youth and how it was used.*
I helped create my support plan.	
My supportive adult helped me develop my support plan.	
I feel the Individual Support Plan was useful.	
Travel	
It was easy to plan my travel with the government representative or travel agent.	*Travel logistics can be difficult to anyone but can often times be more challenging to those with less travel experience. This sections allows us to gather feedback on the travel logistics and identify if there were any problems.*
The government representative or travel agent gave me good directions about who to call if there were any problems while I was traveling (for example, if my flight was delayed).	
I encountered problems while traveling. (Please tell us about the problems on the bottom of this page.)	
It was easy to check into my hotel.	
I was given per diem (e.g., an allowance for meals and incidental expenses) in a way I could immediately use.	
Is there anything else you want to tell us? *This space provides the participant the opportunity to explain in detail any issues or gaps that need to be addressed.*	

IV. Tips for Supportive and Meaningful Youth Engagement: Before, During, and After the Event[4]

General Tips

When working with youth advocates it is important to understand some key information. First and foremost, youth need to be respected as having a unique culture. Second, youth that are sharing personal information and their histories must do it in a way that ensures their safety. Third, youth voice should be heard any time decisions are being made that affect them. Fourth, one must remain objective when working with youth. Finally, the events in which youth are participating should provide them with new skills that benefit their educational and professional development.

Tip 1: Understand the culture of youth.
Youth who become young advocates are often of transition age and are trying to become more independent. This means they might not ask for all the support they really need. Many times youth that have been through the system have been hurt by adults in their lives—not just their parents. As such, they might be scared or even defensive about opening up to you or helping you advocate for a certain cause. In addition, even though youth often experience similar situations, it does not mean it affects them all in the same way. One youth might handle a situation with ease whereas another youth might need more supports.

Tip 2: Remember the youth's sense of safety.
A youth may have shared his or her story with you, but he or she still might not be ready to share it with the rest of the world. Adults should respect the wishes of youth who may not be ready to share such personal details about their lives. Adults sometimes pressure youth to speak at events and this makes youth feel like the adults are relying on them to speak, and the youth feel guilty if they do not want to participate. As adult supporters, it is best to provide opportunities, but not pressure. Believe it—youth want to have their voices heard, but only when they feel comfortable and ready to share.

Keep in mind that youth do not all grow physically or emotionally at the same rate, so one's willingness and ability to share should not be compared to that of another youth.

Tip 3: Understand when and why youth voices should be heard.
Youth must have opportunities to be heard when any decision about their lives is being made or discussed. Youth should have a platform from which to speak when policymakers are talking about laws and regulations that will have an impact on their lives; when a provider is developing/evaluating a program or procedure; and when adults who have authority over their lives meet to discuss plans.

Youth should also have the opportunity to help improve the quality of services they receive from adults. For example, when new youth workers are being trained on how to work with youth who have experienced a child-serving system, those youth workers need to hear from a youth who has lived experience in that system.

Tip 4: Remain objective.
It is important to remain objective when working with youth advocates. You should not underestimate their experiences, compare one youth's experience with that of another youth, or see these experiences as insignificant on any level. Many adult advocacy groups will select the best speaker or the youth

with the most horrific story to speak at their training or event. Doing this does not provide a complete picture of the changes that need to be made, but only gets support for the issues that the speaker faced. In addition, another youth may not have had the same growing opportunities as the speaker and thus may not be as prepared or effective in sharing his or her story. However, this does not make the youth's experience and input any less valuable.

Another issue that dramatically affects youth is when other people tell stories about them. Sometimes parents or providers want to share how difficult things were for them as they were raising or working with a particular youth. This can provide others with a skewed view of that youth because people, including adults, can sometimes exaggerate experiences.

Lastly, realize that although this population of youth has been through some horrific experiences and needs your support, they do not need your pity. Many of the stories that you will hear from youth advocates are sad and emotionally difficult to process. Be sure to tell youth how proud and impressed you are about what they have overcome, but do not tell them how sorry you were that it happened to them.

Tip 5: Provide opportunities for personal growth.
The event in which youth advocates participate should provide them with an opportunity to develop new skills that will help them in school or in the workforce. It should also provide them with a chance to build their professional network. Providing these opportunities for youth will help them get into better schools or obtain better jobs. Ensuring that youth grow from their advocacy experience will provide them with a better chance for a positive outcome in life.

One of the ways that you can help is to provide youth with business cards that contain their name and email address. You can also introduce youth to key adults, like youth group coordinators or college professors. These adults can help youth advocates find more opportunities for success and personal growth.

Sometimes a youth will share stories and experiences about what is currently happening to him or her. For example, a youth could talk about not being allowed visitation with family members at his or her residential treatment center or not having access to health insurance. Adults in the room have a responsibility to act upon these stories to make sure that the youth's needs are being met. Do not let the youth advocate leave the room without providing him or her with the necessary help. Many adults think that the event coordinator has this issue under control, but the bottom line is: if you can help, you have a responsibility to help.

Tips for Before the Event

Supporting a youth begins long before the actual event, meeting, or activity. The resources and tools listed in Section II provide the steps and information that need to be considered; however, there are various nuances that should be considered when supporting meaningful youth engagement.

Tip 1: Establish a trusting relationship.
This can only happen if the youth is given all of the information he or she may need in an open and honest way. The government representative must demonstrate concern for the youth's well-being and preferences while clearly articulating the rules, procedures, and specific reasons his or her input is being sought for the particular event, meeting, or activity. For example, if a meeting around residential treatment settings may benefit from input from discussion of a youth's experiences specifically as they relate to the LGBTQ community, the government representative should ask the youth if he or she is comfortable talking about those specific

experiences. While a government representative cannot access or request information about the Individual Support Plan, it is important to offer the opportunity for the youth to share anything he or she thinks would be helpful (e.g., questions he or she may have concerns about or situations he or she might want help avoiding).

Tip 2: Arrange any per diem beforehand.
The need for any up-front cash per diem should be determined before the youth begins travel. In cases where a youth requests an up-front per diem, this should be provided as soon upon arrival as possible. Ensure it is in a form the youth can immediately use. That is, rather than a check, the per diem might be in the form of an American Express gift card or Visa cash card.

Tip 3: Help youth develop coping skills.
Help youth develop coping skills so they can better handle difficult situations that may arise at the event. Sometimes audience members ask difficult or even offensive questions. Let the youth speakers know they are not obligated to respond to such questions. Sharing their story can often bring up painful memories that might cause a youth to "break down." You should have a plan in place in case this happens. Help youth determine if they need a supportive person at the meeting, who that person should be, and when this person needs to step in.

Tips for During the Event

For the youth, the "event" begins the moment he or she leaves home and, therefore, includes any transportation to and from the event and any lodging while on site. The government representative can provide valuable support by coaching relevant travel agents and event planners in the unique characteristics regarding youth and specific strategies to address any challenges or concerns.

Tip 1: Assist with hotel reservation and check-in.
Hotel reservations can be arranged so that the youth can check in with only a photo ID. The usual credit card request to cover incidentals can be avoided if the event planner has guaranteed the room and given the hotel clear instructions. Some youth do not have a personal credit card that can be used in such instances and being asked for one can cause stress, embarrassment, or other adverse reactions. To avoid undue stress on everyone, it is important to ensure that either the event planner or some other adult is on site or can be easily reached by the youth to resolve any issues during travel and hotel check-in.

Tip 2: Check in with youth once they arrive.
Once you have the youth speaker/presenter fully checked in, take this opportunity to go over some on-site preparations. Ask the youth how he or she is feeling before the speech or panel takes place, and remind him or her of the purpose of the event and his or her role in it. Help the youth review his or her speech or talking points, and make sure that he or she speaks it aloud several times.

Tip 3: Continue to be a source of support for the youth.
Because you adequately prepared the youth prior to the event, you will know when to take over if the youth needs you to, and you will know when you need to give him or her room to express his or her thoughts. Therefore, pay close attention to the youth's verbal and nonverbal cues while he or she is speaking. If someone asks the youth a difficult question, let the youth know that he or she does not have to answer, or help redirect the question for the youth.

When people are nervous and/or have been talking for a while, their mouths have a tendency to get dry, so be sure to provide the youth with water during the event. In addition, make sure tissues are on hand. If the youth needs a break, make sure he or she gets it.

Tip 4: Encourage discussion with the youth during the event.
In the case of a meeting, check in with the youth to make sure he or she understands what is being discussed. Keep in mind that the vernacular may be above the youth's comprehension, so you may need to rephrase something or break it down in language the youth can understand. Making sure the youth is aware of what is being discussed will prevent the youth from being just a token presence.

Tip 5: Support the youth during their speaking engagement.
Another helpful support for the youth during his or her speech is when you, or someone you designate, can be a timekeeper and signal giver. Even though you have practiced the youth's speech with him or her, sometimes time can get off track during a speech; the youth might start talking faster and need to slow down, or need to speak louder; or time could start to go over if the youth, judging by the audience's cues, wants to elaborate on something. Give the youth a hand signal so that he or she knows to slow down or speak up, or as a 5-minute warning and a 2-minute warning, which will let him or her know when to start wrapping up the speech. If it is a longer speech, give the youth a 10-minute warning as well.

Tip 6: Check in with the youth after the speaking engagement.
Support the youth after he or she gives the speech or after the meeting ends, when adults approach the youth to speak. Sometimes adults will take this opportunity to ask questions that they were not comfortable with asking in front of the rest of the audience, and the youth may need your help with fielding these. In addition, don't let the youth get pulled into a lengthy side conversation with someone. Some audience members may want to maintain contact with the youth, so act as the liaison for this networking opportunity.

Tips for After the Event

Even though the event may have ended, the government representative's support for the youth has not. Following up with the youth can be just as, if not more, important as the preparation for and support during the event. By closing any loose ends and allowing the youth space for reflection, the government representative can help ensure the meaningfulness of the youth's engagement.

Tip 1: Schedule a time to debrief with the youth.
Debriefing is important for any speaker or participant, and is especially important for youth with lived experience of mental and/or substance use disorders. Be in touch with the youth as soon as possible after the event. Thank him or her for participating, praise the youth's efforts, and underscore the value of his or her engagement. Many times this appreciation could include sending a letter of appreciation. Ask the youth, if you have not already done so, to complete and return the Youth Feedback Form.

Tip 2: Check in on the youth's well-being.
Check in with the youth a couple of weeks after the event to see if he or she needs any possible services or supports. If the youth enjoyed the experience, he or she may want to do it again, so help the youth find other opportunities to aid in his or her professional development. Make sure to have a conversation with the youth about the end results of his or her advocacy work.

Ask: Was the youth comfortable with how the event occurred? Did he or she feel adequately prepared? Would the youth want to attend more events like this? Did the youth come away with ideas on other, similar venues where he or she would want to speak? What could you as the adult supporter have done better or differently? This level of follow-up is crucial to ensure that the youth doesn't slip through the cracks or experience negative outcomes as a result of being essentially tokenized during the whole process. Make sure the youth documents the event, in a portfolio or in journal entries, which will support the youth's advocacy development.

In the end, the government representative's ability to effectively engage youth will have a major impact on both the youth's experience and the valuable perspective the youth brings to the event that will help inform future SAMHSA efforts. Following the Guidance, and integrating the tools and resources into the meeting or event protocol, will ensure that youth will feel supported, and will allow federal agencies to obtain valuable youth perspectives that will lead to improved policies, procedures, and systems.

Endnotes

1 Pittman, K., Martin, S., Williams, A. (2007, July). *Core Principles for Engaging Young People in Community Change*. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc.

2 Lulow, E. & Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. (2012). Strategic Sharing Workbook: Youth Voice in Advocacy. Portland, OR: Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures. Retrieved from http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbStrategicSharingGuide.pdf

3 Youth Leadership Toolkit. Travel Guide. (2011). National Resource Center for Youth Development. Retrieved from https://www.fosterclub.com/article/youth-leadership-toolkit

4 *Meaningful Youth Involvement: How to Support Youth Participation in Meetings and Events,* National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. Rockville: MD. 2011.

V. Appendices

- Appendix A: Government Representative Checklist
- Appendix B: Youth Engagement Agreement
- Appendix C: Individual Support Plan
- Appendix D: Travel Information Form
- Appendix E: Youth Feedback Form

Appendix A:

Government Representative Checklist for Youth Engagement

Youth Engagement Checklist for Government Representative

Before the Event: Invitations and Preparation

Identify and invite youth participants.

- ☐ Identify youth with relevant lived experience and with varied advocacy skill levels (i.e., avoid overburdening experienced speakers with multiple invitations; encourage emerging youth leaders).
- ☐ Identify an adult in each youth's life who can support his or her preparation and who will accompany the youth to the meeting if the youth is under 18 years of age, or if the youth is 18 or over and requests such support.
- ☐ Inform the youth and supportive adult about the meeting's purpose, anticipated audience, draft agenda, location, and dates. Include a clear description of the youth's specific role and other expectations (e.g., attend and respond to other parts of the meeting).
- ☐ Clearly detail why the youth has been invited (e.g., to present his or her personal experience, not just stories, as someone who has been in foster care, has been in juvenile justice, or identifies as LGBTQ; to provide a youth perspective about a policy or practice; to provide recommendations about future actions).

Send a "resource packet" to the youth and the identified adult supporter. Include a:

- ☐ Cover letter summarizing the invitation: youth's role, meeting's purpose, agenda, audience, location, dates, and options for a supportive adult
- ☐ Copy of the Strategic Sharing Workbook (2012), produced by the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health and the Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures
- ☐ Copy of the National Resource Center for Youth Development's Travel Guide (2011)
- ☐ Copy of the Sample Individual Support Plan
- ☐ Copy of the Youth Engagement Agreement

Convene a telephone call with each identified youth and supportive adult at a time that is convenient to them (i.e., not during school or work hours) and sufficiently far in advance of the meeting or event. During this call:

- ☐ Review the details of the invitation.
- ☐ Reiterate the specific reasons for this invitation and ensure the youth is comfortable sharing his or her life experience publicly.
- ☐ Highlight and review the Strategic Sharing Workbook.
- ☐ Facilitate the youth's preparation for the event (e.g., convene a conference call with four youth participants to jointly plan the session, or call each youth individually to discuss the round table process and how they will participate).
- ☐ Highlight and review the Travel Guide; assess comfort level and if there are any specific needs.
- ☐ Explain logistical details, to include:
  - Honorarium
    - Ask the youth's preference for how this will be paid (e.g., the youth may not have a bank account and would prefer a gift card)
  - Per diem
  - How and when to make travel arrangements
- ☐ Highlight and review the Individual Support Plan template.
- ☐ Discuss details and youth options in the Youth Engagement Agreement.
- ☐ Answer questions.

Convene a preparation call with all youth participants at a time convenient to them (i.e., not during school or work hours). During this call:

- ☐ Introduce yourself and invite the youth to introduce themselves to one another.
- ☐ Introduce the panel or meeting youth co-facilitator, if there is one.
- ☐ Review, again, the purpose and anticipated audience for the meeting.
- ☐ Review, again, the reason these youth have been invited and their role(s).
- ☐ Review the agenda and each topic area in detail, helping the youth identify issues they may want to raise during the meeting.
- ☐ Invite each youth to share his thoughts, ideas, and suggestions for the presentation.
- ☐ Assess the need for and schedule, as needed, follow-up planning calls to ensure the youth are as prepared and comfortable as possible.
- ☐ Describe who might be in the audience (e.g., government officials, treatment and service providers and practitioners, press).
- ☐ Discuss how to dress for the event.
- ☐ Answer any questions related to event, travel arrangements, and other processes.
- ☐ Provide a contact number for questions or concerns that may arise during their personal preparation.

Make all travel arrangements.

- ☐ Advise the youth and his or her supportive adult of deadlines for making travel arrangements, and give them the travel agent's contact information.
- ☐ Provide the travel agent with information about how to reach the youth and supportive adult during non-school or work hours and any relevant details (e.g., they will need a hotel room at the airport the night before an early departure, because they live many hours from the airport; arrange with the hotel to avoid asking for a credit card for incidentals, if needed).
- ☐ Request that the travel agent copy you on reservations for information that is to be included in the Travel Information Form.
- ☐ Arrange and prepay ground transportation between the airport or train station and hotel (the youth may not have a credit card or enough cash to pay for a taxi).
- ☐ Ensure, either directly with the hotel or through the meeting contractor, that the hotel will not require a credit card or debit card for check-in (the meeting contractor or the supportive adult may have to assume responsibility in the event of damages; e.g., someone smokes in the room or breaks a lamp).
- ☐ Secure an emergency contact for the youth and supportive adult in the event they are needed during travel (e.g., missed or cancelled flights, illness).
- ☐ Send the youth and his or her supportive adult their personal logistical information in one combined Travel Information Form.

During the Event

Upon arrival, convene an informal and comfortable meeting.

- ☐ Check in on the youth's travel experience and respond to any challenges that may have arisen.
- ☐ Provide the youth with per diem in cash equivalent form, if applicable (i.e., American Express gift or Visa cash cards that can be used as cash while they are traveling).
- ☐ Review any changes or updates to the agenda, audience, etc.
- ☐ Review key expectations as articulated in the Youth Engagement Agreement.
- ☐ Discuss specific roles, presentations, anticipated discussions, and any other activities.
- ☐ Help formulate key points the youth wants to make.
- ☐ Provide materials in order for him or her to make notes to use during the meeting.

- ☐ Facilitate discussion about any possible differences or disagreements the youth may have about the issues they will be discussing—make sure these don't catch them by surprise during their presentation. Help them develop strategies for managing their differences or "agreeing to disagree" in ways that preserve everyone's dignity.
- ☐ Address any personal challenges (e.g., anxiety).

Before the presentation or meeting:

- ☐ Take the youth to see the room in which he or she will be presenting.
- ☐ Introduce the youth to audio-visual staff and make sure he or she is comfortable with microphones, lights, laptop, LCD projectors, and so on.
- ☐ Introduce the youth to time keepers and make sure he or she can see the cue cards.
- ☐ Introduce the youth to the session's facilitator.
- ☐ Ensure the youth's supportive adult and/or designated staff are where the youth expects them to be and that they understand cues from one another (e.g., youth should speak louder or youth needs a break).

During the presentation or meeting:

- ☐ Request presenters, facilitators, and participants refrain from using acronyms.
- ☐ Advise facilitators to allow sidebars and avoid calling attention to them. Either sit with the youth or be sure someone is close by who can explain context and answer his or her questions throughout the proceedings.
- ☐ Check in with the youth during breaks to answer questions and respond to his or her needs.

After the presentation or meeting:

- ☐ Help the youth avoid difficult or inappropriate questions (e.g., from audience members, press).
- ☐ Introduce the youth to individuals with whom he or she may network in the future (e.g., to build his or her own skills or to speak at other events).

Before the youth departs for home:

- ☐ Thank the youth for his or her participation, reminding him or her of its value to the meeting participants and to SAMHSA.
- ☐ Provide honorarium or stipend in the requested format.
- ☐ Provide the Youth Feedback Form with pre-addressed, stamped envelope.
- ☐ Ensure he or she has all necessary travel plans and information to travel home.

After the Event

Convene a follow-up call at a convenient time (i.e., not during school or work hours).

- ☐ Provide feedback to the youth presenters, highlighting points they got across and the value they added to the event.
- ☐ Ask for and listen to their feedback, concerns, and recommendations.
- ☐ Help them identify areas for improvement for future presentations.

Provide a letter or certificate of appreciation.

- ☐ Include a thank-you letter or certificate of appreciation with a descriptive paragraph of the youth's contribution (i.e., a descriptive paragraph that might be included in his or her resume).

Appendix B:

Youth Engagement Agreement

Youth Engagement Agreement

An agreement between the youth participant and a government representative, which may be either a SAMHSA employee or contractor, as determined by the meeting planners.

This document represents the agreements made between the youth participant and the government agency/representative for a particular event. Since events often differ it is important to do an agreement for each event separately. The government representative should review with the youth participant the information contained within this agreement.

_____

[Name of Youth or Young Adult]

and

_____

[Government Representative and Agency]

for

_____

[Name of Meeting or Event]

_____

[Location and Dates of Meeting or Event]

Important Note to Youth Participant
This is a nonbinding (i.e., not legal) agreement about your participation in a government-sponsored event. This is a reference document to record the agreements between you and the government representative.

Confidentiality Notice
Information you share during this meeting or in your presentation will not be confidential. Confidential means that something will be kept secret. Carefully consider what information about your life experiences you will share. A guide about strategic sharing will be provided to help you think about this and make careful decisions about what to share. If at any time you feel you do not want to share something, do not. You are not obligated to answer any questions about your personal story.

Ask the government representative for clear details.

- Who will hear what I have to say?
- What recording will be made (e.g., meeting notes, video)?
- What documentation of my participation will exist (e.g., meeting announcements, webinars, agendas, photographs)?

The Agreements

SAMHSA is committed to ensuring that youth who participate in agency-sponsored events have a meaningful and safe experience, and are well informed, logistically supported, and well prepared. In order to achieve this goal, it is suggested that the government representative and the youth participant consider and adhere to the following.

In general, the government representative will:

- Explain the meeting's purpose, agenda, audience, location, and dates
- Explain options for a supportive adult to accompany you
- Provide information to help you prepare, including:
    - Guidance about strategic sharing
    - Guidance about travel
    - An Individual Support Plan template
- Explain how information gathered during the event will be used
- Provide (if requested) your supportive adult with the costs of registration, travel, lodging, and per diem (i.e., money to cover meals and incidental expenses) for the event
- Secure your emergency contact in the event there are problems such as delayed flights
- Provide you with travel, lodging, and per diem (i.e., money to cover meals and incidental expenses) for the event
- Provide you with a stipend or honorarium (i.e., payment for your services) in the amount of $_____
- Help you prepare to participate by hosting planning calls, sending materials and information about the event, etc.
- Be available to you during the event
- Debrief with you after the event

In general, the youth or participant will:

- Request to have my name listed as _____ _____, both during the event and in documents and reports that could be made available on the Internet
- Request to be referred to as (preferred pronoun) _____ _____, both during the event and in documents and reports that could be made available on the Internet
- Participate in planning calls with the government representative and any other presenters as requested
- Attend to personal well-being and use an Individual Support Plan (sample template provided)
- Not engage in anything illegal while traveling for and participating in this event
- Show respect for the views and opinions of others and use professional conduct
- Provide feedback to the government representative about the experience after the event is over

Important Contact Information:

Youth Participant's Address, Email, and Phone

_____

_____

_____

Parent or Legal Guardian's Address, Email, and Phone, if applicable

_____

_____

_____

Government Representative's Agency, Name, Address, Email, and Phone

_____

_____

_____

_____

Travel Agent's Name, Agency, Address, Email, and Phone

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other Relevant Persons' Names, Roles, Addresses, Emails, and Phones

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

It is recommended that copies of this completed form be kept by the youth participant, the government representative, and the supportive adult, if applicable.

Appendix C:

Individual Support Plan

Individual Support Plan

Important Note to Youth Participant
This is an optional but highly recommended tool for you and your parent or supportive adult to use to prevent or resolve any challenges that may occur while traveling or participating in the government-sponsored activity. This plan is intended to help you support and promote your own social and emotional well-being. The information in this plan is strictly for your own use and does not need to be submitted to SAMHSA or any other government agency representative.

My Warning Signs and Coping Strategies
What are my warning signs that tell me my well-being may be of concern? Examples might be feeling anxious, having difficulty breathing, or experiencing disturbing thoughts. What can I or someone else do to help me? Make a list of these signs and strategies below.

My Warning Signs	My Coping Strategies Or Best Ways to Relieve Warning Signs	How Can Someone Else Help Me? Who Can I Reach Out To?

Who can give me support, hang out with me, or help keep me in a safe environment (e.g., take a walk, watch a movie, stay sober with me)?

Before I travel to the event

Name	Contact

While I am at the event

Name	Contact

After I travel home from the event

Name	Contact

Who can help me resolve a crisis?

Before I travel to the event

Name	Contact

While I am at the event

Name	Contact

After I travel home from the event

Name	Contact

Which treatment and service providers or practitioners can I use, if needed?

Before I travel to the event

Name & Agency	Contact

While I am at the event

Name & Agency	Contact

After I travel home from the event

Name & Agency	Contact

What are important places or experiences for me to avoid in order to protect my well-being (e.g., hotel bar, heavily crowded rooms)?

Before I travel to the event

Places or Experiences to Avoid

While I am at the event

Places or Experiences to Avoid

After I travel home from the event

Places or Experiences to Avoid

You may want to edit and clip this wallet card to keep with you at all times.

To locate help wherever you are:

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
A SAMHSA-sponsored 24-hour suicide prevention hotline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Alcoholics Anonymous
Find local meetings and resources through their national website
www.aa.org

Narcotics Anonymous
Find local meetings and resources through their national website
www.na.org

Hotel where I am staying
Name:
Address:
Phone:

Government Representative
Name:
Phone:
Email:

Parent or Supportive Adult
Name:
Phone:
Email:

Appendix D:

Travel Information Form

Travel Information Form

Important Note to Youth Participant
This is provided for your easy reference. Please be sure to confirm these details with your official travel documents (i.e., airline itinerary, boarding passes). It is a good idea to carry this with you and to leave a copy with someone at home.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

If you have a problem during travel, such as a cancelled flight, contact:
Name:
Agency:
Phone Number:
If you have a problem while checking into the hotel, contact:
Name (note: this should be someone who can be onsite, if needed):
Agency:
Phone Number:
If you have a problem while at the event, contact:
Government Representative - Name and Number:
Event Planner - Name and Number:
Co-presenter (1) - Name and Number:
Co-presenter (2) - Name and Number:

TRAVEL TO THE EVENT

Long-Distance Travel
Airport or Train Station:
Airline or Train Name:
Airline or Train Reservation Number:
Boarding Time:
Departure Time:
Arrival Time:
Connections, if any
Connecting Flight or Train Name and Number:
Boarding Time:
Departure Time:
Arrival Time:

GROUND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Subway
Subway or Metro Name:
Where to Board:
Where to Get Off:
How to Pay:
Cab or Taxi
Where to Board:
Where to Get Off:
How to Pay:
Private Car or Pre-Paid Ride
Who to Meet:
Where to Meet:

HOTEL

Hotel Name:	
Address:	Phone:
Your Reservation Number:	
Your Room is Being Billed To:	
Type of Room Requested:	

TRAVEL FROM THE EVENT

Long-Distance Travel
Airport or Train Station:
Airline or Train Name:
Airline or Train Reservation Number:
Boarding Time:
Departure Time:
Arrival Time:
Connections, if any
Connecting Flight or Train Name and Number:
Boarding Time:
Departure Time:
Arrival Time:

GROUND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Subway
Subway or Metro Name:
Where to Board:
Where to Get Off:
How to Pay:
Cab or Taxi
Where to Board:
Where to Get Off:
How to Pay:
Private Car or Pre-Paid Ride
Who to Meet:
Where to Meet:

Appendix E:

Youth Feedback Form

Youth Feedback Form

Important Note to Youth Participant
This form is for you to tell us how prepared and supported you felt to participate in this meeting. You are not required to write your name on this form. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity.

Meeting Name:					
Today's Date:					
Check the box that best states how you do or do not agree with each statement. You may add comments at the end of the next page.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does not apply to me
Overall Impressions					
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with this meeting.					
I had the opportunity to participate in discussions.					
I felt my experience and expertise were useful to this meeting.					
I felt I was respected and that the other people listened to me.					
I felt I made a difference in this meeting.					
I learned new information and/or skills during this experience.					
About the Resource Packet and Preparation					
I was given enough information and help preparing for this meeting.					
The government representative clearly explained my role to me.					
The resource packet was useful to me.					
Youth Engagement Agreement					
The government representative clearly explained the agreement to me before I signed it.					
The government representative clearly explained what was expected of me in this meeting.					
I had a chance to ask questions about the agreement and about what was expected of me.					
Individual Support Plan Template					
The government representative clearly explained how to use the Individual Support Plan.					
I helped create my support plan.					

My supportive adult helped me develop my support plan.					
I feel the Individual Support Plan was useful.					
Travel					
It was easy to plan my travel with the government representative or travel agent.					
The government representative or travel agent gave me good directions about who to call if there were any problems while I was traveling (for example, if my flight was delayed).					
I encountered problems while traveling. (Please tell us about the problems on the bottom of this page.)					
It was easy to check into my hotel.					
I was given per diem (e.g., an allowance for meals and incidental expenses) in a way I could immediately use.					
Is there anything else you want to tell us?					

VI. Acknowledgments

The content of this toolkit is based upon the thoughtful input of those who participated in the May 2014 Youth Engagement Guidelines Meeting. The meeting was convened by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and led by youth engagement champions from the SAMHSA staff. Youth from various advocacy backgrounds participated in order to give SAMHSA a well-rounded perspective for defining and addressing meaningful youth engagement.

Gary M. Blau, Ph.D., Chief, Child, Adolescent and Family Branch, Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA

Celeste Bodner, Founder & Executive Director, FosterClub

Lacy Kendrick Burk, MS, MBA, Partner / Consultant, Change Matrix, LLC

Larke Huang, Ph.D., Senior Advisor for Children Youth, and Families and Director of the Office of Behavioral Health Equity, SAMHSA

Courtney Lovell, Director of Recovery Education and Training, Friends of Recovery - New York

Eric Lulow, Public Health Advisor, Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA

Danielle Tarino Rivkin, Public Health Advisor, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA

Casey Montana Rogers, Unplugged Director, Rockers in Recovery

Douglas D. Rudolph, J.D., Policy Director, Young People in Recovery (YPR)

Jim St. Germain, Co-founder, Preparing Leaders of Tomorrow (PLOT)

Rebecca Flatow Zornick, J.D., M.S.S.W., Lead Analyst, Office of Policy Planning and Innovation, SAMHSA

HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4985
First printed 2016

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Mental Health Services