

# **New Directions for Youth Development: Professional Development Efforts in the Field of Youth Development**

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## **Project Goals**

- To provide an overview of the “state of the art” professional development work being done in within the youth development field.
- To offer the field of youth development information that can support the development of new networks and ways of working together.

## **Project Overview**

While youth development is not a new area of interest, what is new is the expansion of systems focused on learning opportunities for youth development professionals. The field has moved from problem focused to promoting the focus of positive youth development moving from a problem-reduction, deficit-oriented approach to initiatives that build individual capacities; rather than focusing on risk, there has been a shift to strengthening protective factors, building competencies, and a focus on indicators of thriving. These shifts have required youth development professionals to think about their work in new ways.

Currently, within the field there are many who are questioning what are the needs of youth development professionals. These questions included identifying: (1) What skills and expertise are needed by the professionals who work with and on behalf of youth; (2) What types of learning experiences are needed by youth development professionals; and (3) How can the field as whole work together to provide a comprehensive development that begins on entry into the field and continues to offer learning opportunities to professionals across time. In short, there is growing wide-spread recognition that education opportunities for youth development professionals will need to continue to expand for the field to grow and move forward.

Moreover, not only is there a need for an increased number of development opportunities; there is also the realization that there must be continuum of experiences available to those individuals who work with and on behalf of today’ s young people. These educational opportunities must be comprehensive and offered for professionals at differing levels including; practitioners, public policy professionals, the general public, and researchers.

The goal of this volume, then, is two-fold. First, to provide solid information, practical tools, and selected references to practitioners, advocates, policy professionals, and researchers interested in the professional development. A second, concurrent goal of this volume is to facilitate an understanding the various aspects of the professional development for the field of youth development in order to enhance and expand those opportunities.

In this volume we have defined the following terms:

*Youth Development (noun)*. A process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models that focus solely on youth problems. (Approved by the executives of National Collaboration for Youth Members, March 1998)

This volume is divided into seven different articles. Each article begins with the articulation of the youth development framework that is the core of the professional development efforts and then describes the strategy used to enhance staff and organization's ability to implement the "youth development approach" throughout their work.

- How was the content determined?
- How does this strategy best cover this content?
- What are the successes thus far?
- What evaluation has been done to determine if the outcomes are successful or not?
- What challenges were overcome in developing this strategy?
- What challenges remain?
- What recommendations would the authors make to the field for the next steps in professional development based on their experience with their specific strategy?

## **Professional Development in the Field of Youth Development**

**The Need for Professional Development in the Field: Jane Quinn, Children's Aids Society.** This article provides the context of professional development in the youth development field. It outlines the need, some of the history and a snapshot at some accomplishments and the remaining challenges.

**Competencies: National Collaboration for Youth; Kirk Astroth, Montana State University; Barbara Taylor, YMCA; Pam Garza, National Collaboration for Youth.** In January 2004, the National Collaboration for Youth approved a set of core competencies needed by entry-level youth development workers for effective youth development practice. This chapter provides an overview of the purpose, process and outcomes and challenges of this effort.

**Role of Higher Education in the Development of Youth Workers: Lynne Borden, University of Arizona; Deb Craig, YouthNet, Kansas; Francisco A. Villarruel, Michigan State University, Great Plains Initiative.** Many new opportunities for youth workers have emerged over the last decade to receive college credit in youth development. These efforts include two-year and four year institutions as well as credits for in-service coursework, online degree programs and Department of Labor apprenticeship certification. or this includes credentialing, certification, degrees and work on advanced degree programs). This article

explores the status of college credit opportunities as well as the role that these efforts can and do make on the professionalization of the field.

### **Intermediaries – In Local Communities Providing Professional Development**

**Opportunities: Elaine Johnson, NTI/AED; other intermediaries.** Intermediaries are taking the lead in providing valuable professional development opportunities to youth workers within their own communities. This article explores the role of intermediaries, their successes and remaining challenges.

### **National Organizations: Focused on the Preparation, Development and Retention of Youth Workers: Girl Scouts of the USA, Girls Incorporated, Boys and Girls Clubs of America.**

National organizations have long provided high-quality training and support to youth workers within their membership. This article describes the current efforts three different national organizations to their members and affiliates including: Boys & Girls Clubs of America and their strategic focus on the recruitment, development and retention of youth workers including a web-based system available throughout their system; Girls Incorporated, a smaller organization, with a strong history of comprehensive affiliate support, including evaluation of the effectiveness of their training on programs; Girl Scouts of America, long a leader in providing training and support throughout their membership – including volunteer development.

### **City-wide and State Wide Efforts in the Development of Youth Workers: - Ellen Gannett**

**- NIOST; Samantha Weschler, Mo Barbosa, Jude Golman - Achieve Boston.** Many new city and state wide efforts have been developed that provide an array of professional development opportunities including consistent competencies, standards, training systems, registry systems. This article explores a cross-organization effort in Boston and reflects on the process of coordination and collaboration as well as the successes and challenges in this one city.

**Reflections: Karen Pittman, The Forum for Youth Investment.** The articles in this journal present the context of youth development and how different strategies have been successful in providing professional development to the field. This last article reflects on the work that has been done; where this work had integrated into larger existing systems and recommendations of the work still yet to do.

### **Timeline:**

- I. Secure writers: March/April 2004
- II. First draft due: First week in July 2004
- III. First round of editing and articles back to writers: Third week in July 2004
- IV. Second draft due: Middle of August 2004
- V. Second round of editing and back to writers with publisher's edits as well: First part of September 2004
- VI. Turn in to Publisher: End of September
- VII. Published