

YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS

OHIO
—adult—
ALLIES

INTRODUCTION

While many programs provide youth with a safe space for recreation, few are designed to empower young people to address pressing issues within their community. Youth-led programs (YLP) are distinct because they develop young people's knowledge, skills and attitudes to be catalysts for positive change within their communities. At the core of YLP, youth are engaged in collective activities and experiences that are intended to spark their interest and enhance their ability to address local issues. In short, YLP empower young people to create community change.

Beginning in 2012, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), Drug-Free Action Alliance (DFAA), and Ohio University's Voinovich School for Leadership and Public Affairs collaborated with adult allies of YLP from across the state in an effort to further refine and develop youth-led programming. Through consultation with the adult allies of youth-led programs, it was collectively determined that the goal of YLP in Ohio is for young people to engage in a data-driven strategic planning process to implement evidence-based prevention strategies to create community change. Youth-led programs are a community-based process (Hogan, Gabrielsen, Luna & Grothaus, 2003) in which young people determine a problem of practice, identify the root causes of the problem, and select and implement evidence-based strategies to address those root causes. Two evidence-based frameworks inform the work of youth-led programs: the Youth Empowerment Conceptual Framework (YECF) and the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF).

For more information on youth-led programs, please see the following white papers:

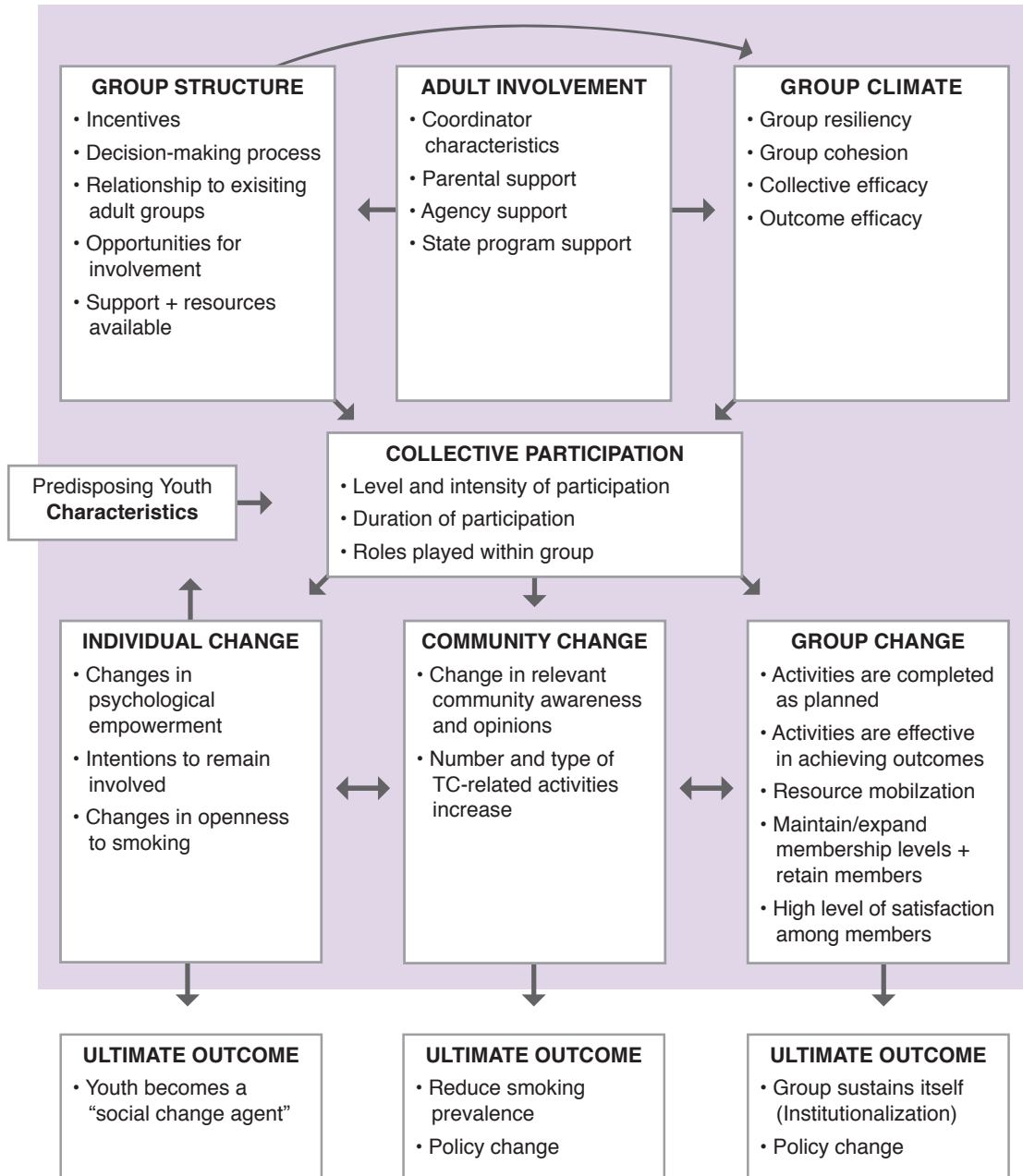
Conceptualizing Adolescence/ts: Consideration of historical views, culture and personal bias in the conceptualizing of adolescence/ts will assist adult allies to better engage, guide and empower young people.

Youth Empowerment: This paper explains youth empowerment, the core construct outlined in the Youth Empowerment Conceptual Framework (YECF; Holden et al., 2004), which adult allies use to guide young people in their community change efforts.

Prevention and Promotion: As prevention and promotion are the fundamental approaches utilized by youth-led programs, it is important for adult allies to understand what each is and how they relate to each other.

Positive Youth Development: This paper provide an overarching definition of positive youth development (PYD), details its core principles, and explains how youth-led programs are distinct from other programs that embrace a PYD approach.

Figure 1. Youth empowerment conceptual framework.



Modified from: Holden, D.J., Messeri, P., Evans, W.D., Crankshaw, E., Ben-Davies, M. (2004). Conceptualizing youth empowerment within tobacco control. *Health Education & Behavior*, 31, 548 – 563.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Youth Empowerment Conceptual Framework (YECF; Holden et al., 2004), designed by Dr. Debra Holden and colleagues, is an evaluative framework that conceptualizes the key processes and outcomes of YLP. The concept of empowerment – the ability to influence social and political systems – is fundamental to this framework (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment is conceptualized as both a process and an outcome. The top portion of the framework outlines the key processes adult allies are responsible for developing in order to create an empowering group setting; this includes establishing a group structure and climate that allow young people to work together effectively. The bottom portion of the model identifies individual, group and community outcomes that can be anticipated by participating in empowering group settings. These outcomes are integrally connected; that is, by engaging in community change efforts young people and groups become empowered.

In addition to being an evaluative framework, the YECF also functions as a valuable tool for adult allies. Adult allies can use this model to help develop their YLP and reflect on existing YLP to ensure they are effectively designed to achieve intended outcomes at the individual, group, and community level. This framework can also be used to aid adult allies in articulating the core work and purpose of their YLP. Whether it is to leverage support from grant funders or to develop a concise elevator speech, the YECF assists adult allies in identifying those fundamental words to explain the work of their YLP.

STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) is a comprehensive, evidence-based framework that guides groups through a planning process to create community change (SAMHSA). Adult allies of youth-led programs engage young people in the SPF in order to plan and implement evidence-based strategies in their local communities. This process requires youth and adults to use data to properly identify and address community issues. The SPF is a valuable tool for adult allies because it outlines the core work in which YLP should engage.



The SPF consists of five key steps, but each step is fluid; that is youth and adult allies may revisit steps throughout the process and engage in steps simultaneously. The five steps are (1) **assessing** community needs, resources, and readiness to address local issues; (2) **building capacity** to support prevention initiatives; (3) effectively **planning** by building logic models and selecting appropriate interventions; (4)

implementing evidence-based prevention strategies; and finally (5) **evaluating** the success of these efforts.

The SPF also identifies two guiding principles: cultural competence and sustainability. Culture must be considered at every step of the process to ensure the needs of all community members are met. Continuously building stakeholder support and identifying consistent funding streams are also critical to sustain an initiative.

CONCLUSION AND RESOURCES

While the YECF identifies the structure adult allies need to provide when assisting young people in developing the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to create community change, the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) identifies the key steps adult allies should engage youth in to create change in their local communities. These two frameworks combined articulate the core work of youth-led programs in Ohio: youth engage in a community-based process to determine a problem of practice, identify the root causes of the problem, and select and implement evidence-based strategies to address those root causes.

Several resources are available to adult allies of youth-led programs who are interested in learning more about enacting these two frameworks. The following website provides information on the evidence that supports the YECF and SPF, as well as tools to help adult allies apply these frameworks to their YLP:

<https://www.ohio.edu/voinovichschool/services/ohio-adult-allies.cfm>

In addition, the Ohio Adult Allies YouTube Channel provides several brief videos that explain the YECF and SPF and describe how to use these frameworks in practice. A link to the Ohio Adult Allies Channel is available through the above website. The YouTube channel can also be accessed by visiting youtube.com and entering "Ohio Adult Allies" into the search box.

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Ohio University's Voinovich School and Leadership and Public Affairs and Drug-Free Action Alliance collaborated with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to host a series of training and technical assistance (T/TA) activities for adult allies of youth-led programs. This series of white papers was developed by adult allies to support their peers who work with young people to use local data and evidence-based prevention strategies to create meaningful change within Ohio's communities. Dr. Jessica Collura, Ms. Aimee Collins, Dr. Holly Raffle and Mr. Zach Gheen of the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs supported Ohio's adult allies as they developed the white paper series. Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Grant# 1700315 provided funding for the Youth-Led Training and Technical Assistance Project.