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**Youth Engagement Core Group**

**Minutes**

**October 4, 2012, 3-4:30 p.m.**

**The Common Roof (165 Ferris Lane), Barrie, ON**

**Present:**

Sarah Stea (YMCA), Deb Woods (Coalition Coordinator), Kristina Veenstra (Coalition Executive Assistant and recorder), Jennifer Summerfield (SCDSB), Shelley Generoux (BNFC), Alicia Henry (E-Fry), Kara Thomson-Ryczko (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit) .

**Regrets:**

Aleta Armstrong (CMHA), Lisa Cluett (New Path), Noelle Bickle (consultant ), Chenoa LeCaille (BANAC), Amanda Meawasige (BNFC),Laurie Nicholson (Simcoe County District School Board), Kristi Pitkin (Simcoe Community Services), Jessica Wolfe (City of Barrie), Pauline Robillard (La Cle), replacement for Richelle Vorsiuk (CAS).

1. **Welcome and Introductions** roundtable introductions were done including background. **ACTION: Kara to forward information on SMDHU youth engagement.**
2. **Youth Engagement Core Group: who we are, where we came from, how we fit into Coalition (Terms of Ref, The Art of YE harvest documents):** documents distributed prior to meeting. The Coalition has as one of its strategic goals to engage youth actively in developing and participating in program planning. This group we hope will help identify what works for young people and listening to them in the planning and evaluation of our members’ services. We wish to elevate best practices so we can share among all Coalition members**. ACTION: Deb to follow up with Kathy Simpson regarding a youth engagement report from the Centre of Excellence.**

This core group began this year after the Center of Excellence training in January 2012. Terms of Reference were developed.

1. **Brainstorming Groups over the summer (review results)**: Four brainstorming youth groups ran over the summer; copies of the results were distributed for information and discussion. Pamela Thorne (UP Project/CMHA) and Sarah engaged youth to run these groups and walked through the results: language, age groups, format of open ended questions, judging youth, communication of services available, clarification and correct information from teachers re services in the community. In all they met with approximately 40 youth between the ages of 13-22. The biggest message learned from the brainstorming is that it is important that youth know someone and are able to approach someone to get the questions and services they need; human contact, genuine relationships are the most important to youth; physical environment less so. Agencies need to connect more effectively with the school boards (i.e. COMPASS).

Now that we have this information what do we do with it? And how? We need to develop a tool for community and organizations to use to help them evaluate how youth friendly they are. Ideas have evolved a lot over the last few weeks. We hope to surface best practices and circulate among Coalition members.

A**CTION: have the Youth Engagement video come to COMPASS groups. Group mentioned that youth would prefer another form other than a business card; a florescent (green, pink, black, orange) bracelet with a USB was very positively received; Kristina to obtain quotes and maybe do the help cards in this format via SSLI.**

1. **Goal of Youth Engagement Core Group:** What is the problem this group is trying to solve? Trying to find out what works/doesn’t work for youth in accessing and using services and share this learning with Coalition organizations so they can engage youth in creating more youth friendly services. **ACTION: All approved.**

Need to ensure we bring youth in as soon as possible but there needs to be a way of engaging young people continuously. We need to emphasize our findings that relationships are most important for youth. It is about deconstructing power and helping youth engage in a natural way. It is very challenging to implement how youth find their voice in organizations and teaching adults how to receive youth information appropriately. The youth need to be given permission to do this kind of work and we have to become flexible - “Organizational Readiness” – this takes training, resources, commitment. **ACTION: Look at some best practices researched beyond Coalition agencies. Need to clearly define expectations and goals we have for young people first. Not sure we wish to have youth at this table; we wish to have best practices and have youth at organizations’ tables instead with a voice. Can be a research best practice document/recommendations and youth voice via video, powerpoint, CD.**

Jennifer spoke to the BNFC opportunities for youth at their agency. They are non-judgemental, open door policy, engage them in fitness/recreation nights, collaboration with other youth, job support, homework, comic book creation or kitchen clubs for all ages with mentor opportunities.

Youth engagement is usually defined as a paradigm shift from working with youth as clients to working with youth as partners. What we are aiming for may be more accurately termed “youth friendly”, where we use youth as consultants to help us define what makes a service/organization youth friendly. Adults learn from youth. **ACTION: Share Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation with members which speaks to healthy relationships.**

1. **How to involve youth at next meeting:** Group decided it was not appropriate to have youth join our next meeting until we are clear on the next steps. It was discussed however, that the youth may help provide us with direction.
2. **Next steps:**

* **Continue discussion** about how to define what a youth friendly organization would look like, what is the best way to engage youth in this exploration
* **Barrie Youth Friendly group** could be a good source of youth and expertise
* **Consider connection to another existing youth group** e.g. Youth Quest program at the Y
* **Consider connection to the Anti-stigma Task Force:** discuss this possibility as both groups are moving in similar directions on some areas for children, youth and their families. **ACTION: Deb and Aleta to connect on options.**

1. **Next meeting:**

Wednesday, November 7, 3-4:30, The Common Roof (165 Ferris Lane, Barrie). Goals: to create a plan