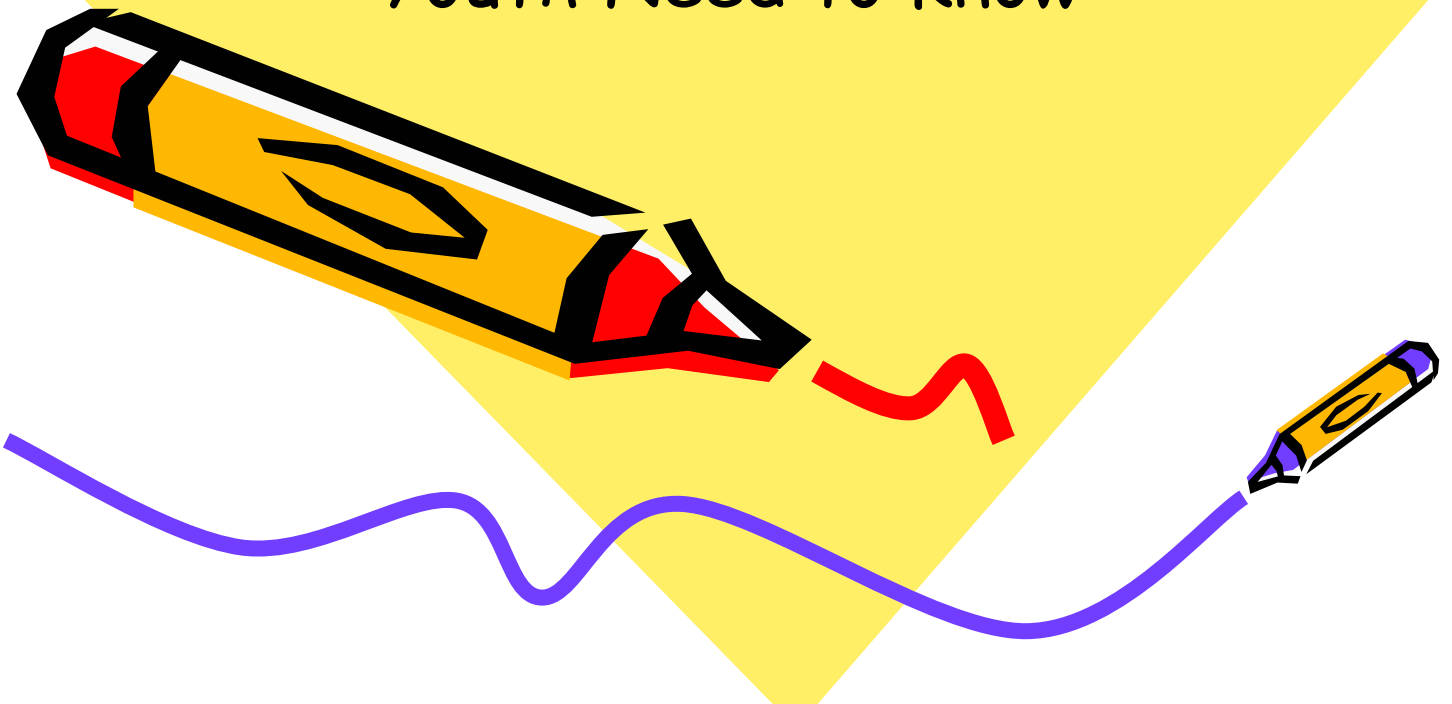


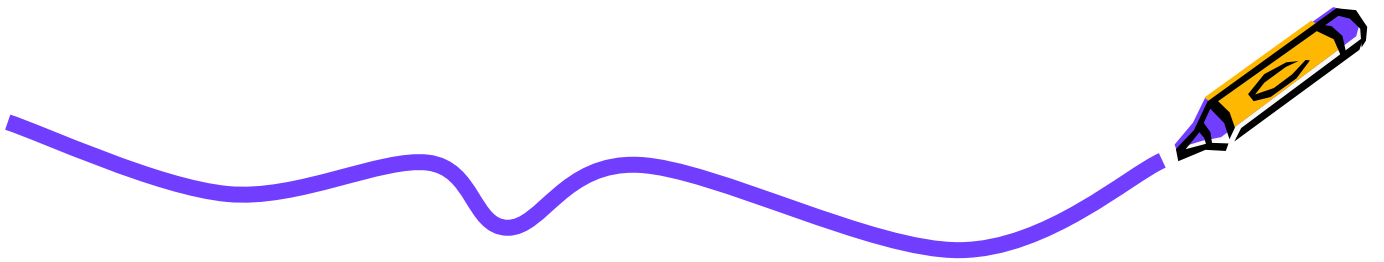
# Youth Leadership Development

What Adults Working with  
Youth Need to Know



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**This publication is available in alternative media on request.**

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## Introduction

Welcome! This training package, Youth Leadership Development, What Adults Working with Youth Need to Know, is designed to serve as a resource for adult volunteers and professionals who work with youth—specifically in the area of leadership development.

If you are reading this introduction and considering using the training that follows, chances are you place a high value on working with young people and helping them develop as leaders. Fantastic! Your interest in and dedication to this process is greatly appreciated. Since you spend time working with youth, educating them, and helping them develop as leaders, isn't important that you also spend time educating and developing yourself in order to be effective in your work. Of course it is!

This training package contains four sessions, and each session builds on the session before it. However, it is designed in such a way that you can use one session at a time (or even part of a session), depending on your needs. If you would like to use all four sessions together, they can be combined into an intensive day-long training or a weekend workshop. Or, they could be separated into weekly and even monthly sessions. How you choose to do it depends on what will work best for you and your group of adult volunteers and professionals.

The four sessions are:

***Session One: What Leadership Means to Me.*** This session explores the definitions of leadership and the developmental needs of youth engaged in the process of leadership. The session provides basic information on leadership characteristics and types as well as the stages of youth leadership development.

***Session Two: Follow the Leaders.*** This session explores youth leadership in groups. Since youth view leadership in a group context, this session will help you to explore the various stages of group functioning and provide tips for helping to engage youth groups in productive discussions

***Session Three: Making a Difference.*** This session focuses on the need youth have for their leadership experiences to be hands-on and have an impact. The session will help you to understand what factors are necessary for leadership experiences to be meaningful to youth and also provide you with some practice incorporating these factors into the leadership experiences you help to create.

***Session Four: Training Wheels.*** This session helps to explain the needs and expectations that youth have of the adults who work with them. The goal of this session is to provide you with a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of adults who work with youth as well as tips for empowering youth, partnering with them, and allowing them to have ownership in their leadership experiences.

Each session includes hands-on activities, informational slides, and opportunities for interaction and open discussion with other participants and youth leaders. Through information, involvement, and reflection, this training package will allow you to become more confident and effective as you work with youth on the development of leadership.

Leadership potential exists in all youth. Thank you for wanting to work with them in ways that will further shape and hone their diverse talents. Zeldin and his colleagues (2000) emphasize the need for modification in adult attitudes and current organizational structure which would allow for greater ease in facilitating youth-adult partnerships. These sorts of things are not easily changed, so the process is not something that can be completed overnight. This training is intended to provide you with some first steps and resources for continuing to evolve toward a greater understanding of youth.

Camino and Zeldin (in press) sum up their thoughts by encouraging a “concerted, multi-pronged effort” to demonstrate to adults that youth are capable of making positive contributions to the community so that adults, in turn, will be motivated to provide youth with the supports they need to advance along the path of leadership development.

Ultimately, adult volunteers and professionals working with youth need to be willing and able to look at leadership in a broad and thorough manner without confining themselves to traditional definitions, personal preferences, or common biases. Youth must be provided with practical and widely applicable experiences which are meaningful to them—and they must be allowed to have responsibility for, and ownership in, those experiences. Otherwise, they will be short-changed in the developmental process. This is not fair to them, and it is not fair to the organizations and communities within which they function. Current literature on the topic of youth leadership development tells us that leadership, especially for young people, is not something that is determined at birth. It is a potential in everyone that needs to be recognized, encouraged, and developed.

Good Luck!