Addressing The Cultural Needs of Youth

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YOUTH POWER! of Families Together in NYS
MISSION
YOUTH POWER! is the New York State network of young people who have been labeled and are seeking change. Together, we have decided to speak up about our experiences because no one knows what it is like for us better than we do. Through peer-to-peer mentoring, we empower young people to be active citizens, aware of government operations, their rights and the ability to use their voices to influence policy, practice, regulation and law. We are young people helping other people, ensuring availability of self-help and peer support while changing systems so that young people get the support they need with the respect and dignity they deserve.
How are we Classifying Youth?

- Age Range of 12 – 21
- YOUTH POWER! age range is 12 – 30
  - With the current trend it is important to realize there has been a shift in “reaching landmarks” by defined ages
  - Young Adults face multiple “Transition Phases”
Generations We Serve

 Millennials

 Generation Z
- Born between 1997 – Now (Pew Research Center)
Generational Angst

- Every generation faces different social and environmental challenges.
- Young people throughout history have challenged the status quo and created social change.
- Young people who question things and voice their opinions should be celebrated, encouraged, empowered, respected and listened to in every generation.
Cultural Variables and Sub Cultures

- LGBTQ
- People of Color
- English as a Second Language
- High System Involvement
- Location
- Economic Standing
Becoming a Label

- Young people are faced with a variety of labels regardless of a disability
- Punks, Goth, Jocks
- It is difficult for many youth to be associated with one idea, group, or trend
- Young people like to be known for who they are not what they appear to be
- Having the label of Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED) on top of other labels is difficult. It has a negative connotation that no one wants
Creating Self Identity

- It is a fundamental need for young people to have a sense of belonging.
- It is natural for young people to experiment and explore various interests.
- Some people view this as passing fads, It is not so much fads as exploring self-identity.
Self Expression

- Self expression is very important to young people
- Artistic forms of expression visual, music, writing
- Clothing & appearance
- Physical activity
- Technology
- Vocalization
Testing Boundaries

- It is the nature of young people to test boundaries and rebel against authority
- Young people need guidance but they also need to learn from personal experiences
- Provide opportunities for young people to make informed decisions and build the skills they will need as adults
Realistic Expectations

- Young people who receive mental health services are often held to higher standards than their peers
  - Can’t go to sleep late
  - Have to be up early
  - Can’t have loud music
  - Early curfews
  - Etc.
Risky Behavior vs Age Appropriate

- Often activities that are common for young people are viewed as “risky behaviors” for youth who receive MH services
  - Being out with friends and drinking alcohol after 21 years of age.
  - Having Sex
  - Having a girlfriend/boyfriend
The Outcome

- Transitional services often do not account for this and make it difficult for young people to act in ways that are common for their non-labeled peers.
- It furthers the negativity and segregation of young people receiving services
Diversity

- Cultural competency is very complex and is about more than just a person’s ethnicity.
- When providing services it is a necessity to meet the needs of the individual.
- Don’t make assumptions based on your perception of the person’s background.
- Ask open-ended questions that leave the door open for exploration.
Barriers to Receiving Services

- Lack of Engaging Activities
- Disconnected from the Community
- Transportation
- Knowledge of the Event
- Timing of the Event
- Family Beliefs on Mental Health Services
- Stigma or fear of judgement
Identified Needs

- Interaction with Police
- Community Resources
- Life Skills
  - Hygiene
  - Money Management
  - Cooking & Cleaning
  - Job Coaching
Youth Guided Practice

“Youth Guided means that young people have the right to be empowered, educated, and given a decision making role in the care of their own lives as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all youth in the community, state and nation.”

- Youth M.O.V.E. National
Five Principles of Youth Guided Practice

- Strength Based
- Sharing Power & Empowering Youth
- Value Youth Culture
- Value Cultural Competence
- Recognize & Avoid Adultism
Changing How We Think

- Youth are assets and resources to creating better outcomes
- Push back isn’t always disobedience but sometimes it’s an attempt to share opposing opinions (like true partners)
- Give young people the tools
Being Creative

- Allow young people the opportunity to direct how services are offered
- Break down dreams to create goals
- Physical Activities
- Community Outings and Events
- Utilize the arts
  - Music – Listening and Creating
  - Crafts
  - Coping Tools
Key Points

- Remember not everything is attached to the Label someone is given
- Youth Guided Practice creates a space for real and meaningful youth engagement
- Understand your own bias
- Utilize Trauma Informed Approach
- Let young people learn and grow in their own ways.
QUESTIONS?
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