


# Youth Engagement: What, Why and How

Presented by Zac Johnstone Nicole Sudiacle  
@CYMH\_ON



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# Acknowledgements

- Before we begin, we would like to acknowledge that we are on traditional land of the Haudenosaunee, Ojibway and Anishinabek nations
- Thank you for inviting us!
- Discussion based, questions encouraged
- Striving towards a safer, braver space



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# About us

We bring people and knowledge together to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of mental health services for children, youth and their families and caregivers.

SERVICE AREA SUPPORT	SYSTEM SUPPORT	IMPACT AND INNOVATION
strengthen skills and knowledge in key areas that lead to <b>improved outcomes</b>	provide consistent evidence-informed approaches that <b>enhance service planning and delivery</b>	inspire excellence and innovation through <b>continuous learning, evolution and innovation</b>



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## What we're here for

- Provide an overview of youth engagement
- Explore key concepts and considerations for authentic engagement
- Mobilize our existing knowledge and practices
- Build your understanding of implementing youth engagement in your agency, community and related systems



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## Who We Are



Zac Johnstone (they/them) Strategic Advisory Council  
Nicole Sudiacle (she/her) Youth Advisor



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## What IS Youth Engagement?

“Empowering all young people as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important.”

- The New Mentality



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## Guiding Principles

1. Value youth as community assets
2. Commit to participatory leadership
3. Build authentic relationships
4. Strive for health equity
5. Meet youth where they're at
6. Use a whole community approach
7. Put safety first



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## Youth Engagement: The Benefits

Clinical	Personal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develops recovery skills</li><li>• Strengthens clinical relationships</li><li>• Increases active attention in sessions</li><li>• Increases quality of session participations</li><li>• Reduces depressive symptoms &amp; suicide risk</li><li>• Protects against stigma</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improves self-confidence</li><li>• Builds leadership skills</li><li>• Strengthen sense of responsibility</li><li>• Improves academics</li><li>• Increases physical activity</li><li>• Reduces substance use</li><li>• Increases critical thinking and sound decision-making</li></ul>

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## Agency Benefits

- Improves program effectiveness
- Increases the visibility of mental health services
- Promotes a culture of inclusion
- Increases agency credibility and appeal to funders
- Increases community reach
- Fosters greater staff commitment to the agency
- Decreases operational cost

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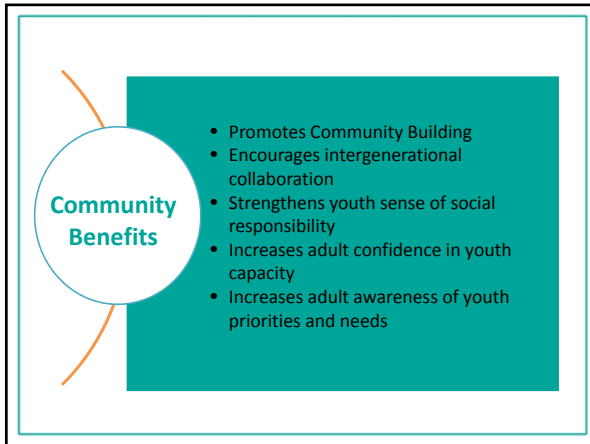
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**Community Benefits**

- Promotes Community Building
- Encourages intergenerational collaboration
- Strengthens youth sense of social responsibility
- Increases adult confidence in youth capacity
- Increases adult awareness of youth priorities and needs

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**CONTINUUM OF ENGAGEMENT**

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health

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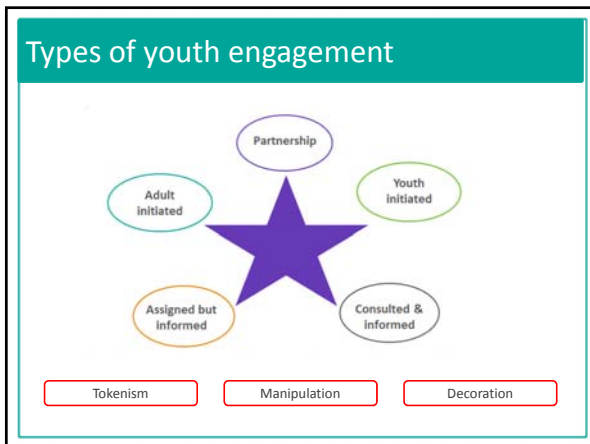
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**Types of youth engagement**

Partnership

Adult initiated

Youth initiated

Assigned but informed

Consulted & informed

Tokenism    Manipulation    Decoration

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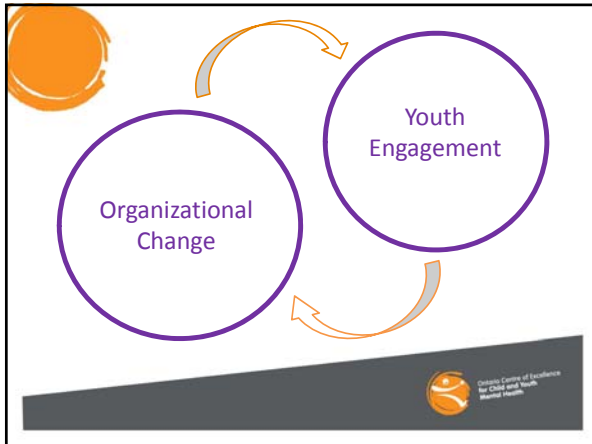
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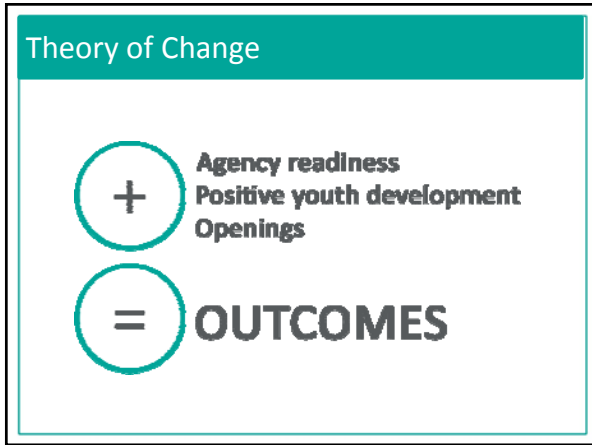
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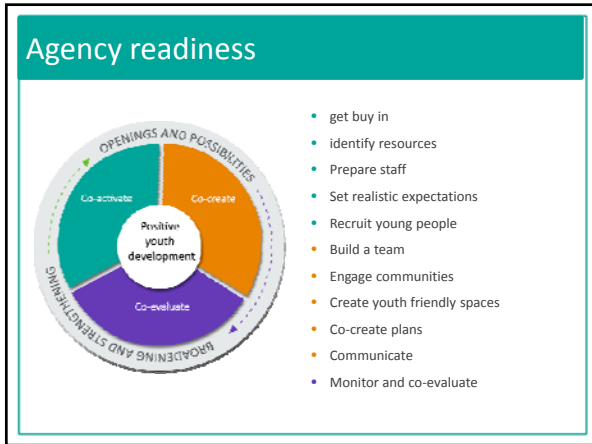
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### Building and Sustaining a Core Team

**Benefits of a team approach**

- Enriches the change process.
- Helps identify the challenges and opportunities in YE and pools resources to overcome them.
- Helps in creating a common vision to support and sustain youth engagement.
- Team members can act as ambassadors to the practice of YE which supports staff readiness

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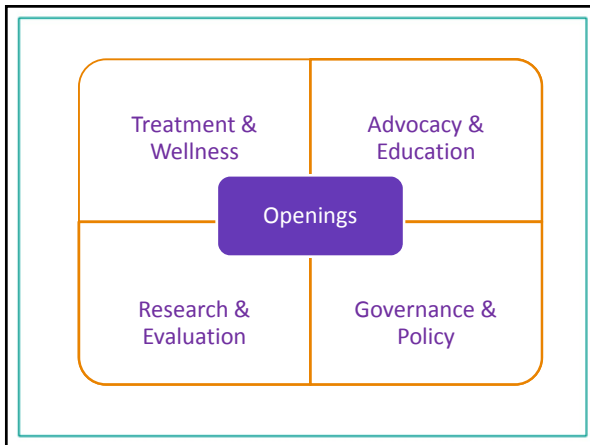
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### Putting the Openings into Action

1. Which Openings does your agency excel at?
2. What are the barriers/facilitators to these openings in your agency?

Treatment & Wellness	Advocacy & Education
Research & Evaluation	Governance & Policy

Openings

Division of Services for Child and Youth Mental Health

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**World Cafe**



Ontario Centre of Excellence  
for Child and Youth  
Mental Health

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**How does your agency engage young people in leadership positions?**



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**How can we facilitate more (and more meaningful) youth engagement across Child and Youth Serving Sectors?**



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**What are the (many) barriers to engage marginalized youth?**



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**What's important in being an Adult Ally?**



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**Tips for Intergenerational Relationships**

1. Set Out Clear Goals
2. Encourage Differences and Creativity
3. Make Connections
4. Provide Mentorship and Support
5. Communicate Openly

Drawn from Ilona Dougherty's report on Intergenerational decision-making partnerships



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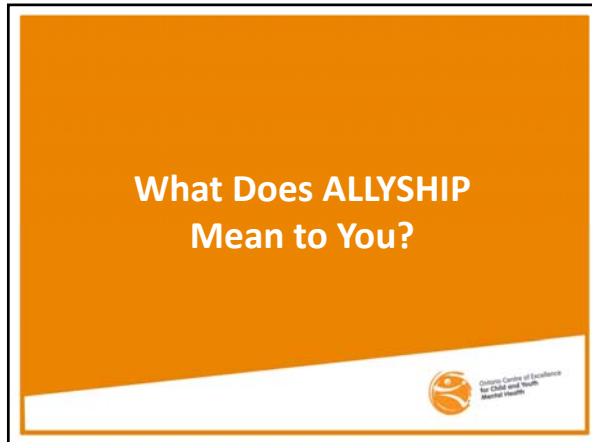
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