



Best Practices to be Incorporated into Youth Peer Mentorship Programs

Area	Learnings	Best Practices
<p>Re-traumatization of work</p>	<p>We have learned that both the sharing of our stories as well as talking to others about their stories can re-traumatize.</p> <p>Being consulted by organizations about our stories then dealing with the agencies who push back on the youth peer mentor program with policy and procedure is frustrating and re-traumatizing, as well as de-valuing. Often stories are shared, and we feel that we have made progress and are understood yet nothing changes at the level of practice.</p>	<p>Have available mentors to debrief, as well as outside support/counselling separate from the funding organization (e.g. John Howard).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This could be through aftercare (OACAS) or under 21 through your agency, or through employer (e.g. John Howard sets up outside counselling sessions). <p>Rosie Reid works with Loyalist students through these issues and may have material or insights.</p> <p>Importance of having decision makers who are community players and supportive of our work advocate on our behalf at a system level (e.g. Justice Deluzio).</p>
<p>Lived Experience</p>	<p>An important aspect of this work is the ability of YPM to share their stories, perceptions, and experiences.</p> <p>Youth Mentees connect better with YPMs who have relatable experiences therefore allowing them to re-engage in the community.</p>	<p>We have learned you can advocate without sharing details of your story. There are some areas that require building trust, and as YPM it's important to reflect on what you are comfortable sharing and what pieces are kept private.</p> <p>We have identified some areas that are impactful, such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of places lived - Age into care - Parental negligence

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	<p>We have started to question what happens if a YPM chooses not to share personal stories, how will this impact the work and relationships both with youth and agencies.</p> <p>At larger meetings (e.g. CORE group) YPM are required or share personal details while others at the table participate from a “professional” lens.</p> <p>YPM will be at different stages In ability to share their stories. Modelling how to share without being too personal will be important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of schools attended - Reasons why youth were charged in care - Rules of group homes - How you were talked to in schools - Conditioned to deficit mindset and importance of being strength based (impactful moments where someone saw our strengths) - Number of youth in group homes not in jurisdiction <p>These areas have proven impactful and are things that can be discussed in a more generic method to avoid the sense of “this is who I am”.</p> <p>Discussion boundaries is important,</p>
Training	<p>Training before starting any peer mentorship is vital.</p> <p>The following training is seen as beneficial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SafeTalk - De-escalation and crisis prevention - Trauma Informed - Diversity and Cultural Competency training - PLAR practitioner <p>Orientation on policy and procedure for lead agency is vital at the start of contract.</p>	<p>Lived experience helps provide broader context for applying best practices to our training. YPM unique lived experience and world views provide great opportunity to incorporate and integrate concepts from all training.</p> <p>Orientation session for YPM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies and procedures for YPM - Policies and procedures for JHS - Best practices and framework - PLAR practitioner role - PLAR group portfolio



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	<p>Need to identify a framework for onboarding new YPM.</p>	<p>Development of a hiring/orientation package and process.</p>
<p>Supervision</p>	<p>We work best with ongoing, available, consistent professional mentorship/supervision by a program supervisor/staff who is up to date on what we are doing.</p> <p>As YPM we regularly work with youth or agencies and run into issues where we require feedback and follow up, or guidance. Regular face-to-face meetings are important.</p> <p>Often working with agency staff can seem daunting and intimidating, or like an authority/power struggle. Having the presence of a supervisor who can help address issues and provide guidance for next steps is important for the “do no harm” model.</p> <p>YPM will enter the program from different places and occupational experiences and will need assistance with transitioning to an office environment. This can also create challenges to program validation and YPM taken seriously.</p>	<p>Supervision available during the hours of YPM work, including emergency contact. Someone should be available.</p> <p>Adult Ally attends meetings as support team with YPM. YPM should not be meeting with service providers involved with mentees by themselves.</p> <p>Orientation to office procedures (phone calls, emails, meeting preparation and facilitation) are important aspects of YPM work that require mentoring and feedback.</p>
<p>Reconnecting as a group</p>	<p>We have learned that coming together as a team allows for reflection, follow-up, problem</p>	<p>Schedule weekly meetings to have all team players present if possible, including project</p>



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	<p>solving an adjusting is imerative to our work. It helps to establish priorities, work around YPM unique schedules, and debrief on challenges and progress.</p> <p>The cycle seems to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning - Trouble shooting - Debriefing - Follow-Up - Adjusting - Repeat 	<p>facilitator (if there is one),YPM, and program supervisor.</p> <p>Develop shared work plans.</p> <p>Updating executive director of progress and ask questions.</p> <p>Transparency in roles and responsibilities of everyone involved is important to ensure effective communication.</p>
<p>Group homes</p>	<p>We have learned that the same challenges and barriers that existed for us continue to exist. When we work with group home staff we feel the stigma of our story impacts our professional capacity to work effectively with both the staff and mentee.</p> <p>We have also learned that communication needs to be direct and not leave any gray area for misinterpretation.</p> <p>We have learned that visits with mentees are more beneficial outside the group home to be re-engage or engage with the community</p> <p>There is a lack of trust by staff in our processes, program, goals, and professional competency.</p> <p>There is a lack of social/recreational programming</p>	<p>Advocacy or support by lead agencies including CAS regarding the importance of our work would help make progress with relationships with group home staff and supervisors.</p> <p>Supervision/support when dealing with staff or service providers is helpful.</p> <p>YPM should focus on planning activities in the community to strengthen our relationship and interactions with mentees.</p> <p>YPM can find or develop and include more social/recreational opportunities for youth In the community.</p>



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	<p>for youth in residential and group homes which we have seen impact education.</p> <p>We rarely have private and confidential space to meet with mentees when we are at group homes.</p> <p>We found our practice easily slipped into a case management approach. Boundaries around purpose and roles should be addressed.</p>	
<p>Working with agencies</p>	<p>It is important but challenging to share the purpose and function of the work that we do with community partners.</p> <p>This has impacted our ability to receive referrals for mentees and support for our project.</p> <p>We are more effective and educated as a program when we have community agencies actively on board and sharing information.</p> <p>Our planning is most effective when consistent representation is available at the table or for YPM to access information, support and resources.</p>	<p>Consistent representation at the table, or alternatively, a consistent point of contact with a representative at each agency.</p> <p>Communication materials developed for contact to share with others at agencies.</p> <p>Commitment by agencies to connect us with all eligible youth and help us navigate any policies and procedures on their end.</p>
<p>Authentic engagement</p>	<p>We recognize that youth are most appreciative and receptive when we engage them authentically and respectfully,</p>	<p>For us, authentic engagement – with a strengths-based focus includes:</p>



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	<p>showing appreciation for their strength and validating their trauma.</p> <p>-</p> <p>It is important to value the person instead of just the story.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consent to share information- Acknowledging that they have shared their story and thanking them- Acknowledging mentee vulnerability- Recognizing the value of agencies practising these methods that foster authentic engagement. <p>Value each individual mentor and mentee.</p>