



FACTSHEET

TAKE 5: Practicable Takeaways for Youth Work in a COVID-19 Era

Content developed by Clementine Utchay, YouthREX Research Assistant, from *Reimagining Youth Work in a COVID-19 Era*, a YouthREX webinar series that took place in the summer of 2020.

From July to September 2020, YouthREX hosted a six-part online conversation series on how the Ontario youth sector is adapting to shifting contexts as a result of COVID-19.

Different youth programs and advocates explored how they are pivoting their approaches to youth engagement, programming, and advocacy; the issues that are emerging as priorities in their work; the lessons they are learning (and unlearning); and ways they are adapting in real time during this unprecedented period. Here are 5 key takeaways from this series:

BE CREATIVE AND FLEXIBLE



Youth work during this time requires **more collaboration, more care, more creativity and flexibility**, and more compassion for one another. Programs are responding to shifting needs in real time, and working to maintain their relevancy and their connections with youth, families, and communities in a variety of ways that require innovation and adaptation.

LISTEN TO YOUTH AND MEET THEM WHERE THEY'RE AT



Youth have multiple and compounding needs. Adapting programs to meet youth where they're at during this time is especially important. **There's no one-size-fits-all approach**, but listening to youth and working in a way that responds to their needs and concerns can facilitate ongoing engagement and participation.

ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY



Online programming has both improved program access for some and made access for others more difficult. Keep in mind that not everyone has the skills or capacity to engage online, so **consider how youth may access additional tools, resources, and supports in other ways.**

ENGAGE IN EVALUATION



Youth programs that pivoted online are implementing new strategies and ideas; by documenting the outcomes, they can share lessons learned in real time. **Acknowledge that youth also have critical insights to offer:** ask what they need, what's going well, and what can be improved, and then measure your program outcomes based on their perspectives.

LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS



Youth workers have had to take on roles they might not have before, including being **resource navigators** in supporting youth to access additional resources and supports from other community agencies.

Partnerships with other organizations/programs can help in **responding to need, supporting changes in program delivery and strategies for youth engagement, and facilitating collaboration** for funding opportunities.

