

Guiding Principles for Positive Youth Development

Michigan 4-H Youth Development

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1. Youth develop positive relationships with adults and peers.

Youth develop sustained relationships with peers and adults that nurture their positive development.

Elements of effective practice:

- Adults and youth are available and accessible to each other for information, guidance and support.
- The development of positive, meaningful relationships that foster a sense of belonging and connectedness over time is encouraged and supported.
- Adults and youth are consistently and actively engaged together in activities and experiences.
- Cooperative experiences that build trust and foster honest and open communication are developed and supported.

- Opportunities and experiences are provided to foster youths' positive sense of purpose and view of the future.
- Youth are recognized for both their participation and achievement.

4. Youth are considered participants rather than recipients in the learning process.

Youth are encouraged to actively participate in their own learning. Opportunities for youth to learn and develop take place in many different contexts and take into account a variety of learning styles.

Elements of effective practice:

- Learning is encouraged in formal and nonformal settings, in planned and unplanned ways.
- Opportunities for shared decision-making, planning and program implementation are provided for youth.
- Adults and youth work together to overcome barriers to participation such as transportation, cost and scheduling.

5. Youth develop skills that help them succeed.

Youth experience and learn from hands-on educational opportunities that help them develop the skills they need to be successful adults.

Elements of effective practice:

- Youth identify, develop, practice and articulate their skills.
- Youth set challenging yet realistic goals; they follow through on their commitments to achieve their best.
- Youth receive support from adult and teen volunteers, family members, peers and the larger community throughout the skill-building process.
- Youth recognize and celebrate their skills and accomplishments within their own definition of success and mastery.

6. Youth recognize, understand and appreciate multiculturalism.

Youth will respect differences among groups and individuals of diverse backgrounds. Youth will develop skills and competencies that help them foster social justice in their communities and their world.

Elements of effective practice:

- Youth explore and value their own diverse abilities, skills, interests and cultural backgrounds.
- Youth explore diverse people, places and ideas.

I pledge...



My **HEAD**
to clearer thinking,



My **HEART**
to greater loyalty,



My **HANDS**
to larger service,



My **HEALTH**
to better living,
for my club,
my community,
my country and
my world.

2. Youth are physically and emotionally safe.

Youth will learn more and participate more fully when they feel physically and emotionally safe. A structured yet flexible environment encourages honesty, trust and respect among all youth and adults.

Elements of effective practice:

- Adult and youth volunteers model constructive ways for providing feedback and addressing situations, behaviors and emotions.
- Activities and programs are held in environments that maximize the safety and well-being of participants.
- Youth are encouraged to try new experiences through positive risk-taking.
- Rules, expectations and consequences are clear, consistent, developmentally appropriate and applied fairly.

3. Youth are actively engaged in their own development.

Through a process of identity discovery and awareness, youth increase their personal competence and sense of well-being.

Elements of effective practice:

- A wide range of opportunities and experiences that encourage youth and adults to explore, discuss and reflect on ethical values, personal interests, strengths and accomplishments.
- Youth explore, discuss and reflect on ethical values, personal interests, strengths and accomplishments in purposeful and meaningful ways.

- Youth and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities are included in decision-making, leadership and planning.

7. Youth grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership.



Youth feel included and involved in their communities. They have significant roles to play and important contributions to make as stewards of the future. Youth develop personal competencies that foster leadership, caring and citizenship.

Elements of effective practice:

- Youth are aware of and informed about local and global needs, opportunities and issues, and are provided meaningful roles in how decisions are made.
- Youth use their time, energies and skills for the benefit of others.
- Youth practice leadership skills to address needs, issues and opportunities.
- Youth are encouraged to recognize their roles as stewards in their communities.

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Children, Youth, & Family Programs



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