

# Authentic Youth Collaboration





COHHIO is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to ending homelessness and to promoting decent, safe, fair, affordable housing for all, with a focus on assisting low-income and special needs populations.

# COHHIO Youth Housing Initiative Team



**Lisa Brooks she/her  
Youth Housing  
Initiative Director**



**Ami Diallo she/her  
Youth Housing  
Initiative Specialist**



**Evelyn Garon she/her MSW  
Youth Housing  
Initiative Specialist**

# Youth Initiative Core Roles and Responsibilities



## **Advocacy & Policy**

Advocate for the needs of Ohio's marginalized and at-risk youth with an emphasis on homelessness. Work to strengthen or establish data-driven youth policy



## **Technical Assistance**

Provide Technical Assistance and support to state departments, providers, school districts, health departments and others upon request



## **System Coordination**

Support strengthen enhance and develop, where needed, youth focused system coordination at a local, state and federal level



## **Awareness**

Facilitate regular convenings and conversations with critical stakeholders aimed at preventing and ending youth homelessness.



## **Training**

Provide training and support to state departments, providers, school districts, health departments and others upon request

# COHHIO Youth Housing Initiative

COHHIO's Youth Housing Initiative seeks to reduce the barriers that prevent Ohio's youth and young adults at risk of or experiencing homelessness from gaining access to housing, services and stability -- through furthering advocacy, training and education; in order to put an end to youth homelessness across our state.

The program also aims to provide these youth with tools and information to assist them as they navigate systems and communities for supports and services.



# Authentic

## Youth Engagement Training

Kai Cotton & Christie Sozio

A Place 4 Me



Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

**WELCOME!**



# What Is **Authentic** Youth Engagement?

- **Partnering with young people**
  - to create systems, programs, or organizational change
  - supporting individual leadership and professional development with youth
- **Based on an understanding of adolescent brain development — recognizing how young people mature and what they need to support that growth**
- **Young people and adults work together:**
  - as equal contributors to decision making
  - with a balance of sharing ideas and information between youth and adults

# Why is Authentic Youth Engagement **important?**

- ▶ Young people are the **experts** of their own lives.
- ▶ Authentic engagement demonstrates a commitment to an inclusive process geared toward **advancing equitable outcomes**.
- ▶ Engaging young people in planning and decision making regarding their lives — and the larger community — helps young people build skills such as reasoning, decision making and self-regulation.
- ▶ Increase young people's influence and personal stake in the community.
- ▶ Leads to well-informed decision making, practice design and policies.



# What Comes to Mind When I Say “Adolescence?”



# What Comes to Mind When I say, “Adolescence?”

A lot going on

Ups and  
Downs

Growth

Taking  
chances

Becoming who  
you will be

Creative

Learning

Innovation

Relationships

Friendships

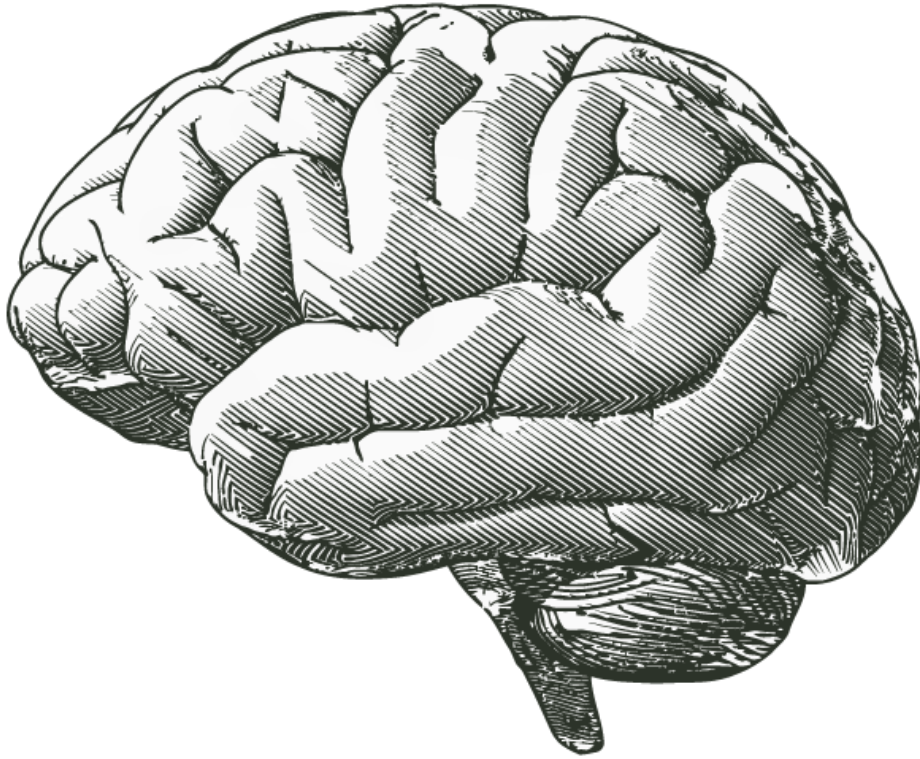
Energy

Mood Swings

Healthy Risk  
Taking

Lots of  
Feelings

# What's the **brain** got to do with it?



**Pre-frontal Cortex**



**Limbic System**

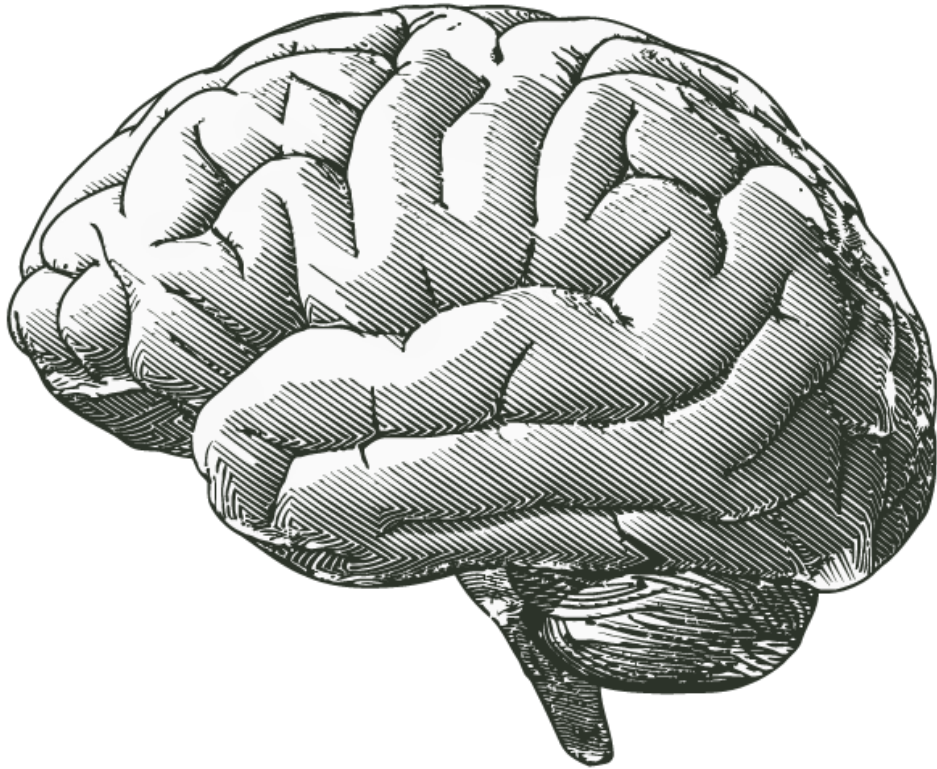


**Mid Brain**



**Brain Stem**

# Adolescence: What's Going on in There?



## **Cortex**

Critical Thinking  
Emotional Regulation  
Planning  
Introspection



## **Limbic System**

Emotionally Reactive  
Attachment  
Survival

# Change the Narrative:

## From **Impulsive** to **Creative Contributors**



### **Adolescents are:**

- **Uniquely primed for learning**
- **More sensitive and receptive to others' influence**
- **Motivated by curiosity, passion and excitement**

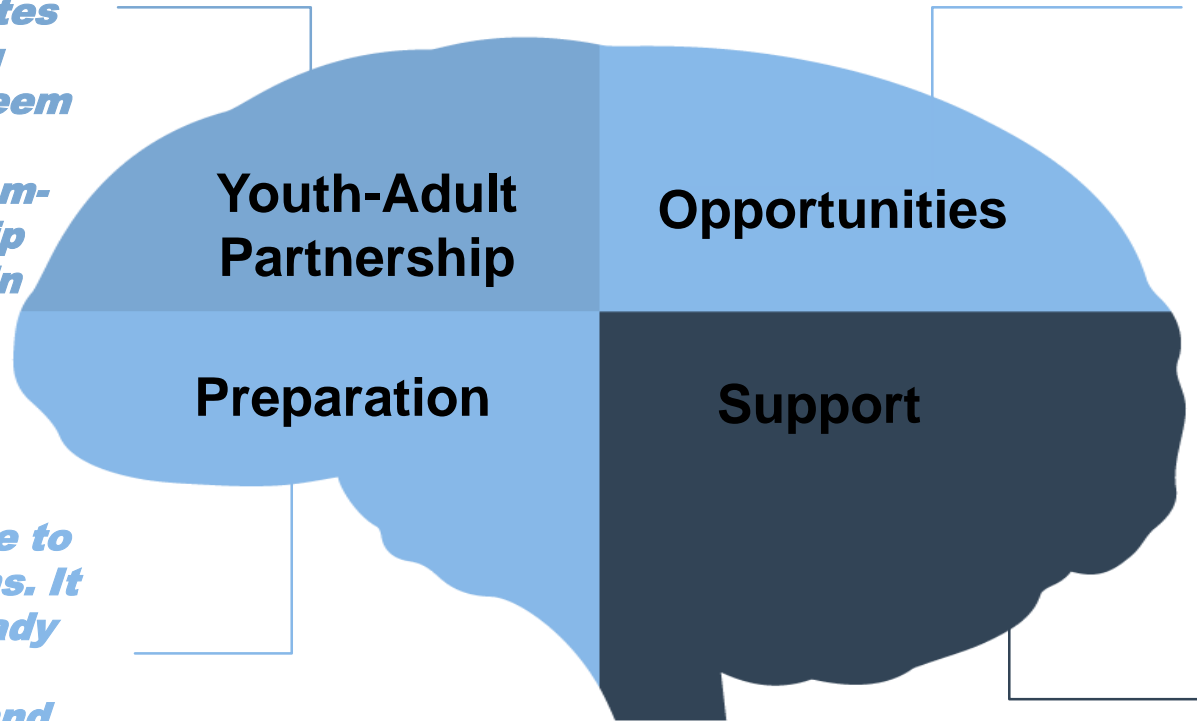
### **Adults can:**

- **Approach young leaders as creative and powerful contributors**
- **Provide opportunities to try new things and take on consistent responsibilities**
- **Develop relationships through partnerships that will involve them in decision-making**

# Achieving Authentic Youth Engagement: How it Looks in Practice

*Treats young people as equal partners, cultivates trust, enables young people to build self-esteem and supports the development of problem-solving and leadership skills they will need in adulthood.*

*Empowers young people to make informed decisions. It enables them to be ready for and benefit from opportunities known and unknown. Preparation should happen well in advance of the event, meeting, etc.*



*Provides avenues to exercise the youth-adult partnerships that have been formed. Opportunities should be identified, evaluated and created while thinking about adolescent development and the individual needs and goals of the young person, with a specific goal or result in mind.*

*Is grounded in authentic and trusting relationships that enable young people to gain optimal benefits from participating in an opportunity to lead and contribute. Support is often physical, emotional and financial and is tailored to meet the unique needs of the young person.*

# Assessing the 4 Practices of Authentic Youth Engagement in your Organization.

## Assessing Youth-Adult Partnerships

- In what ways are adults asking for, listening to and incorporating the ideas of young people?
- In what ways are adults integrating the opinions, suggestions & experience of young people into organizational decisions?
- How are young people and adults intentionally sharing power?

## Assessing Opportunity

- In what ways does this opportunity meet the needs of the young person?
- Does the opportunity contribute to a skill or goal of interest to the young person?
- How does this opportunity contribute to a larger goal or effort for change?

## Assessing Support

- In what ways does it meet the needs of the young person?
- What support strategies have been discussed with the young person?
- In debriefing an opportunity, did you discuss how they felt, what went well and what skills were gained with the young person

## Assessing Preparation

- What info does the young person want and need to feel empowered to say yes or no to an opportunity or partner?
- What info does the young person want and need to feel confident and comfortable to contribute to the work?
- What is the young persons preferred prep style? (i.e. talk through, write things down, record conversations)
- What skills or goal in preparation are strengthening?



# ✧Spectrum of Adult Attitudes✧

**Adults know what is best for young people and control situations in which they allow them to be involved.**

**Youth as Objects**

**It is the young persons responsibility to take advantage to what adults have designed for them.**

**Adults retain control over the majority of decisions, letting young people make trivial decisions because it will be “good for them.”**

**Youth as Recipients**

**Young people have the responsibility to practice for when they become “real people”.**

**Adults respect young people as having something significant to offer, supporting and encouraging their full involvement.**

**Youth as Partners**

**Young people have responsibility for making meaningful decisions and for working as equal partners with adults.**

# ROGER HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION



**RUNG 8 - Youth initiated shared decisions with adults:** Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

**RUNG 7 - Youth initiated and directed:** Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

**RUNG 6 - Adult initiated shared decisions with youth:** Adult-led activities, in which **decision** making is shared with youth.

**RUNG 5 - Consulted and informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

**RUNG 4 - Assigned, but informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

**RUNG 3 - Tokenism:** Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

**RUNG 2 - Decoration:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

**RUNG 1 - Manipulation:** Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

# ✧ Action Steps ✧

- ▶ **Action Step Navigation – What are some action steps your organizations can commit to implement more authentic youth engagement?**
- ▶ **Try to come up with at least 1 action step.**

# • Additional Action Steps •

- Plan for the involvement of young people
- Recognize internal and external barriers to youth-adult partnerships
- Treat young people as individuals
- Respect & prioritize the time and responsibilities of young people
- Take time to explain leadership roles
- Check assumptions & stereotypes
- Practice good communication

# ❖Q&A❖





# ❖ Thank You ❖



# Bringing Authentic Youth Collaboration to Life

***“Authentic youth collaboration is about more than inviting a young person to share the stories of their past; it is also about providing the space for them to share their visions for the future.”***

***- True Colors Foundation***

How can authentic youth collaboration be implemented into your work?



# Defining “Youth Action Board”

- A Youth Action Board (YAB) is a group of youth and young adults who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness.
  - Composed of youth age 24 and under
- A YAB’s aim is to engage youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in providing real and authentic feedback and education to improve the services and systems designed to support them.
  - The YAB’s expertise is derived from lived experience, but extends beyond advocacy and storytelling to offering communities insight and suggestions for improving systems and service delivery.
  - Through the YAB, members are empowered to develop their own strategies, missions, values and goals.



# Why are YABs Important?

- Youth empowerment and meaningful inclusion
- Youth have valuable experiences that can teach and inform
  - Youth with lived experience have first hand knowledge of the homeless response system
- Youth homelessness is often undercounted/invisible, YABs bring youth issues to the forefront
- YABs reinforce shared power and equal partnership

# YABs in Ohio

Please answer the following poll questions as they appear:

- Do you currently have a YAB?
- How are interested are you in forming a YAB?
- What challenges are you facing in forming a YAB?
- What resources/support do you need in order to achieve YAB success?

# Discussion

Can you see the benefits in your work when you partner with lived experience?

When you think about developing authentic youth collaboration at your organization, or at the community level, what comes to mind for you?

How are you currently embedding lived experience into your work?

# Questions?



# Resources

[Building a YHDP Planning Team Webinar Slides](#)

[Ending Youth Homelessness: Building Blocks of a Youth System Webinar](#)

[COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Paying People with Lived Experience and Expertise](#)

[Youth Compensation Challenges and Solutions](#)

[Guide to Authentic Youth Leadership and Collaboration](#)

[True Colors – Youth Collaboration Toolkit](#)

[A Way Home America – Youth Collaboration Toolkit](#)

[Youth Collaboration 201 Roadmap](#)

[Youth Engagement Toolkit](#)

[Youth Leadership Toolkit](#)

[Youth Collaboration Tools and Tips](#)

[Foster Club Youth Leadership Toolkit](#)





T<sub>1</sub>

H<sub>4</sub>

A<sub>1</sub>

N<sub>1</sub>

K<sub>5</sub>

S<sub>1</sub>