

Overview of Youth Development¹

Youth Development is a *growth process* by which all youth (the “double digit” years through the teenage years, age 10 to age 20) seek ways to meet their basic physical and social needs.

- ✓ Youth development is experienced by all young people regardless of their intellectual capacity, social and economic background, ethnicity, or race.
- ✓ Young people from disadvantaged communities have more barriers and fewer resources available for positive supports during this developmental phase. Programs like BTE and volunteers like yourselves are vital to help fill the gaps for these young people.

Youth Development is an *approach to build competencies* (knowledge, skills, and abilities) necessary to succeed in adolescence and adulthood.

- ✓ This approach is not new; what is new is the focus on designing and implementing programs that reflect research-based principles that are drawn from studies on resiliency, strength-based services, and adolescent development.
- ✓ To build youth competencies, youth development programs make use of the **3Ps** — *people, places, and purpose*. The 3Ps involve:

People Youth development programs need volunteers like yourselves that can serve as role models, mentors, motivators, and teachers.

Places To broaden students’ visions for their life, youth explore and build competencies through key experiences at unique venues, such as companies, higher education institutions, or cultural institutions.

Purpose All opportunities and activities must be meaningful and relevant to youth.

¹ Advancing Youth Development Training Program, AED National Training Institute for Community Youth Work

Overview of Youth Development, continued

- ✓ Key Youth Development Principles:
 - **Youth do youth development.**
Youth must be engaged in their own development. While youth will grow up with or without support, successful navigation of this stage of development supports (is a prerequisite for) a successful adulthood.
 - **Youth needs are fundamental.**
All youth need and can benefit from a variety of supports to help them prepare for their future—even youth who are “A” students or those who seem to “have it all together.” Remember, if a youth appears “problem free,” it doesn’t mean that they are fully prepared.
 - **Youth have useful knowledge, skills, and attributes.**
Every young person has assets/strengths that can be tapped into for positive development. These are called youth competencies.
 - **Youth need access to relationships with caring and competent adults.**
Adults can offer guidance and resources to support positive growth among youth. Youth need many adults with different skills, knowledge, and qualities for positive growth. Adults must have high expectations for youth
 - **Youth need intentional opportunities that promote positive development.**
Youth development takes place in a variety of places and through a variety of experiences.
 - **Youth development fosters resiliency in youth.**
Resiliency is acquired through opportunities (chances) and supports.
- ✓ Exemplary programs in the youth development arena have clearly defined goals for youth based on the capacities, strengths, and developmental needs of youth and provide youth with the supports and opportunities to make progress toward those goals. Successful youth development programs:
 - Are researched-based
 - Focus on the strengths or assets of youth, not deficits
 - View and identify youth as resources, not problems
 - Seek to develop youth, not fix youth
 - Focus on youth needs, not adult needs
 - Require training of volunteers working with youth