



Positive Youth Development and Youth Programming in Erie County

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Goals

Increase understanding of the components of Positive Youth Development.

Understand why PYD is important to the Youth Bureau.

Clarify requirements and explain context for aligning programs with PYD principles.



What Is Positive Youth Development?

Youth and community needs are your “why”.

The services you offer are the “what”.

PYD is the “how”.

How do you ensure you are successful in implementing your program and meeting need?

Programs are...

- intentional
- prosocial
- engage youth within their families, peer groups, schools, organizations, and communities
- recognize, utilize, and enhance strengths and assets
- promote positive outcomes
- provide opportunities
- foster positive relationships
- furnish support

Common Threads: Strengths-Based, Youth-Centered, Competency-Based, Inclusive and Safe

Positive Youth Development “Framework”

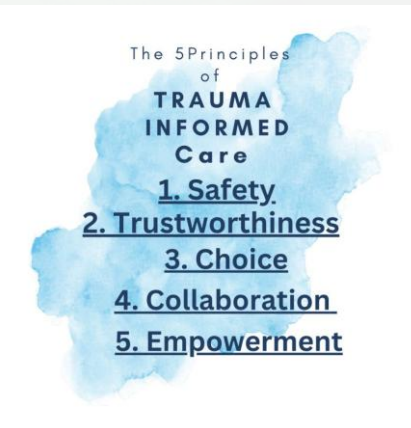
The PYD “framework” contains specific principles, but it is informed by several approaches to program design and understanding, including:

- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
- NYS Touchstones
- 40 Developmental Assets
- Principles of Solution-Focused Trauma-Informed Care (Collaboration, Safety, Empowerment, Choice, Trustworthiness)
- The “Five C’s” of Youth Development (Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, Caring and Contribution)

Currently, an update to the OCFS principles of PYD is underway which will update the current Touchstones to align with current research and youth-centered outcomes. This will roll out in the 2026-27 program year.



Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Why does this matter?

- Positive Youth Development guides our collective work to ensure that our funded programs are leading to positive outcomes across the youth lifespan in many different life domains.
- PYD is a framework that supercedes program activities or type. It is a research-backed philosophy which is centered in youth well-being. This allows us to apply the PYD “lens” to many different types of programs (i.e. sports, juvenile justice, etc.) because the focus is holistic.
- OCFS utilizes a framework of 8 PYD principles. All YB-funded agencies must align their programs to these 8 principles and articulate that alignment annually through the “QYDS Forms” submitted with your contract process. (What is QYDS??)
- It is important that you fully understand the Principles of PYD and our overall implementation framework so you can best integrate and/or articulate those principles.

Program Monitoring and PYD

The 8 Principles guide our program evaluation process.

Starting in the 25-26 program year, site visits will be monitored using the 8 principles as a guide.

[Here is an example of the monitoring tool which the Services Coordinators will be utilizing to score your program.](#)

The monitoring tool will evaluate specific components of your program within each of the 8 principles to produce a final score. Specific components will involve program administrators only.

The score will inform Youth Bureau staff in areas in which your program may need support.

This tool is used widely throughout the NYS Youth Bureau system.



The 8 Principles of PYD

1. Psychological and Physical Safety
2. Appropriate Structure
3. Supportive Relationships
4. Opportunities to Belong
5. Positive Social Norms
6. Support For Efficacy & Matterering
7. Opportunities for Skill Building
8. Integration of Family, School & Community Efforts

Reference: <https://actforyouth.org/pyd/settings.cfm>

Physical and Psychological Safety

Meaning:

Safe and health-promoting facilities; practice that increases safe peer group interaction and decreases unsafe or confrontational peer interaction.

Examples in Practice:

- Staff monitor youth/adult ratios
- Mentors are trained in safety procedures
- Dietary restrictions are tracked
- Emergency plans in place
- Spaces are accessible to all

Poor Example: Building is safe and lit. Emergency plans exist.



Appropriate Structure

Meaning:

Clear and consistent rules, expectations, and age-appropriate monitoring.

Examples in Practice:

- Consistent schedules
- Clear rules co-created with youth
- Structured activities with monitoring and feedback

Poor Example: Program staff are trained to work with youth and will provide a sound environment.



Supportive Relationships

Meaning:

Caring, encouraging adult-youth interactions, peer support, and mentoring.

Examples in Practice:

- Youth paired with mentors
- Staff trained in youth engagement
- Weekly check-ins
- Peer groups foster belonging

Poor Example: We ensure that we support children, families, school and staff at all times. Our program has an open-door policy at all times.



Opportunities To Belong

Meaning:

Opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities; social inclusion, social engagement and integration; opportunities for socio-cultural identity formation; and support for cultural and bicultural competence.

Examples in Practice:

Staff is trained and skilled in methods to ensure all participants are involved and not excluded due to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Space and activities are handicap accessible.

There is both a designated bulletin board and a display case in the Community Center for the members to share their activities and interests.

Participants are given opportunities to share stories and experience from their families or cultural/ethnic groups, generational relationships and bonds with other members of our community.

Poor Examples: Will increase knowledge about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Staff and campers represent different cultures and nationalities. All youth are welcome as long as they meet the age requirements.



Positive Social Norms

Meaning: Rules of behavior; expectations; injunctions; ways of doing things; values and morals; and obligations for service.

Examples in Practice:

- Youth develop a code of conduct
- Positive behavior celebrated
- Community service recognized

Poor Examples: Youth told to behave; no recognition system in place.



Support for Efficacy and Mattering

Meaning: Youth-based; empowerment practices that support autonomy; making a real difference in one's community; and being taken seriously. Practices that include enabling; responsibility granting; and meaningful challenge. Practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels.

Examples in Practice:

- Youth advisory boards
- Youth lead projects
- Input used to change program design

Poor Examples: Youth asked for opinions sometimes, but no follow-up or decision-making power.



Opportunities for Skill Building

Meaning:

Youth gain and apply new skills in real-world contexts. Program is focused on competency.

Examples in Practice:

- Workshops on life skills
- Internships
- Applied peer projects.

Poor Examples: Some skills introduced, but no practice or application outside program

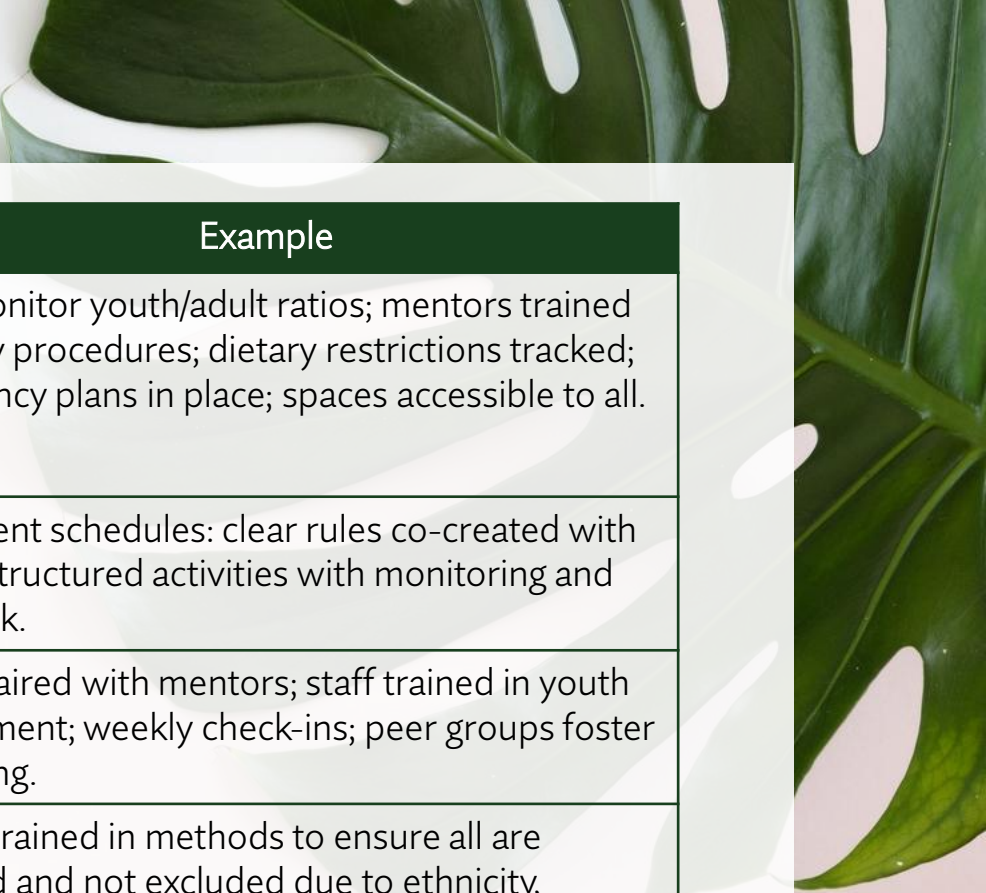
Integration of Family, School & Community

Meaning: Strong connections with families, schools, and community partners

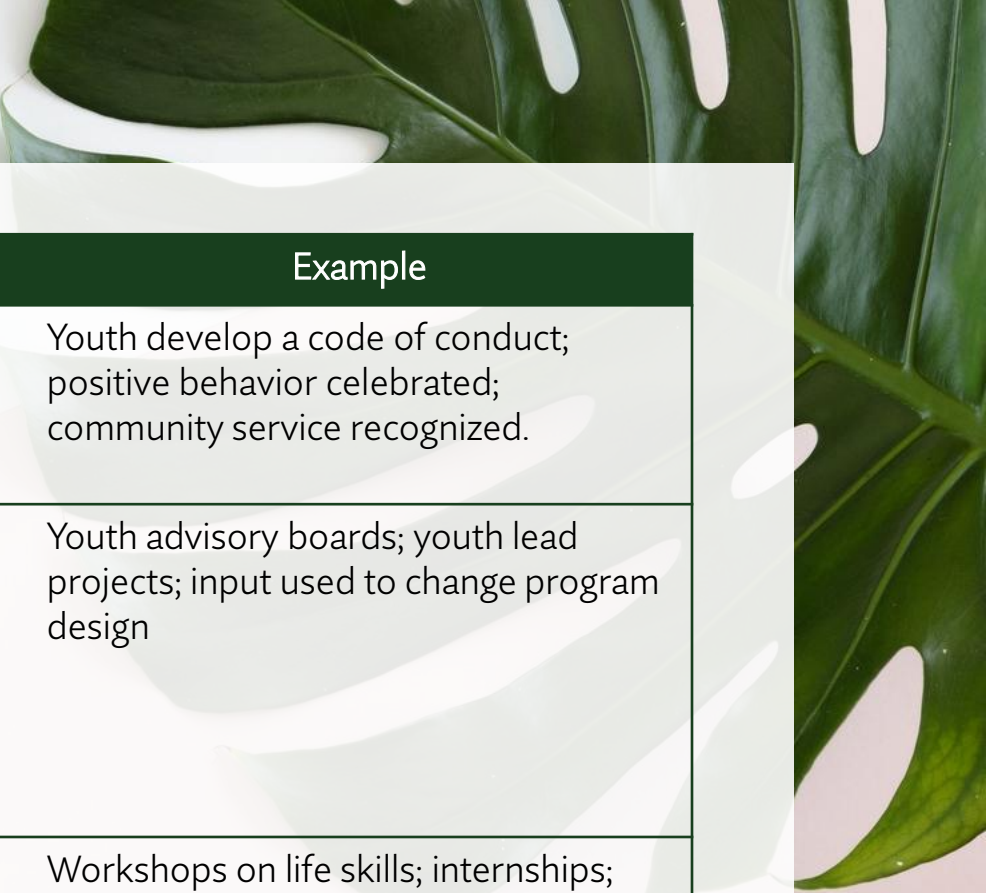
Examples in Practice:

- Regular parent communication
- School collaboration
- Community partnerships for service and learning

Poor Examples: Parents receive flyers; minimal collaboration with schools or community



Principle	Description	Example
1. PHYSICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY	Safe and health-promoting facilities; practice that increases safe peer group interaction and decreases unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.	Staff monitor youth/adult ratios; mentors trained in safety procedures; dietary restrictions tracked; emergency plans in place; spaces accessible to all.
2. APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE	Clear and consistent rules, expectations, and age-appropriate monitoring.	Consistent schedules: clear rules co-created with youth; structured activities with monitoring and feedback.
3. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS	Caring, encouraging adult-youth interactions, peer support, and mentoring.	Youth paired with mentors; staff trained in youth engagement; weekly check-ins; peer groups foster belonging.
4. OPPORTUNITIES TO BELONG	Opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities; social inclusion, social engagement and integration; opportunities for socio-cultural identity formation; and support for cultural and bicultural competence.	Staff is trained in methods to ensure all are involved and not excluded due to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability. Space and activities are accessible. There is a bulletin board for the members to share interests. Participants are given opportunities to share stories and experience from their families or cultural/ethnic groups.



Principle	Description	Example
5. POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS	Rules of behavior; expectations; injunctions; ways of doing things; values and morals; and obligations for service	Youth develop a code of conduct; positive behavior celebrated; community service recognized.
6. SUPPORT FOR EFFICACY & MATTERING	Youth-based; empowerment practices that support autonomy; making a real difference in one's community; and being taken seriously. Practices that include enabling; responsibility granting; and meaningful challenge. Practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels	Youth advisory boards; youth lead projects; input used to change program design
7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILL BUILDING	Youth gain and apply new skills in real-world contexts.	Workshops on life skills; internships; applied peer projects.
8. INTEGRATION OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, & COMMUNITY EFFORTS	Strong connections with families, schools, and community partners.	Regular parent communication; school collaboration; community partnerships for service and learning.



Thank you

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