

**INSTITUTIONAL POSITION STATEMENT
FOSTERING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP
AT
ANN & ROBERT H. LURIE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO
OCTOBER 24, 2024**

WHEREAS, adolescence is an important period of development, learning, exploration and growth¹;

WHEREAS, young people bring vital perspectives and are important to identifying and addressing adolescent social, behavioral, physical, mental and other health care needs²;

WHEREAS, young people engaging in efforts to identify solutions to persistent social, physical, mental and behavioral child and adolescent health challenges allows them to develop critical-thinking skills and contribute to ideas that are acceptable and relevant to youth during an important period of adolescent brain development;

WHEREAS, youth have unique insights on how to promote health equity and remove barriers to quality healthcare for youth based on race, income status, gender, gender identity and disabilities³;

WHEREAS, youth leadership and engagement in research, advocacy and activism are transformative processes for young people to identify problems and propose solutions related to child and adolescent health⁴ and the institutions that impact them;

WHEREAS, collaboration between youth and adult researchers and organizations is a vital component of youth engagement that requires transparency, an investment of time to build trusting relationships, and ongoing training and commitment⁶;

WHEREAS, youth leadership and perspectives should be elevated, as referenced in the Hart Youth Participation model to reflect authentic decision-making versus tokenism, with intent to receive and incorporate their opinions and lived expertise to institutional discussions and decision-making⁷;

WHEREAS, since 2006, members of the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (Lurie Children's) Kids Advisory Board (KAB), who are all Lurie Children's patients, have been providing a diverse patient perspective, voice and advisement regarding pediatric healthcare, research, and programming experiences;

WHEREAS, youth leaders of Communities United and Voices of Youth and Chicago Education and Mikva Challenge have demonstrated through youth participatory action research (YPAR) projects and reports that they are committed to engaging with organizations and systems to improve child and adolescent health;

WHEREAS, youth participants of the Community Health in Action Mentorship Program (CHAMP) have engaged in CARE (Clinical Care, Advocacy, Research and Education) projects that have supported Lurie Children's public health goals while offering hands-on skill development of students interested in pursuing healthcare careers;

WHEREAS, since 2001, youth participants in Discovering Healthcare Careers are prepared for employment at Lurie Children's and future success through leadership development, hands-on healthcare experience, training workshops, and networking opportunities;

WHEREAS, since 2001, Youth Leaders in HIV, the Prevention First Advisory Resource Center, the Teen Engagement Alliance (TEA), and the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) have informed and strengthened the work of our institution to promote inclusion, comprehensive support services, early intervention, and harm reduction;

WHEREAS, youth engagement, leadership, advocacy and activism benefits both youth and Lurie Children's to be more effective in advancing child and adolescent health;⁸

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED:

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago will continue to support policy and program initiatives to advance evidence-based approaches, policies, and practices to foster genuine youth engagement, through research and program design, development, and elevate intentional and diverse youth leadership and decision-making opportunities to promote health equity and improve child and adolescent health.

¹ UCLA, The Core Science of Adolescent Development,

https://developingadolescent.semel.ucla.edu/assets/uploads/research/resources/Core_Science_Summary.pdf.

² Fuligni, A.J. The Need to Contribute During Adolescence. *Perspect Psychol Sci*. 2019 May;14(3):331-343. doi: 10.1177/1745691618805437. Epub 2018 Dec 18. PMID: 30562473; PMCID: PMC6497551; Youth engagement toolkit resource guide. Province of British Columbia; Annie E. Casey Foundation, A Framework for Effectively Engaging with Youth, 2019. [aefc- aframeworkforeffectively-2019.pdf](#); and Act for Youth, Positive Youth Development Principles, [actforyouth.net](#)

² Act for Youth, Positive Youth Development Principles, [actforyouth.net](#); and Jim Casey, 2012 (see note 1).

³ Garney, W.; Wilson, K.; Ajayi, K.V.; Panjwani, S.; Love, S.M.; Flores, S.; Garcia, K.; Esquivel, C. Social-Ecological Barriers to Access to Healthcare for Adolescents: A Scoping Review. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2021, 18, 4138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18084138>.

⁴ Lindquist-Grantz, R., Abraczinskas, M. Using Youth Participatory Action Research as a Health Intervention in Community Settings. *Health Promotion Practice*. 2020;21(4):573-581. doi:10.1177/1524839918818831; The transformative power of action research; and, Dusty, C. E. (2024). The transformative power of action research. *Educational Action Research*, 32(2), 165-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2024.2321728>.

⁵ Cohen, A. K., Ozer, E. J., Abraczinskas, M., Voight, A., Kirshner, B., & Devinney, M. (2020). Opportunities for youth participatory action research to inform school district decisions. *Evidence & Policy*, 16(2), 317-329. <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426419X15649816542957>.

⁶ Young, A., Toraif, N., Le, C., Gergen Barnett, K., & Augsberger, A. (2024). Facing power: navigating power dynamics in a youth participatory action research project situated within a healthcare setting. *Journal of Community Practice*, 32(3), 315-336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2024.2385624>,

⁷ Hart, R. Ladder of Participation, 1992, [Microsoft Word - Ladder of Participation.doc \(higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.08.022>

Addendum:

Principles of Youth Engagement¹

Empower Youth: Provide opportunities for leadership and skill development, empowering young people to play meaningful roles in shaping their communities.

Promote Strength-Based Approaches: Provide opportunities for youth to identify and build on their internal and external strengths.²

Develop Skills: Offer opportunities for young people to develop and enhance their skills through training, workshops, and hands-on experiences, empowering them to contribute effectively to their communities and beyond.

Embrace Inclusivity: Ensure that youth engagement efforts actively involve young people from diverse backgrounds, ensuring representation and amplifying marginalized voices.

Ensure Accessibility and Equity: Remove barriers to participation such as language, disability, health, geographic, or socioeconomic status, making youth engagement initiatives accessible to all. Commit to an open and collaborative process to determine the amount and method of honorariums and stipends to recognize youth for their time, talents, and contributions. Include support for transportation, childcare, and other costs associated with participation.^{3,4}

Foster Collaboration: Encourage collaboration between youth and adults, recognizing the value of intergenerational dialogue and partnership to solve community challenges.

Prioritize Training for Adults: Ensure adults are prepared and trained to work with and engage in authentic collaboration with young leaders that focuses on shared decision-making and leadership.⁵

Address Relevance: Focus on issues that directly impact the lives and futures of young people, ensuring that youth engagement initiatives are relevant and responsive to their needs and interests.

Cultivate Trust: Build trusting relationships between youth and adults involved in the engagement process, fostering an environment where young people feel respected, valued, and listened to.

Encourage Creativity: Provide opportunities for young people to express themselves creatively and explore innovative solutions to community challenges, fostering a culture of experimentation and innovation within youth engagement initiatives.

Celebrate Accomplishments: Recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of young people involved in youth engagement initiatives, fostering a sense of pride, motivation, and belonging among participants.

Promote Sustainability: Emphasize sustainable practices and long-term investment in youth leadership development, ensuring continued impact and growth over time.

¹Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Authentic Youth Engagement, 2012. [JCYOI-AuthenticYouthEngagement-2012.pdf \(aecf.org\)](#); Anthony, J., Ball, S., Charlie, D., Berggren-Clive, K., Bruce, D., & Butler, A. (2013). Youth engagement toolkit resource guide. Province of British Columbia; Annie E. Casey Foundation, A Framework for Effectively Engaging with Youth, 2019. [aefc-aframeworkforeffectively-2019.pdf](#); and Act for Youth, Positive Youth Development Principles, [actforyouth.net](#)

² Act for Youth, Positive Youth Development Principles, [actforyouth.net](#); and Jim Casey, 2012.

³ Thriving Families Safer Children, Equitable Compensation Taskforce, 2023. [TFSC Equitable Compensation Taskforce Report - June 2023.pdf](#)

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation, Early Lessons in Engaging Youth and Adults in Community Change Efforts, [Early Lessons in Engaging Youth and Adults in Community Change Efforts - The Annie E. Casey Foundation \(aecf.org\)](#)

⁵ Act for Youth, Working with Youth. [Working with Youth - YCD Toolkit](#)