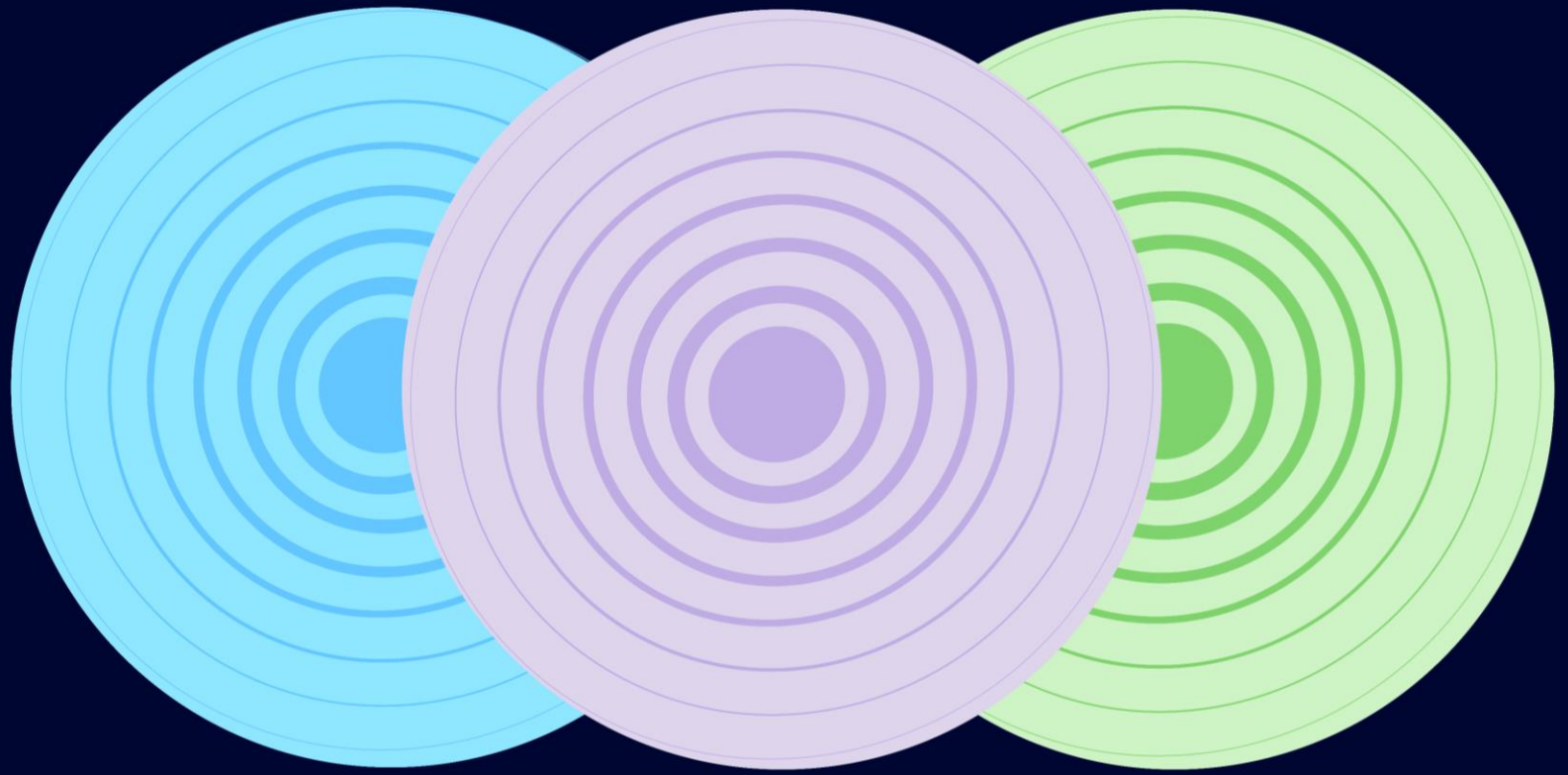
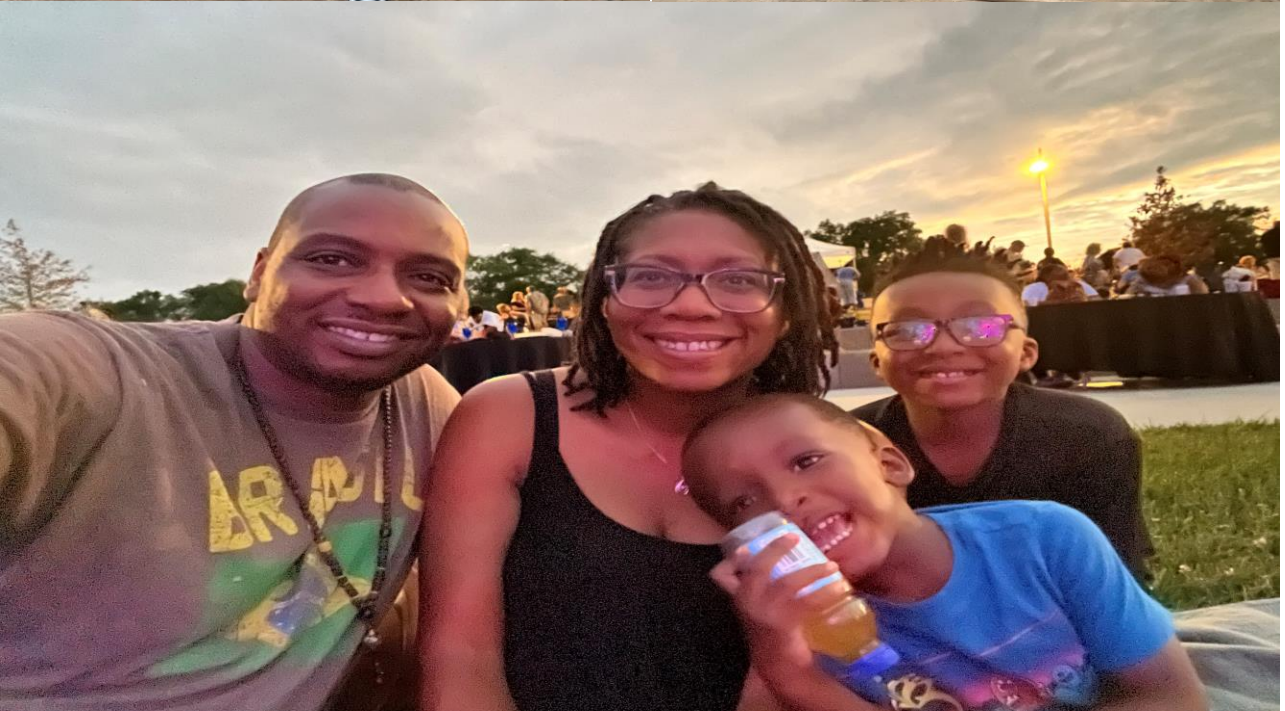


INDIANA ROUNDTABLE ON

MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

#IRMHSUMMIT2023



My Why

They are why I will continue to fight so hard to change the narratives about our community and advocate for young people.

Building Transformational Relationships through Healing Centered Engagement

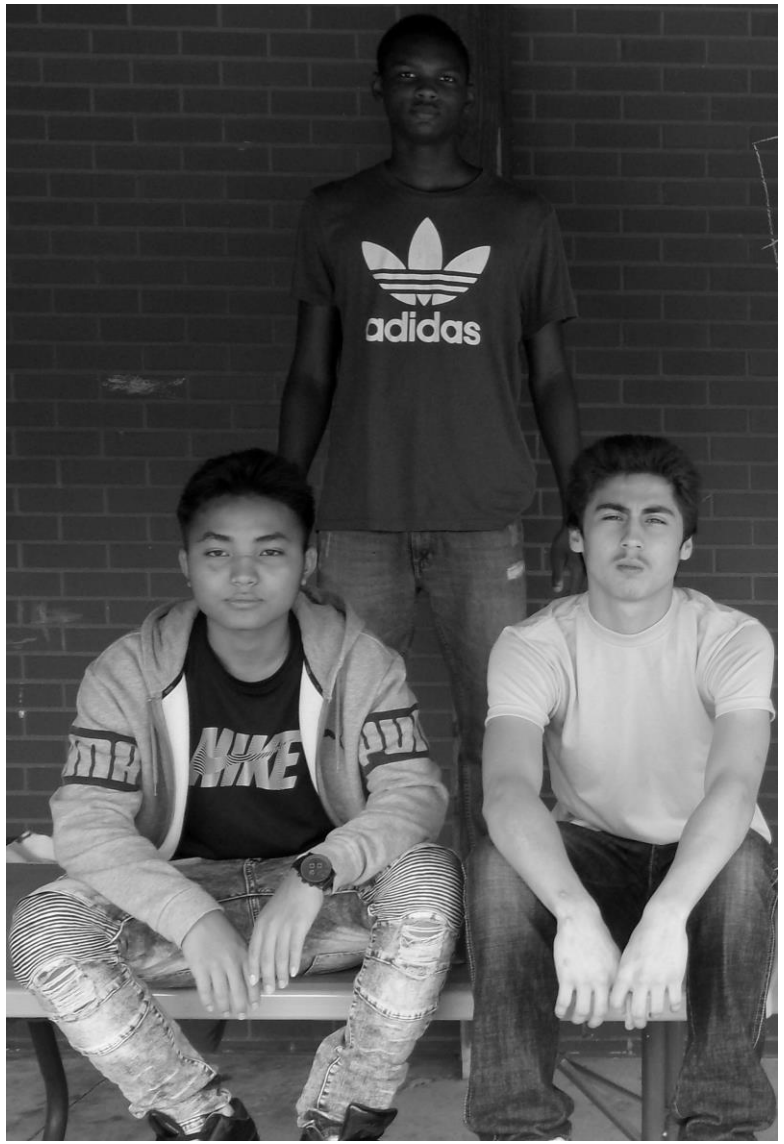
What we will cover

1. Learn the core tenants of Healing Centered Engagement
2. Given tools on building transformational relationships with clients
3. Given tools to shift organizational power to those most impacted

“One of the most insidious forms of injustice is its eroding of our sense of hope and possibility,”

-Dr. Shawn Ginwright

Through culturally sustaining education, healing-centered engagement, and workforce development, VOICES provides the relationships, resources, and opportunities for communities to heal, grow, and further their path towards economic self-sufficiency and civically engaged lives. VOICES programs and services are grounded by our Four Pillars of Wellness:



Who we serve:

78% of our students are male

84% are African-American

Between the ages of 12-24

45% of our students have system involvement

Not in a traditional school setting and are currently suspended, facing expulsion or are expelled.

85% live at or below poverty level

Impact

- In-program recidivism rate of *8% as compared to 32.2% state average*
- 80% of clients indicate an improvement in life circumstances in an evaluation survey
- 35% complete their educational journey
- 75% report ability to impact community in positive way

What we are seeing

RECIDIVISM

- Anti-social behavior
- Negative peer groups
- Returning to old habits

ANXIETY

- Meeting expectations
- Financial Stress
- Lack of equitable options

EDUCATION

- Lack of focus
- Test taking anxiety
- Skill attainment not rewarded

BASIC NEEDS

- Documentation
- Housing
- Food insecure
- Transportation

NEGATIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Increased mental health needs
- Addiction
- Impact of trauma on development

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Framework

		Levels of Influence*			
		Individual	**Interpersonal**	**Community**	**Societal**
Domains of Influence *(Over the Lifecourse)*	**Biological**	Biological Vulnerability and Mechanisms	Caregiver–Child Interaction Family Microbiome	Community Illness Exposure Herd Immunity	Sanitation Immunization Pathogen Exposure
	Behavioral	Health Behaviors Coping Strategies	Family Functioning School/Work Functioning	Community Functioning	Policies and Laws
	Physical/Built Environment	Personal Environment	Household Environment School/Work Environment	Community Environment Community Resources	Societal Structure
	Sociocultural Environment	Sociodemographics Limited English Cultural Identity Response to Discrimination	Social Networks Family/Peer Norms Interpersonal Discrimination	Community Norms Local Structural Discrimination	Social Norms Societal Structural Discrimination
	Health Care System	Insurance Coverage Health Literacy Treatment Preferences	Patient–Clinician Relationship Medical Decision-Making	Availability of Services Safety Net Services	Quality of Care Health Care Policies
Health Outcomes		**Individual Health**	**Family/ Organizational Health**	**Community Health**	**Population Health**

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2018
*Health Disparity Populations: Race/Ethnicity, Low SES, Rural, Sexual and Gender Minority
Other Fundamental Characteristics: Sex and Gender, Disability, Geographic Region

What is Healing Centered Engagement?

The History of Theory & Practice Leading to HCE

1990s

Resiliency

Kids bounce back from a lot.

How can we help kids learn and practice resiliency?

2000s

Youth Development

Kids have strengths and advantages.

How can we help them leverage and build upon these assets?

2010s

Trauma-Informed Care

Kids experience trauma.

How do we acknowledge and address this trauma?

2020+

Healing-Centered Engagement

Kids are complex people with agency.

How do we help them heal, prompt systems change, and thrive?

Moving Beyond Trauma-Informed Care

"While the term trauma informed care is important, it is incomplete."

Collective Trauma

- Systemic racism
- Gun violence
- Generational poverty
- Addiction, abuse
- Hurricane Katrina, California wildfires, etc.

"...when viewed individually simply fails to capture how collective harm requires a different approach than an individual one."

Root Causes of Trauma

"If trauma is collectively experienced, this means that we also have to consider the environmental context that caused the harm in the first place. By only treating the individual we only address part of the equation leaving the toxic systems, policies and practices neatly intact."

Pathology over Possibility

"Trauma-informed care runs the risk of focusing on the treatment of pathology (trauma), rather than fostering the possibility (well-being)... Everyone wants to be happy, not just have less misery."

HEALING CENTERED ENGAGEMENT IS EXPLICITLY POLITICAL, RATHER THAN CLINICAL.

- Communities, and individuals who experience trauma are agents in restoring their own well-being. This subtle shift suggests that healing from trauma is found in an awareness and actions that address the conditions that created the trauma in the first place. Researchers have found that well-being is a function of the control and power people have in their communities
- When people advocate for policies and opportunities that address causes of trauma, such as lack of access to mental health, these activities contribute to a sense of purpose, power and control over life situations. All of which are necessary to restore well-being and healing.

Healing centered engagement is asset driven and focuses on the well-being we want, rather than symptoms we want to suppress

- An asset driven strategy acknowledges that people are much more than the worst thing that happened to them, and builds upon their experiences, knowledge, skills and curiosity as positive traits to be enhanced.

- While it is important to acknowledge trauma and its influence on people's mental health, healing centered strategies move one step beyond by focusing on what we want to achieve, rather than merely treating emotional and behavioral symptoms of trauma.

Healing centered engagement is culturally grounded and views healing as the restoration of identity.

Healing is experienced *collectively*, and is shaped by shared identity such as race, gender, or sexual orientation. Healing centered engagement is the result of building a healthy identity, and a sense of belonging. For youth of color, these forms of healing can be rooted in culture and serves as an anchor to connect young people to a shared racial and ethnic identity that is both historical grounded and contemporarily relevant.

Some examples of healing centered engagement can be found in healing circles rooted in indigenous culture where young people share their stories about healing and learn about their connection to their ancestors and traditions, or drumming circles rooted in African cultural principles

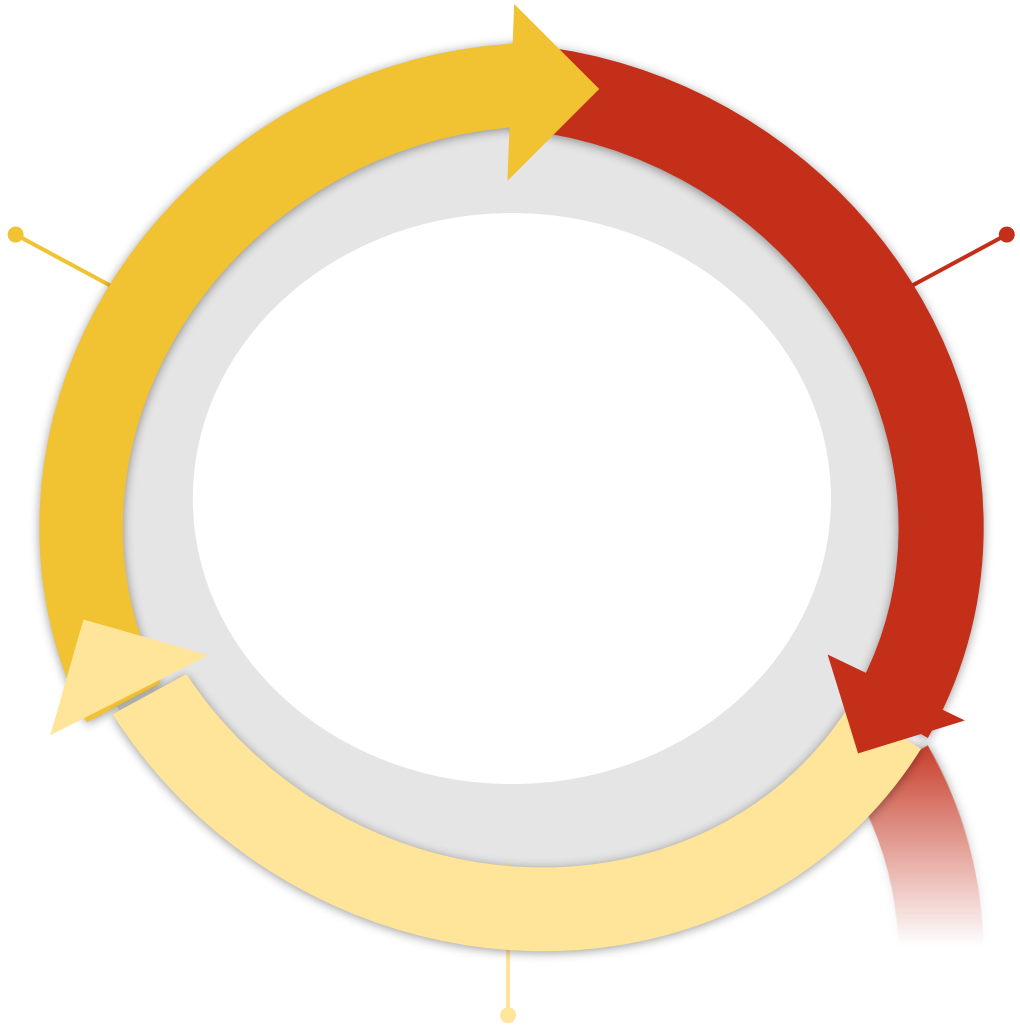
Healing centered engagement supports adult providers with their own healing

- Healing centered engagement requires that we consider how to support adults in sustaining their own healing and well-being. We cannot presume that adulthood is a final, “trauma-free” destination.

- Policy stakeholders should consider how to build a systems that support adult youth worker’s well-being, by creating structures like sabbaticals for employees or creating incentives like continuing education units for deeper learning about well-being and healing.

Tools on building relationships

PROTECTION



PROVISION

PARTICIPATION

ALTRUISTIC

"We are experts in helping others."

We feel good about helping others. We value the intention of our efforts more than impact of our efforts.

Trusting:

"We trust that communities know what they need, and we help them get there."

We find expertise and solutions on the ground. The communities who have direct experience of an issue are the experts.

Empathy.

Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

The capacity to place oneself in another's position is the only way to achieve empathy

Once empathy is achieved then we can look at each other in an equal humanized way.

Have you shared your experiences? Have you shared your why for this work?

Respect

- Respect is something we ALL value as a key factor in our relationships.
- For relationships to be healthy and productive, they must be mutually beneficial.
- DO NOT utilize the “Matilda Mindset”
  - I’m big, you’re little.
  - I’m right, you’re wrong.
  - I’m grown, you’re a kid.
- Acknowledging and affirming the experiences that young people have gone through is a sign of respect.
- Minimizing or downplaying their experiences is disrespectful. (Adultism)

Building Rapport

- Importance of safe space
- Get to know clients beyond the usual conversations about services and goals
- Develop awareness of client's everyday experiences and prepare to support them through challenges
- Meet them where they dream
- Cultural awareness
- Listen, ask questions and give of your own vulnerability

Confidence

What are ways confidence is BUILT and BROKEN?

This is connected to self-esteem. Affirmation is KEY! (The world can be heavy).

Confidence is related to behavior (traditional vs. maladaptive), academic performance, and socialization (well-behaved vs. delinquent).

Exaggerated Visibility: Coping mechanism resulting from exclusion, erasure, and dismissal. A way to demand acknowledgement in ways that resist conformity to the “traditional” culture.

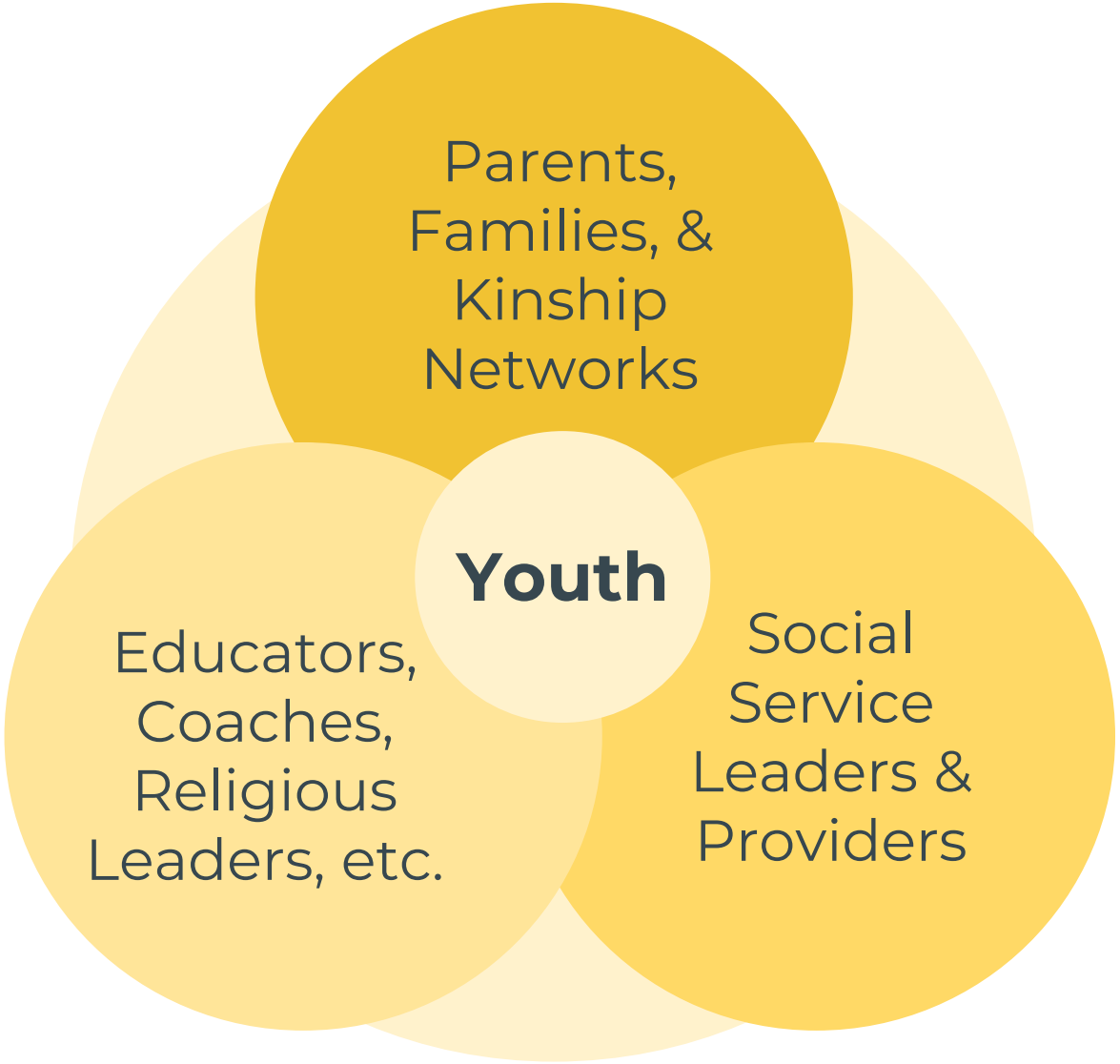
Accountability

- While the warm fuzzies are important, connections require holding each other accountable.
- Accountability should be a space of honest and open communication.
- This requires active listening and responding in “love”.
- Accountability is rooted in collaboration, not malice.

Shifting the power

- Co-design programs/evaluation
- Avenues for advocacy
- Engagement agreements
- Design own plan of care/action
- Pathways to positions of power

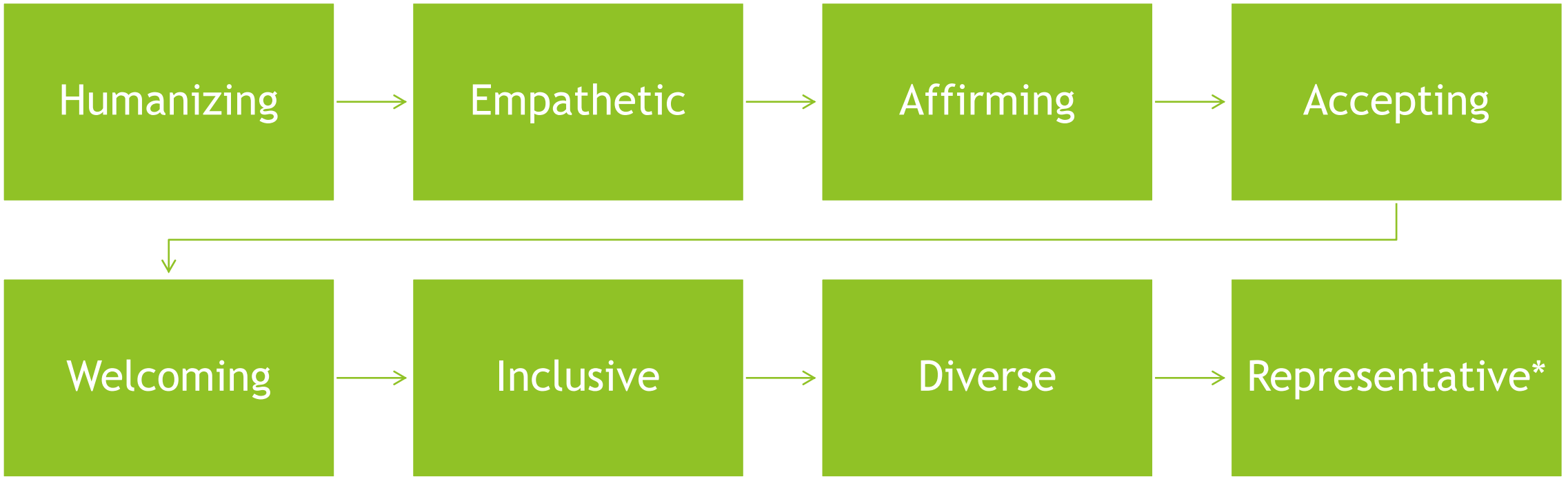
Stakeholder Co-Creators - Youth as Leaders/Contributors



Youth are decision-making partners in each of these groups. Tools to create equitable, authentic, mutually-beneficial engagement:

- Surveys
- Focus group
- Interviews
- Parent/family conferences
- Workshops and co-creation projects
- Large-group events

All in service of building authentic, sustained **relationships**.



Creating Healing Spaces

Thriving is the Goal

For young people to not simply survive, but thrive, they need the following:

The ability to dream and seek their passions without discouragement or judgment.

To be encouraged and provided the necessary tools to be successful.

The security to be proud of their individuality and uniqueness.

To exist is spaces that manifest optimism, initiative, and hope.

Transformational Relationships

- Importance of safe space
- Get to know clients beyond the usual conversations about Probation and Court orders.
- Develop awareness of client's everyday experiences and more prepared to support them through challenges
- Meet them where they are
- Cultural awareness
- Listen, ask questions and give of your own vulnerability

With continuous practice, the outcome will be life-changing – for both of you.

Empowering youth and families

Instead of inviting the ‘other’ into an existing structure or space, belonging requires that we re-position ourselves—personally and professionally, mentally and emotionally, physically and spiritually—as one point or arc in a new circle. This new circle is co-created with—not for—the people we serve, and is created around shared values.

Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation

- Improved services & policies
- Greater accountability of systems and decision-makers
- Enhanced protection
- Capacity development of youth and all groups in which they exist
- Contributing to communities to increase the equity, wellness, and innovation within their communities

the child who is
not embraced by
the village will
burn it down to
feel its warmth

-african proverb

Contact information

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