



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
TEEN INSTITUTE

# Engaging Youth in Meaningful Ways

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# **In this session we will explore...**

- **why youth voices matter.**
- **the benefits of youth engagement.**
- **ways to engage youth.**
- **what meaningful engagement looks like.**



# What does youth engagement mean?

- Youth engagement is the result when young people are involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change.
- This means involving youth in planning and in making decisions that affect themselves and others.
- Youth engagement happens in youth-adult partnerships that are structured so that both groups contribute, teach, and learn from each other.

Source: [http://actforyouth.net/youth\\_development/engagement/](http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/engagement/)



# Think back...to your teen years

Can you remember a having an issue that impacted you, your friends, or your community?

Did you have a voice in any conversations or decisions made about it?

If not, why?

How could things have been different if you did have a voice in the conversation?



# Youth engagement is a win-win proposition.

- **Young people** benefit by gaining skills, knowledge, self-esteem, and connectedness.
- **Adults** benefit by enhancing their own competencies, learning to better understand and value youth, and increasing their commitment and energy to their organizations.
- **Organizations** benefit by improving their programs, gaining community recognition, and attracting funders.
- **Communities** benefit by improving quality of life, coordinating youth services, and authentically embracing diversity by representing young people.

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# Youth Engagement

## Isn't...

- Bringing youth in AFTER decisions have been made.
- Having one youth on your board or committee to speak for all youth.
- Telling youth what they need.
- Expecting youth to just follow along with plans they didn't have a voice in.
- Being present in the same room.

## Is...

- Involving youth PRIOR to groups being created and decisions being made.
- Inviting a diverse group of youth to take part.
- Asking youth what they think, feel, and see within their communities.
- Having youth take the lead in meetings, planning, and implementation.
- Open and engaging communication between youth and adults in the room.



# What does youth engagement look like?

Let's welcome our panel!

**Monica Gallant & Abby Forrence**

of C.A.S.T.

Community Action for Safe Teens

Souhegan Valley

<http://www.nhcast.org/>



# What does youth engagement look like?

- Could you share an example of a time or forum where youth voices were overlooked?
- How does CAST work with youth in meaningful ways?
- What benefits have you seen from meaningful youth engagement?





# Questions to ask around youth engagement...

- What is the purpose of your group or organization?
- What population(s) are you looking to impact with our work?
- What reasons haven't you had youth involvement?
- What are some perspectives youth voices might bring to the conversation that we aren't hearing?
- How/what are the barriers to youth involvement in your group?
- What is the first step you can commit to around youth involvement for your group?



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# Thank You!

For more information on the NH Teen Institute  
visit our website at [www.nhteeninstitute.org](http://www.nhteeninstitute.org)  
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