

# Checklist for Participation with Children And Young People

who have a Parent with a Mental Illness

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This checklist is designed to be an easy-to-use reference tool for organisations incorporating participation with children and young people into their practice.

- Where an organisation's outcomes impact on children and young people; it is vital to acknowledge, value and incorporate their perspectives and understandings gained through their lived experience in planning, development and evaluation processes.
- Ensuring that an organisation and its staff adopt an attitude and a culture of positively acknowledging youth participation will support sustained and continual recognition and achievements in youth participation.<sup>1</sup>
- Paramount in participation of children and young people is the well-being of participants; they must be supported throughout their involvement.
- If your organisation does not provide any direct support services to children and young people then it is advisable to engage with services that do, and co-facilitate participation activities with them. With this strategy, participants are more likely to feel comfortable as they are likely to be familiar with the staff, the venue and/or other participants.
- Recruitment information should be 'youth friendly' (such as posters, pamphlets, use of internet/email) and provide all the information and contact details required.<sup>1</sup>
- Diversity of those participating is crucial. Although it would be great to have a group of young people that represent your entire youth community or organisation, this is unlikely. However, it is good to be aware of diversity during the selection or recruitment process.<sup>1</sup>
- Having a key contact for young people being involved in participation is vital.<sup>1</sup>
- Ensure that you respond quickly to feedback, questions or suggestions to gain young people's respect and keep them motivated.<sup>1</sup>
- Be proactive in communicating with young people e.g. reminder text message for upcoming meetings and follow up text messages to thank them for their time. Be willing to follow up young people outside of formal meetings as required, to maintain a positive, meaningful relationship with the organisation for that young person.
- Consent from parent/guardian may be required for young people's involvement, particularly if under 18 years of age.<sup>1</sup>
- It is important that all young people involved in participation are made aware that confidentiality is respected. To ensure this, participants should be made aware of how what they discuss/contribute will be used and by whom.<sup>1</sup>

- It is important to remember that meetings should be held at times and locations where public transport is accessible. If meetings/events are not close to public transport, taxi vouchers may be required for young people to attend.<sup>1</sup>
- Many young people may feel socially isolated. Therefore, ensure participation strategies have a social element (e.g. providing morning/afternoon tea during, before and/or after meetings), keep meetings relatively informal and promote social interaction. This translates into an enjoyable atmosphere.<sup>1</sup>
- Appropriate group size needs to be determined relative to the participation initiative. For example it is often best to use large groups for consultation purposes, however smaller groups allow for greater in-depth discussions and promote the opportunity for everyone's opinions to be expressed.<sup>1</sup>
- Setting times for meetings can be difficult. It may be appropriate to have meetings scheduled at different times and days to ensure that a variety of young people (e.g. school attendees, workers, night shift, etc) are able to attend.<sup>1</sup> Checklist for Participation with Children and Young People.<sup>1</sup>
- Think about using a variety of age-appropriate activities as different people will have different strengths: e.g. art, drama, writing, small discussion groups, games, brainstorming, etc.
- Make sure participants know they can take a break from or leave the activity at any time and that a staff member is available to talk to if required.
- Make sure participants know who to contact after the activity if they need follow up support.
- Young people should be appropriately recognised for their time, thoughts, opinions and input into the service. Forms of payment may include vouchers or cash, and should cover incidental expenses, such as travel.<sup>1</sup> Relevant associated policies or procedures should be readily available for staff and young people.
- It is important to conduct evaluations of youth participation leading to continual improvements. This also increases respect and trust. Evaluations could be conducted at the end of meetings, through questionnaires or through group discussions as well as annually or after finalisation of projects/programs.<sup>1</sup>
- Where possible, involve youth in the planning of youth participation strategies. This enables a greater sense of ownership and a genuine partnership.<sup>1</sup>
- Aside from face to face activities, other participation techniques include surveys, wikis, emails and phone calls. Remember to ensure that participants are clear about who to contact if they need support.

## Some other useful resources

Resources Specifically on Young Children's Participation (NSW Commission for Children and Young People): <http://kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/ourwork/participation/resources/paticipationyoung.cfm>

Involving Children and Young People: Participation Guidelines (Commissioner for Children and Young People WA): <http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/files/Participation%20Guidelines.pdf>

National Youth Participation in Mental Health Scoping Project Report (AICAFMHA): [http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC35\\_report.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC35_report.pdf)

Factsheet 1: Benefits of Youth Participation:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact01.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact01.pdf)

Factsheet 2: Challenges of Youth Participation:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact02.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact02.pdf)

Factsheet 3: A-Z of encouraging youth participation:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact03.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact03.pdf)

Factsheet 4: Guiding Charter:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact04.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact04.pdf)

Factsheet 5: Supports required for Youth Participation:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact05.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact05.pdf)

Factsheet 6: Models & Methods - how to involve young people:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact06.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact06.pdf)

## References

1. Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (AICAFMHA). National youth participation strategy scoping project report, Factsheet 3: A-Z of encouraging youth participation [Internet] 2008; Available from:  
[http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth\\_participation/files/AIC37\\_Report\\_fact03.pdf](http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact03.pdf)