

10 UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH ADVOCACY



OVEREXPOSURE

Youth advocates can face burnout from frequent requests to represent others, leading to stress and emotional exhaustion.



DISAPPOINTMENT

Young advocates may regret words spoken or left unspoken during advocacy events, feeling disappointed in perceived mistakes.



TOKENISM

Not genuinely valuing youth ideas and contributions through active participation can lead to symbolism and mere appearances of inclusivity.



COERCION

Youth should be offered fair pay without coercing them with stipends that disrupt their regular income, risking job instability. Also, urging them to prioritize advocacy over education or work can confuse their priorities.



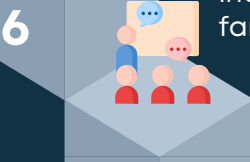
ROLE CONFUSION

As young advocates delve deeper into their work, their personal and professional boundaries may blur. The roles of supportive adults may shift, and some advocates may seek more independence and no longer need a mentor.



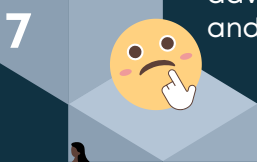
ALIENATION

Advocacy can consume young advocates, distancing them from personal interests and relationships. Sharing stories may strain connections with family, agencies, and communities.



SECONDARY TRAUMA

The competitive nature of advocacy work can place undue pressure on young advocates. They might feel compelled to outperform others, leading to oversharing and, in some cases, experiencing secondary trauma from hearing others' stories.



RE-TRAUMATIZATION

Some young advocates may have experienced trauma, which advocacy work can re-expose them to, potentially causing emotional distress or mental health relapse.



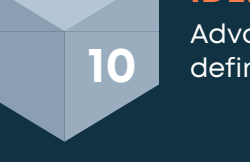
"SUPER STAR STATUS"

When young advocates gain recognition, they may feel pressured to uphold an image and meet high expectations, leading to isolation and anxiety.



IDENTITY CRISIS

Advocacy work can trigger identity crises in young adults, particularly if they're defined by past stories. They may struggle with who they're becoming.





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TRAUMA-INFORMED STRATEGIES

TO MITIGATE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH ADVOCACY

CREATING SAFE SPACES

- Set up welcoming environments where young people feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear.
- Make sure staff have dedicated time to offer emotional and physical support.
- Develop clear plans for handling wellness and crises.
- Practice speeches and event logistics thoroughly.
- Regularly debrief to ensure the well-being and safety of young participants.

BUILDING TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

- Focus on and invest in building strong relationships with young people.
- Clearly explain rules, roles, and expectations.
- Keep youth informed about how their contributions matter and what to expect.
- Establish mutual boundaries and follow through on commitments.

HONORING CULTURAL HUMILITY

- Create an inclusive atmosphere where everyone feels respected, no matter their background.
- Make sure young people are fairly compensated for their time and efforts.
- Honor young people's cultural practices and preferences.
- Recognize that all young people from one background do not think the same way.

PROMOTING PEER SUPPORT

- Encourage opportunities for young people to learn from each other and make connections.
- Have more than one young person represent events to avoid tokenism and decoration.
- Offer mentorship and training to help youth develop leadership skills.

ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION AND MUTUALITY

- Prepare and support young people well for projects or events.
- Work closely with them to identify the benefits and risks of events/activities.
- Make sure there are worthwhile benefits and that risks are minimized.

EMPOWERING VOICE AND CHOICE

- Let young people decide how much they want to be involved and when to step back.
- Give youth all the info they need to make informed choices.
- Get mutual agreement about roles and responsibilities.
- Involve youth ahead of time in planning events and projects.



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