

Youth Engagement and Participation in a Child and Youth Care Context

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Abstract

Youth participation and engagement were examined and reviewed using three core Child and Youth Care (CYC) contexts: engagement, relationships and self. It was found that meaningful youth participation occurred when a tangible change process followed young people's engagement with adults. Different types of youth participation were reviewed. The research revealed several barriers to meaningful youth engagement, such as tokenism, social power imbalances, and biases on the part of both the young people and the practitioners. Young people in care, in particular, face barriers to youth engagement. Positive youth engagement is achieved when young people are seen as experts in their own lives and are engaged as primary stakeholders in their own plan-of-care meetings. This process can be augmented by the presence of youth engagement facilitators, which CYC practitioners are ideally suited to be. Critical self-reflection can help practitioners become aware of their own definitions of and biases towards youth engagement. Given that there is no one agreed upon definition of youth engagement, it differs between individuals and organisations. Youth are often engaged following the completion of a programme. Scholars purport that youth should be engaged in the planning, creation and final evaluation stages of programme administration.

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The practice of youth participation has gained more acceptance in recent years amongst practitioners, advocates and researchers (Akiva et al., 2014). Youth participation can take place in a variety of settings, including community service centres, educational institutions, governmental organisations and child welfare agencies (Checkoway, 2011). The following research centres on how youth participation is mobilised through Child and Youth Care (CYC) practice. In order to provide an understanding of youth participation from a CYC lens, three concepts central to CYC practice – engagement, relationships and self – are used to outline research specific to youth participation. The dynamic of youth participation and engagement is examined herein as it exists between adults and young people, not between young people and other young people.

Engagement

An important aspect of youth participation is youth engagement (Shaw-Raudoy & McGregor, 2013). In order for youth engagement to occur between adults and young people, there must be youth-adult partnerships present. Engagement is a foundational aspect of CYC practice, which should ideally be present in the spaces where young people live their lives, and in the relationships young people share with their Child and Youth Care Practitioners (practitioners) (Gharabaghi & Stuart, 2013). It often begins with a practitioner expressing interest in a young person's everyday experiences, such as who their friends are or which games they are currently playing. When young people were asked what the most important aspect of youth engagement was to them, they reported that it was when adults behaved like "allies, supports, and resources" (Shaw-Raudoy & McGregor, 2013, p. 400).

Tokenism

In much of the literature on youth engagement, researchers extensively discuss the dangers of tokenism (Bulling et al., 2013; Hart, 1994; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). One example of tokenism is when a small subset of young participants is asked to engage with adults, while it is assumed that the specific subset of young people speaks for all young people who share their life circumstances. This can lead to individual experiences being restrictively listened

to by adults, versus purposeful youth participation which involves a more transformative and perennial approach. The same is true of youth participation of minority young people, who are often invited to participate as a means of decoration, as opposed to being given any actual influence (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Researchers warn that adults in privileged positions within society are often unaware of the role they play in inviting minority young people into spaces merely to advance their own adult-driven agendas (Wong et al., 2010).

Young people report not liking when adults ask them to meetings and then proceed to ask them questions the adults already know the answers to (Shaw-Raudoy & McGregor, 2013). This extends to asking young people questions which adults think they *should* be asking of young people, instead of stopping to think about the actual subjective experiences of the participants with whom they are speaking. Additionally, youth participation can be viewed as tokenistic when young people are asked to share their thoughts and opinions, but no actual influence or decision-making occurs as a result. Researchers stress the importance of tangible change in true youth participation; otherwise, asking young people to speak to adults is nothing more than surface level tokenism. It is suggested that tangible change can be accomplished by actively engaging young people throughout all stages of programme development and implementation (Head, 2011; King, Cianfrone, Korf-Uzan, & Madani, 2015).

Theories of Youth Participation

Deliberative democracy is a type of youth participation which involves open dialogue, listening, contemplation and engagement (Bulling et al., 2013). Deliberative democracy extends beyond merely voting on issues; it involves meaningful conversations through which parties speak to their experiences, whilst respecting the opinions of others who are present. Another key component is the absence of a power hierarchy between adults and young people. There have been many positive international examples of this, such as youth juries in Australia, governmental meetings with young people in the United States, municipal 'Dialogue Days' in Finland and community-organisation deliberations with young Indigenous people in Canada (Bulling et al., 2013). From these case studies, came evidence that adult decision-makers are less

influenced by youth participation if it is shared with them after the fact by a third party, versus if they were physically present with the young people and engaged with them one-on-one. This has implications for policy level changes which are based on 'citizen-engagement research', versus when adult policymakers physically hear from young people.

In one Canadian journal article, Transformational Learning Theory values were woven into the concept of youth engagement. The values of this model include a holistic method of youth engagement, whereby young people are engaged through a youth-centric process and empowered to exercise their own choices, autonomy, civic involvement and experiential learning (Shaw-Raudoy & McGregor, 2013). In this model, tokenism does not occur. Youth engagement is seen as the catalyst for broader psychological, societal and policy-level changes. In this model, researchers advise practitioners to overcome the tendency in traditional adult-youth partnerships - to conceptualise young people as powerless or novice, versus powerful or expert. The objective of this kind of engagement is not to help young people become law-abiding adults, but to engage them in political and social change processes, as meaningful contributors to society from where they are currently at.

Throughout the literature, the Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) Pyramid framework of youth participation appears central to many national and international organisations. This framework presents itself as youth-centric and argues that other frameworks such as Hart's Ladder of Participation and Shier's Models of Participation are inherently adult-centric (Head, 2011; King et al., 2015; Roach, Wureta, & Ross, 2011; Wong et al., 2010). This framework outlines three aspects of youth participation starting from "symbolic participation", to "shared control" between young people and their adult partners and commences with "independent participation", whereby adults concede power to young people (Head, 2011; King et al., 2015, p. 649). The purpose of this framework is to establish trusting relationships between young people and adults within service organisations. Based on an empowerment framework, adults are viewed as possible resources to young people, with young people continuously encouraged to share their experiences and use their voices to inform the surrounding environment. However, this framework is often not

representative of the general population and is more often found in communities with higher socio-economic statuses and education levels (Head, 2011; King et al., 2015). Due to its focus on youth-led relationship-building within adult run organisations, this framework could be useful in improving youth engagement in practitioner-occupied spaces.

Empowerment theory is predicated on the idea that young people are competent citizens, rather than just recipients of services (Checkoway, 2011). Several case studies have shown that, in order for young people to feel as though they can participate in meaningful policy-level decision-making, they must first feel empowered to do so (Bulling et al., 2013; Vromen & Collin, 2010). Based on an empowerment perspective, young people who participate in decision-making practices gain important information about their rights and options, develop decision-making skills, and experience enhanced feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Augsburger, 2014; Huang, Duffee, Steinke, & Larkin, 2011; King et al., 2015). This allows young people to feel as though they have the space and opportunity to speak their truths and be listened to by the adults around them.

Youth-adult partnerships are defined by Zeldin et al. (2013), as the “practice of multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together in a collective manner over a sustained period of time, through shared work intended to promote social justice, strengthen an organization and/or to affirmatively address a community issue” (p. 390). Bronfenbrenner's well-regarded developmental-ecological theory provides insights into how practitioners can influence young people to participate in decision-making through youth-adult partnerships. Bronfenbrenner emphasised the importance of ongoing interactions, which are characterised by reciprocal activity and the shifting of power between the systems that influence a person's development (Akiva, Cortina, & Smith, 2014; Zeldin et al., 2013). From a developmental-ecological perspective, it is argued that individuals gain more control over their environment when they use their voice and assume responsibility within settings. These settings are ideally characterised by a system of shared beliefs, an atmosphere of emotional support, opportunities to assume diverse roles, and leadership roles that are committed to change.

A number of helping professionals point out that central to the ecological theory is 'perspective mentoring relationships'. Though this sounds positive, often in these relationships, adults maintain a high degree of control and fail to successfully engage young people (Zeldin et al., 2013). This often leads to a build-up of tension and disconnection between young people and practitioners. Relationships between young people and adults, which are characterised by a balance of power, are relationships which are most likely to create true engagement and promote positive youth development. Essentially, youth-adult partnerships otherwise referred to as practitioner-young person relationships, include the types of interactions that underlie positive human development and empowerment.

Relationships

Decision-making made by young people has the potential to take place in contexts which are both goal-directed and relational (Zeldin et al., 2013). Relationships represent a central feature of effective CYC practice (Garfat & Fultcher, 2012). Relationships are described as the 'co-created' space between a practitioner and young person, whereby both parties contribute to making the relationship meaningful. A number of studies focus on the perspective of young people, highlighting their experiences of participation and how it affected them. Many young people expressed that they felt as though they had limited opportunities to participate in decision-making processes in their lives (van Bijleveld, Dedding, & Bunders-Aelen, 2015). They also reported that they were not well informed about what was going to happen to them, what they should expect in the near future, and what changes would be taking place in their lives. Additionally, many felt that their views were not acted upon or valued. Diversely, Leeson (2007) notes that young people felt good when practitioners valued their views, took their concerns seriously and provided realistic options for them. Even when the young peoples' choices did not work out in reality, many still reacted positively and felt valued when they felt they were being listened to.

Power

Power, according to Gharabaghi (2008), is located within gender stereotypes, age, race and ethnicity; it is also located in contexts that are not identity-based, such as education and access to information. Beyond many material factors, power is also located within the social role of the 'helper' versus the person who receives the help. Children with disabilities are often socially constructed as being in need of help. More recent definitions of disability focus on social obstacles as the main barrier to full participation, rather than personal deficits (Marshall, 2017). Institutional dynamics bring awareness to the power imbalances within practitioner-youth relationships, which develop because of cultural contexts that create opportunities for power imbalances. Developmental relationships, which are characterised by a balance of power among both parties, are relationships which are most likely to create proper engagement and promote youth development (Zeldin et al., 2013).

Power should not be manifested in youth participation solely by adults or solely by young people (Wong et al., 2010). Both parties have teachings and experiences to bring to youth participation and, in working together, adults and young people can learn from one another. There have been examples where young people have been left to completely run their own programming and, with limited experiences in leadership and coordination, their programming soon fell apart (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). Adults play an important role in facilitating participation for young people. However, adults are still granted more power in society and should, therefore, scaffold this power onto young people in order to help them learn ways in which to navigate using their own power as they get older (Wong et al., 2010). There is little to no evidence that if adults alone wield power or young people alone wield power that young people ultimately benefit in some way.

The existence of power dynamics between adults and young people has to be acknowledged in order for it to be critically examined. For young people, it is normal for one or two main caregivers to make decisions on their behalf (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). For young people in care, however, this power is divided up amongst many different human service professionals, such as social workers,

case managers, practitioners and parole officers. Gharabaghi (2008) argues that the process of agenda setting is a way in which institutional dynamics set the context for power within practitioner-youth relationships. By the time a practitioner meets a young person, they have already set up an agenda made of predetermined goals and objectives that the young person often has no real input on. Young people in care face greater challenges having their voices heard compared to young people who are not in care (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). Youth participation is dampened by the fact that young people in care usually lack safe attachments with adults they feel comfortable confiding in. Often young people purposefully withhold their experiences and opinions from their social workers, because they fear that it will be used against them by professionals at a later date. Additionally, social workers tend to have heavy caseloads which lead to young people falling through the cracks when it comes to participating in their case planning. This is particularly true of young people in the justice system.

Aspects of Positive Youth Participation

In order to work towards taking a needs-led approach to practice, and view young people as a resource rather than being in need of help, practitioners should actively engage in critical self-reflection (McMillan, Stuart, & Vincent, 2012; Metselaar, van Yperen, van den Bergh & Knorth, 2015). When this is done effectively, the practitioner will defer to the young person when it comes to creating their care plans. It is argued that this gives the young person a sense of autonomy and control over their care, which is often lost within child welfare systems (McMillan et al., 2012; Metselaar et al., 2015; Roach et al., 2013). This aspect of youth participation requires a practitioner to practice empathy, understanding and client empowerment (Metselaar et al., 2015). Young people report that they found practitioners who engaged in this type of reflective practice to be the most useful in helping them to achieve their goals, because they felt their voice was taken seriously (McMillan et al., 2012; Metselaar et al., 2015). Therefore, viewing the young person as their own resource in their care provision, allows a practitioner to work towards increased meaningful change for the young people with whom they work.

Additionally, young people report feeling empowered when they are consulted during the creation, implementation and evaluation stages of programme development. It is argued that programmes which are aimed at young people will be more effective if they consider a youth perspective throughout all of their stages (Head, 2011; King et al., 2015). When young people are engaged at all levels, they report developing a sense of belonging while, concurrently, their self-esteem improves (Huang et al., 2011; King et al., 2015). For example, an Australian mental health literacy organisation involved young people at all three stages of development of their phone-based application, which would be used to disseminate mental health education, resources and coping strategies for young people (Head, 2011; King et al., 2015). Young people were involved in how the application would look and function, while also informing what type of content would be included in the application. Additionally, after the application was disseminated, young people were consulted on what they thought worked well and what they thought needed improvement (Head, 2011; King et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to not only consult young people once they have begun using a programme or service, but also to engage them throughout said programme's development and implementation.

Barriers to Youth Participation

Historical perspectives of spatial isolation among generations, and the lack of understanding among the younger and older generations, have led to current barriers to youth participation (Zeldin et al., 2012). Age segregation has long been identified and still manifests itself in many institutions which serve young people. What was once done to protect young people from exploitation now serves to reinforce the 'outsider' status of young people. Skott-Myhre (2006) argues how current practices in the field of CYC are established in the construction of 'otherness' that originated during the Enlightenment and colonial periods of European history.

Although many adults agree that involvement of at-risk young people is a basic right, at-risk young people are often excluded from participating in decision-making processes. This leads to decisions being made for them regarding their treatment and placements (Oppenheim-Weller et al., 2017). While contemporary

thoughts on youth engagement have begun to shift from deficit-based models towards youth-centred approaches, it is still difficult for practitioners to challenge contemporary media portrayals of young people as 'victims of poverty', 'troubled', or 'passive recipients of services' (Checkoway, 2011; Wong et al., 2010). Often adults engage in 'adultism', whereby they assume that they are better and more entitled to act on behalf of young people without their permission. Studies show that providing young people with the opportunities to express their voice in their treatment planning can result in positive outcomes, enhanced child safety and improved relationships with child protection services (Oppenheim-Weller et al., 2017).

Much of the literature indicates that the intent to involve young people in decision-making is present, but that service professionals continue to demonstrate ambiguities and reservations about the specific roles young people should play as participants (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). Though many practitioners readily accept the idea of youth involvement, the practice itself is much more challenging and extends beyond just inviting young people to be physically present in meetings (Hubberstey, 2001). Even when young people are invited to participate, their attendance rates are low, particularly because the meetings held by the adults responsible for young people are not youth-friendly or youth-centred (Oppenheim-Weller et al., 2017). Often practitioners and decision-makers believe that co-learning and working with young people is a one-off activity which can be undertaken by planning a meeting with youth once a year (Shaw-Raudoy & McGregor, 2013). Researchers advise that, in order for meaningful cross-generational engagement to take place, sufficient time and broader organisational shifts must be built into settings which serve young people.

Methods of communication are also important when it comes to youth participation. For example, some deliberations may take place wherein adults and youth speak different languages and thusly problems unfold due to stakeholder ideas being lost in translation (Bulling et al., 2013; Vromen & Collin, 2010). Not only does this create barriers for young people who do not speak the corresponding language used by practitioners, it also creates barriers for young people who do not understand the language because they have not been

educated in CYC specific jargon. In Hubberstey's (2001) study on the challenges young people and practitioners face in regard to participation, practitioners expressed concerns regarding the capacity and ability of some young people to participate in multidisciplinary meetings. Along with those whose first language was not English, many practitioners were worried that those with mental health issues would be overwhelmed and not comprehend the information being discussed. Young people with disabilities report they want to be directly spoken to by practitioners about their disability and plans-of-care (Marshall, 2017).

Adults admit to sometimes underestimating the intentions of young people and their capacity to follow through on the agreements that they have made with adult decision-makers (Bulling et al., 2013). When decision-making adults undermine the abilities and intentions of young people engaged in a participatory process, this leads to barriers in idea-exchange. It is additionally of great importance that if young people are being invited to speak about different policies or referendums regarding their communities, that the issues be explained to them in clear terms. Young people should be made aware of what it is they are being asked to participate in. Language and tone must be considered when policy processes, research projects or adult objectives are being explained to young people.

Judgement appears to bar both young people and adults from meaningfully engaging one another in youth participation (Bulling et al., 2013; Vromen & Collin, 2010). It appears that young people judge adults based on whether or not they are worth collaborating with. Conversely, adults judge young people based on whether or not they are able to make sense of the issues at hand and how maturely they appear to be responding to them. Adults sometimes report feeling as though young people will not be able to understand the complex issues being discussed (Vromen & Collin, 2010). Some practitioners feel that youth participation is not warranted due to the subject matter of the young person's case not being appropriate for a 'younger audience' (van Bijleveld et al., 2015; Oppenheim-Weller et al., 2017; Vromen & Collin). Perhaps more attention should be attributed to preparing young people prior to a meeting they attend, and to creating a more youth-centred and youth-friendly atmosphere.

When cases revolve around abuse and neglect, practitioners are less likely to seek youth participation in case-planning meetings (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). Cross-cultural judgement also influences meaningful participation, whereby if participants believe there is a hierarchy in the social dynamics between those involved in the participatory process, meaningful exchanges cannot take place (Bulling et al., 2013). Practitioners' perceptions of the appropriate age at which at-risk young people can and should make decisions may differ (Oppenheim-Weller et al., 2017). One study found that in several international case-studies, young people under the age of 16 were not represented in adult-youth participatory processes (Bulling et al., 2013). It would appear that the literature does not reflect the value that all young people should be included in youth participation.

Self

Since self and the understanding of one's own 'self' is an important aspect of CYC practice, it must be considered when discussing the participation of young people in spaces such as child welfare agencies. The understanding of self will vary among different practitioners and, therefore, its implementation in youth participation will look different based on each individual's practice. It is important to consider this dynamic relationship when conceptualising self within youth engagement strategies.

Practitioner Reflective Practice

One meta-analysis of how clients and social workers perceived youth participation in child welfare and child protection agencies showed that workers hold vastly different interpretations as to what youth participation really is (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). There appears to be a fundamental gap between worker-conceptualisations of theory versus actual practice within systems of care. Social workers, by and large, agreed that youth participation was important. Some cited the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in their reasoning and some saw it as an integral part of gaining access to information specific to their clients. When it came to youth participation in practice, however, significant differences were present in how each worker mobilised youth

participation. Some workers felt that consulting the young person was enough. Some thought giving young people space to express themselves was true youth participation. Others felt that it encompassed explaining clearly what was to happen to them in an inclusive way. Some actually allowed their clients some degree of autonomy in decision-making processes, however, this varied markedly from social worker to social worker.

Skott-Mhyre (2006) notes that practitioners need to recognise their existing privileges, biases and resultant power relations with young people. Based on the personal nature of CYC practice, it is important to note that everyone holds biases and judgements (Gharabaghi, 2008). Judgements can be about more than one specific young person. They can be about how one feels about involving young people in decision-making, how much information should be disclosed while young people are present, at what age one feels young people can appropriately be involved, what type of young people have the privilege to partake in decision-making, and the degree to which the young person's opinion should influence final decisions. While it is natural for all individuals to hold biases and judgments, it becomes problematic in CYC practice when those biases and judgments are not acknowledged or challenged. One cannot simply say that young people should participate and have it be so in practice. As previously outlined, according to Bulling et al. (2013), in order for youth participation to rise above simple tokenism, it must be mobilised towards some kind of actual influence. This is where practitioners must engage in critical self-reflection in order to examine how they perceive youth participation and how they will go about mobilising youth influence in their respective settings.

Facilitators

In some forms of youth participation, particularly isolated formal meetings, trained facilitators can be invited to the meeting to ensure that young people's voices are heard by adults (Bulling et al., 2013). There is a documented tendency for adults who have agreed to hear from young people to then dominate the conversation with their own voices. This is particularly true when it comes to some of the most marginalised young people in society, specifically those with disabilities. Facilitators are responsible for setting the tone for the

interactions between adult and youth participants. In some instances, they can act as advocates for the young people, ensuring that the decision-makers at meetings actually hold true to their respective roles and respond to the requests of the young people participating in deliberations. The degree to which young people can represent themselves and confidently express their own opinions, needs and preferences, varies with age and developmental capacity (Roach, Wureta & Ross, 2013; Wong et al., 2010). The roles and scope of adult facilitators, who are helping young people, should be negotiated between the young people and the facilitator. Researchers cite practitioners as the ideal professionals to act as this type of intermediary, due to a foundational aspect of their practice centring on listening to young peoples' voices (Bulling et al., 2013).

When asked, young people report that entering into a partnership with their practitioner, where both they and the practitioner actively engage in building the relationship, is the most effective way to engage a young person (McMillan et al., 2012). Across several studies, young people continuously reported that when they feel they are a part of the decision-making team alongside their facilitator, they feel empowered and more able to benefit from their care (Bulling et al., 2013; King et al., 2015; McMillan et al., 2012; Shaw-Raudoy & McGregor, 2013). Since entering into relationships alongside young people is so often presented in CYC practice literature, it could be suggested that asking young people to engage equally in said relationship building is essential to CYC practice. Additionally, these participatory partnership-based relationships have shown to have a long-term impact on young people who reside in communities identified as at-risk. For example, young people who entered into a partnership with their practitioner were more likely to increase their grades in school by 10%, were more likely to graduate from high school and were more likely to obtain employment after meeting with their practitioner, in comparison to other young people living in their community (Roach et al., 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that by giving young people an equal voice throughout the relationship development process, youth-adult partnerships such as these improve statistics regarding school performance and attendance in communities identified as at-risk.

Implications for Practice

Researchers advise that it is the role of adults in adult-youth partnerships to ensure that spaces are open, safe and accepting for young people, in order for them to feel safe to share with others (Wong et al., 2010). It is precisely because of the power adults yield in society, that they are uniquely stationed to use their influence to create the opportunities for young people to engage with adults in co-learning exchanges. There are, however, many influences that affect the process of youth involvement. For example, while the number of young people who attend meetings has increased over recent decades, Leeson (2007) argues that when young people attend meetings they are often only physically present, rather than active participants.

Young people's feelings about attending care-meetings are mixed. While some young people, for the most part, feel positive about their participation, some acknowledge feeling very uncomfortable and intimidated while sitting in a room with a large number of people present (Hubberstey, 2001; van Bijleveld et al., 2015). Most young people expressed that they wanted to know what was being said about them and needed reassurance that their views were being represented. Hubberstey (2001) notes that practitioners often revealed that they themselves felt uncomfortable disclosing their feelings and important information while young people were present. This has implications for shared decision-making and for maintaining trusting practitioner-youth relationships. The frequent changing of practitioners who are involved in a young person's life can lead to barriers to honest communication, trust building and an absence of meaningful relationships (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). Perhaps the lack of agreement amongst practitioners as to their understanding of what youth participation entails, and what weight it should be given, provides a reason for many of the aforementioned barriers.

Conclusion

The most important aspect of youth engagement, which sets it apart from surface level participation or tokenism, is when it leads to tangible change or influence. When discussing youth engagement and participation through a CYC

lens, one can consider how participation manifests itself in the contexts of engagement, relationships and self. Practitioners tend to agree that young people should actively participate within their organisations, in care meetings and other modes of intervention; however, there appears to be a large discrepancy in how youth participation is actually mobilised. Therefore, it is important that practitioners identify and understand the multiple barriers to participation which are present, and actively work towards dismantling them. The foundational practice-based aspect of critical self-reflection is an important part of practitioner-facilitated youth participation. Practitioners must remember the integral role they play in care milieus and live up to their roles as the professionals 'who listen to young people's voices'. Since practitioners hold a position of power in young people's lives, it is important for them to critically reflect on that power and use it in ways that work towards improving youth engagement and overall participation in the aforementioned areas of CYC practice.

About the authors

All three authors were students of the undergraduate Child and Youth Care and the graduate Child and Youth Care programmes at Ryerson University in Toronto. Lindsay Sinclair holds over ten years of experience serving children, youth and their families, within community, mental health and hospital settings. Melissa Vieira holds ten years of experience working with youth in a number of community, school, recreational and hospital settings. Vanessa Zufelt holds more than fifteen years of experience working with young people and their families in schools, homeless shelters, international contexts and within their homes.

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