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Health Care and the Issues Faced by Youth with Disabilities

A white paper written by youth leaders from the Youth Leadership Development Institute
2011

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Youth Leadership Development Institute

Introduction to the Youth Leadership Development Institute (YLDI):

The Youth Leadership Development Institute was established through support from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's State Implementation Grant. This Institute worked to promote the development of advocacy and leadership skills in youth with disabilities. The developers of the curriculum believed in the importance of creating youth lead and youth focused programs, in order to develop a network of peer mentors. Youth who attended these events were between the ages of 16-28, had a disclosed disability, and were identified as emerging leaders.

Purpose of the YLDI:

The goal of the YLDI is to provide a safe, accepting environment to cultivate the growth of self-acceptance, confidence, and self-advocacy skills. Youth leaving the YLDI program should feel more accepting of themselves with a disability, more confident in their abilities and choices, and a connection to the other youth attending the YLDI, as well as to the disability community as a whole.

Youth Leadership Development Institute White Papers

Introduction to the White Papers

In recognition of the finite time that this group of youth leaders had together, the members of the YLDI decided that they wanted to leave a legacy of the work that they had done together. They recognized the devastating outcomes that can be a result of the unaddressed barriers that youth with disabilities commonly face. In an effort to address these issues, the youth decided to develop a set of twelve white papers, which identify the discrimination and barriers that youth endure.

Development of the White Papers

In November of 2009, the first YLDI was held in Cranberry Pennsylvania, approximately twenty youth with disabilities attended this event from that group eight youth were selected to take on leadership positions for future YLDI events. Throughout the following two years three additional YLDI trainings were held and from those three twelve additional leaders were chosen to assist in creating training materials, leading sessions, speaking to officials about youth issues, and creating white papers. In the last year of the program these twenty leaders attended advanced leadership institutes where they assisted in developing the twelve white papers.

During this two-year endeavor, the twenty leaders (ages 16-29) met on four different occasions to identify the top issues faced by youth, define source of the problems, and create recommendations. These four weekend meetings produced the foundation of each of these documents. The twelve white papers developed include:

- Employment
- Education
- Self-Advocacy
- Healthcare

- Independent Living
- Youth Leadership Development
- Social Relationships
- Disability Stigma
- Transition
- Transportation
- Top Issues: Summary of Concerns

Youth then volunteered to further develop these documents into policy papers. Each paper was then edited by the other leaders. These papers are to be used to identify the barriers faced by youth and to recognize the importance of the youth voice in developing solutions. Please email Josie Badger at josiebadger@hotmail.com with any questions, comments, or to request a presentation.