

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD *Toolkit*



Youth Advisory Board Toolkit



Indiana
Department
of
Health



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Introduction

Engaging young people is a crucial aspect of effective youth-oriented programs. Since 2019, the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) has prioritized the "for youth, by youth" model, which allows young people to define their needs and priorities. This approach recognizes that young people are best equipped to understand their peers' challenges and issues. By empowering young people to lead, they can create programs and initiatives tailored to their specific needs. In 2022, IDOH partnered with another state agency - The Family and Social Services Administration Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) – to launch its first Indiana Youth Advisory Board (IYAB).

The IYAB is a group of young people from across the state who work together to advise state agencies on issues that impact youth. The board consists of individuals aged 14 to 24 who represent different Indiana regions, races, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Despite facing unexpected challenges and experiencing some growing pains, the board set a new standard for youth work in Indiana.

Through many opportunities and experiences, the IYAB encourages young leaders to remain engaged and motivated to achieve their goals. Young people play a critical role in decision-making. This approach shows how much their voices matter and how they can affect real change in their communities. Members of the IYAB are not only present at important discussions, but they also witness the direct impact of their work. They can influence policies, programs and initiatives that affect their lives and the lives of their peers. Indiana will continue its commitment to give young people a voice in decision-making. IDOH hopes that you are encouraged to do the same and find resources and lessons learned that can help you along the way.



This toolkit was designed to assist state agencies in developing and maintaining a youth advisory board by sharing how this was accomplished at the Indiana Department of Health and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. However, we hope the information may be helpful to any agency pursuing this work.



Preparing Your Workplace

First thing first: working **alongside** youth will be different than what you are used to and can be challenging, but it will be extremely rewarding. Developing, fostering and maintaining a workplace that supports youth-led and youth-informed work is essential. Is your workplace culture youth friendly? Have you clearly outlined the ways you plan to incorporate youth voices? Have you defined what “youth” means in terms of your work? What do you want the structure of your board to look like? Are youth aware this is a job?



Highly Recommended: Make this a paid job opportunity for youth and treat them as an equal employee! This incentive also helps recruit youth who do not just want another opportunity to volunteer.

Building Your Team

Adult leaders are responsible for organizing projects and tasks for the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) while board members drive the work and determine that projects align with their goals.

The YAB is supported by many adult leaders who work in different capacities. This additional support is crucial for our success. At IDOH, two staff members work with the board 10% of their time and a third team member who coordinates most of the work dedicates 80% of their time. At DMHA, two staff work on the board 10% and 30% of their time. The entire team meets monthly to check in and provide updates. Keep in mind, our team is responsible for a board of 66 youth advisors. Check out the sample board facilitator (80%) and youth advisory board member position descriptions below.



Board Facilitator (Adult Lead) Position Description

Purpose of Position/Summary:

The youth engagement coordinator is responsible for daily activities related to the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and youth engagement and development. The youth engagement coordinator will oversee YAB projects and work with internal and external partners to carry out the objectives of the participating agencies and YAB youth and young adult board members.

Essential Duties/Responsibilities:

- Serve as the primary contact for the YAB within participating agencies
- Establish collaborative relationships with multiple partners, including statewide youth-serving organizations, local health departments and other public and non-profit agencies to improve youth engagement within programming
- Compose press releases, newsletters and website updates discussing up-to-date information on YAB activities and successes



- Plan an annual in-person all-board YAB meeting. This may include selecting a space and theme, recruiting speakers, contacting vendors, creating an agenda, organizing travel, ordering promotional items, etc.
- Connect YAB members with ongoing projects in their home counties
- Select new YAB board members annually
 - Create/update YAB application
 - Create materials to disseminate to schools, stakeholders, partners and other youth-serving organizations
 - Coordinate the selection process
 - Request follow-up information from applicants
- Identify and coordinate opportunities to present YAB work at the local, state and national levels. This includes submitting conference proposals, coordinating youth participation, organizing travel and interacting with youth and conference managers.
- Work with the YAB to ensure they meet objectives as outlined in the memorandum of understanding
- Lead, facilitate and manage all YAB-related activities and meetings, this includes frequent evening meetings and occasional weekend events
- Work with YAB to plan activities for International Adolescent Health Week and other adolescent and young adult health-related observances. This includes assisting in the development of social media toolkits, webinars and other educational materials.
- Research existing programs and services related to the YAB's focus areas and work with YAB to connect with these initiatives

Board Member (Youth and Young Adults) Position Description

Essential Duties/ Responsibilities:

- Participate in monthly Youth Advisory Board virtual meetings
- Identify future youth suicide prevention priorities and make recommendations for how to improve the quality of life for youth across Indiana
- Contribute feedback on adolescent health programs
- Create meaningful projects (such as flyers, toolkits, webinars, in-person events, videos, etc.) to address emerging issues that are currently impacting youth
- Gather and share input on youth's access to care and how their health is impacted by their community and healthcare systems



- Determine term-year advisory board priorities and response programming for topics including adolescent health, mental health, sexual health, minority health, substance prevention and policy
- Serve as experts on youth and young adult experiences
- Support state leaders to make informed decisions on youth public health programming and policies



Lesson learned: We recommend checking in with your state youth labor laws before determining the age. For example, you must be 14 to work in Indiana and cannot work after 7 p.m. on a school night.

Requirements:

- Youth (age 14-24) residing in (location/state)
- Ability to work collaboratively with peers
- Demonstrate cultural competence and understanding of the unique challenges of youth including minority/BIPOC youth, LGBTQ+ youth, youth in foster care, parenting as a young person, rural youth and youth who have experienced homelessness
- Strong interest in public health and/or mental health
- Clear communication and time management skills
- Comfort, willingness and ability to learn, adopt and utilize new technology
- Excellent coordination skills, including multitasking and setting priorities

Setting Goals & Expectations

Youth boards require a solid and effective structure. Creating agreements and memorandums of understanding help set clear expectations and standards for everyone involved in this work.



Lesson learned: Our first time around, we wanted to be relaxed and leave the structure of the meetings completely to the youth. They quickly told us they needed and wanted some structure and agreements in place. We continue to build and improve on these alongside the board.

Agreements

Create an initial draft and then work with the youth board to finalize it. Ensure their wants and concerns are reflected in the language. Once approved by leadership and the board, ask the members and leadership to sign the group agreements.




Agreement Example

- I agree to commit at least 2.5 hours to this board each month and will participate in at least one committee.
- I agree to be present and engaged during meetings by limiting phone use, actively listening, asking questions, sharing ideas, and turning on my camera when possible.
- I agree to notify my assigned supervisor within 72 hours before/after if I must miss a meeting via email, text, GroupMe, etc. I understand if I fail to do this it counts as an unexcused absence, and I can only have three of these during the year before I am removed from the board.
- I agree that all personal experiences shared in YAB meetings must remain confidential and should not be discussed with those not a part of the YAB.
- I agree to exemplify qualities like open-mindedness, genuineness and respectfulness.
- I agree to offer my peers and leadership constructive criticism.
- I agree to act as a positive ambassador for _____ (your agency).
- I agree to be supportive of my YAB peers when they choose to be vulnerable.
- I agree to consider cultural differences when engaging in YAB discussions.
- I agree to be considerate and respectful of others' pronouns and ask when I'm unsure.
- I agree to listen to others and to be open to and respectful of their differing opinions and viewpoints.
- I agree that words or actions that are racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, etc., are not tolerated.
- I agree to always try my best.
- I understand that if I do not uphold these agreements my status on the board will be moved to a voluntary position instead of a paid position.



Tip: There is no such thing as overcommunicating with youth. We message many reminders across many platforms to ensure everyone sees every update.



Tip: Be flexible! Unpaid, voluntary positions are an option our board agreed upon as youth can be busy with school, clubs, jobs, college transitions and more. This is a modification to the agreement about removal after three unexcused absences above. We wanted to make sure youth always had a space to connect.



Memorandum of Understanding

MOUs keep all agencies involved in the YAB process accountable for board outcomes and success. Setting a formal agreement ensures everyone is on the same page.

MOU Example

This memorandum of understanding (“Memorandum”) is entered into by and between agency one and agency two.

The purpose of this MOU is to build or expand the capacity of agency one and agency two to develop a Youth Advisory Board. These boards will be expected to identify future youth suicide prevention priorities, make recommendations for how to improve the quality of life for youth across our areas of responsibility, and provide feedback on adolescent programs and youth’s access to care. Youth on the board will act as experts on their own experiences and determine the advisory board’s priorities and response programming for topics including adolescent health, mental health, sexual health, minority health, substance use prevention and policy.

- Agency one will be expected to co-lead the planning and structure of the Youth Advisory Board meetings and activities. The Youth Suicide Grant Project Director (or other agency one appointed key staff person) will serve in this role. They will also provide direct funding (from x grant) to agency two per youth advisory board member for up to 10 hours per month for a total of 450 billable hours per month.
- Agency two will be expected to co-lead the planning and structure of the Youth Advisory Board meetings and activities. The Director of Maternal and Child Health Programs (or other agency two appointed key staff person) will serve in this role. Agency two will provide direct funding from the (y grant). The amount of this funding is dependent on available funds each year, but will be used to cover food, conferences and other items for the youth. Agency two staff will provide subject matter expertise related to public health data, programming and policies on topics of interest or concern to the board.

In collaboration, agencies one and two are expected to communicate common key priorities and messages to community stakeholders including youth-serving organizations throughout our areas of responsibility. Use the Youth Advisory Board feedback to:

- Improve state-coordinated efforts to effectively identify risk factors and barriers to treatment for youth, and
- Conduct ongoing program coordination, implementation and evaluation between agency one and agency two.



Note: IDOH joined forces with another state agency for our YAB. This MOU helps us both understand our roles/responsibilities and financial commitment.



Board Member Recruitment

This is where you identify who you want to serve on your board and decide how you plan to find those individuals. What do you want your collaboration and partnerships to look like? What do you want your board to look like? What is your timeline to get this work off the ground? How will you score and select youth based on their applications?

Spreading the Word

Create and disseminate materials with partners, stakeholders and other interested parties. Connecting with youth-serving agencies and schools will be especially important. Consider giving presentations and hosting Q&A sessions while the application is open.

Recruitment Flyer

Create and disseminate a flyer to recruit youth advisors. Below are examples Indiana created in 2021 and 2024. We recommend a QR code for quick and easy access to apply.



Apply now!
YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

We are actively recruiting all Indiana youth and young adults to make a difference in public health and suicide prevention

- Must be between the ages of 13-23
- This is a paid opportunity for all Indiana youth and young adults
- Gain experience working with public health initiatives and suicide prevention to help the youth and young adults of Indiana

Deadline to apply March 31st

Please visit <https://www.in.gov/health/mch/> or scan QR code to apply



Scan to apply!



APPLY TO THE INDIANA YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD



Job Description:

- Indiana Department of Health and Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction are actively recruiting all Indiana youth and young adults to make a difference in public health and suicide prevention. In this position you will:
 - Gain experience and knowledge working with public health and suicide prevention initiatives
 - Be an advocate for others
 - Work on various projects to improve the health and well-being of young people in Indiana

Additional Details:

- Remote position
- \$20/hr
- Must be between the ages of 14-24
- If selected, you will serve a 1-year term
- Please apply by April 19 if interested

Questions?

<http://tinyurl.com/idoh-iyab>
smundt@health.in.gov
caitlyn.short@fssa.in.gov





Creating Your Application

It is essential to ask questions that allow you to get to know the potential board members better. As you develop your application, consider having applicants answer basic information and demographic questions along with short answer questions.

Make sure you ask for contact information such as email and phone number. You might consider including a question about county of residence. Short answer responses help you understand your candidates' "why." We don't recommend making the application too long or too difficult to apply.

After reading responses, it can still be hard to decide who you want to join the board, especially if you receive hundreds of applications – we had 540 applications in 2024. However, this also means that you have a pool of potential board members who could bring exciting new perspectives and ideas. If this happens, you may need an additional scoring round. One possible approach is doing a video submission. IDOH invited half of all applicants to submit a video. Most youth submitted a video via email or linked to their video on social media. Accessing some videos can be a challenge, so help from our team of interns in organizing our video submissions was so helpful.



Advice: Ask for them to input their email address twice in their application. This will make sure you have a way to contact them in case of a typo.

Highly recommend! The video submission idea came from our youth consultant and the youth have really liked doing this. It also allows us a glimpse into their personalities and excitement for the YAB.

Example Application Questions

- Why do you want to join the Youth Advisory Board?
- Describe your interest in public health, mental health and/or suicide prevention.
- What do you hope to achieve as a member of the YAB?
- Describe 2 – 3 emerging issues that impact teens in our state that are most important to you.
- What skills do you feel you can bring to the YAB?
- How do you navigate differences in opinions/ideas?



Example Video Submission Questions

- Introduce yourself! Tell us your name/any nickname you may have, your interests and your location.
- Tell us again why you are passionate about joining the YAB. How do you envision yourself contributing to our team and making a difference?
- Explain what you hope to gain from joining the Youth Advisory Board. In your perfect scenario, what are some things you would like to give and receive from being a part of this group? How do you see yourself growing and developing through this experience?



- What superpower are you bringing to the table? What is your biggest strength? How will this strength help you make a positive impact as a member of our team?

Scoring Applications

Once your application deadline passes, the most challenging part begins - scoring. We recommend building a large team of reviewers representing your participating agencies' diverse interests. After selecting reviewers, you must develop a clear scoring rubric. We recommend dividing applicants among reviewers and creating a reviewer checklist to help everyone keep track of who they are responsible for reviewing. Afterward, you can review scores and develop plans for the next steps. During this process, you want to think about the following:



- Who is represented?
- Who stood out?
- Is a second application round necessary?
- If so, what types of questions should be asked?

Indiana has used “0-3” and “yes/ no/ maybe” scoring scales to review board member applications. We have found that using a yes/no/maybe scale sometimes causes ratings to vary across scorers who value and look for different traits in applicants. This resulted in too many “maybe” answers. Further defining what characteristics are most important for board members or using a 1 – 10 scale may help other sites using this scoring format.

Scoring Template Example: Written Submission

| Questions | Reminder: Here are the Questions |
|-----------------------|--|
| | Why do you want to join the Youth Advisory Board? |
| | Describe your interest in public health, mental health and/or suicide prevention. |
| | How do you navigate different perspectives/ideas? |
| | What do you hope to achieve as a member of the YAB? |
| | Describe 2 – 3 emerging issues that impact teens in our state that are most important to you. |
| | What skills do you feel you can bring to the YAB? |
| | How do you navigate differences in opinions/ideas? |
| Scoring Rubric | <i>Score each of the questions above on a scale from 0 - 3</i> |
| | Each applicant score total will automatically populate based on your scores entered in columns |
| | Please use the final column for any notes or comments. Update final scores by ___ date. We will meet after ___ to discuss candidates and next steps. |



Scoring Template Example: Video Submission

| | |
|---|--|
| Video Questions | Reminder: Here are the questions asked on each application. |
| | Introduce yourself: tell us your name/any nickname you may have, your interests and your location. |
| | Tell us again why you are passionate about joining the YAB. How do you envision yourself contributing to our team and making a difference? |
| | Explain what you hope to gain from joining the youth advisory board. In your perfect scenario, what are some things you would like to give and receive from being a part of this group? How do you see yourself growing and developing through this experience? |
| | What superpower are you bringing to the table? What is your biggest strength? How will this strength help you make a positive impact as a member of our team? |
| Scoring Rubric | Score each of the four questions above on a scale of YES, NO, or MAYBE |
| | <i>The criteria is as follows:</i> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in _____ and will be able to have yearly meetings in person. • Ability to communicate well on camera. • Their video answers all questions. • They bring unique experiences, perspective or diversity to the board. • Lived experience is a benefit. • They are enthusiastic. |
| | YES: The applicant meets all criteria, and the scorer feels he or she will be a necessary asset to the YAB. Their video demonstrates exceptional talent, and the scorer feels strongly that they would play a key role on the board. In this case, the applicant will be given immediate acceptance to the board and will have little to no further re-evaluation. |
| | MAYBE: Scorer believes that the applicant demonstrates good understanding and great potential for the board. However, the applicant may be missing something. The applicant will be re-evaluated later to make a final decision regarding his or her entry. |
| NO: Applicant does not demonstrate the needed criteria for the Youth Advisory Board | |
| | <i>Please use the final column for any notes or comments. Please update final scores by _____. We will meet after _____ to discuss the final candidates and next steps.</i> |



Once you have completed the selection, notify your candidates of their acceptance or denial. Young people are often incredibly vulnerable in their submissions, so please assure them that their applications are treated with utmost care and consideration. Therefore, it's recommended to share a resource card with all who applied to provide them with additional support.



Sample Acceptance Message

Congratulations!

We are excited to welcome you to the IYAB! We had many applications and an impressive pool of candidates across the state, but we decided that we needed you on the board. We are so glad to have you join our team.

Now, to the logistics:

- As a member of the Youth Advisory Board, you are required to participate __ hours per month at a rate of __/hour with the opportunity for up to __ hours per month depending on projects or workload outside of our monthly meeting.
- Please reply to this email letting us know whether you accept or decline the position.
- If you accept the position, complete [this link](#) to select all dates and times you are available to meet virtually for our kickoff meeting.
- Note: our first meeting will last __ hours.
- If you accept the position, send us a selfie and a short paragraph about you that we can share with the rest of the board for our kickoff meeting. Complete these tasks by ____.
 - Your “about you” could include:
 - Name or nickname
 - Where you live in Indiana
 - Activities you like doing
 - What you are passionate about related to mental health and public health and why
 - A fun fact about you

Please reach out if you have any questions. Again, thank you so much for your thoughtful application, and we cannot wait to get started!

Denial Message

Dear [Applicant],

Thank you for taking the time to apply for the IYAB. We had over _____ applications for the board this year. We appreciate your interest in our organization and commitment to making a difference in your community.

After carefully reviewing all the applications received, we regret to inform you that you have not been selected for the Indiana Youth Advisory Board. Although your application was impressive, we received many qualified applicants and had to make some difficult decisions. We assure you



this is not the end of your journey with us. We encourage you to continue pursuing your passion and involvement in your community.

Your interest in the IYAB is highly valued, and we hope that you will consider applying again in the future. We will keep in touch with future opportunities as they arise.

Thank you again for your interest, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavors.



Advice: If there are other ways you might engage youth throughout the year, ask them if they would be interested. For example, we might ask youth to plan an event/conference, volunteer, participate in focus groups and more. This would be a great space to ask and keep them engaged in other ways!

Onboarding

Onboarding is **the beginning of a Youth Advisory Board**, which makes it a significant time for laying the foundation of your board including permissions, documentation, training and expectations.

Parent/Caregiver Engagement

Carving out time to meet and engage members' parents and guardians, especially those under 18, is vital to a Youth Advisory Board's success. We recommend hosting a parent or caregiver-specific meeting (we hosted ours virtually) to discuss the type of work board members will be engaged in and address possible concerns parents or guardians may have. Guardians have enjoyed getting to know the staff and learn more about the work and benefit of the board.



Highly recommend! We thought of this after we started our first IYAB and were fielding a lot of questions from parents and caregivers. Have this meeting up front and let them get to know the staff/team of adults that will be working with their youth. Having just a one-hour webinar built a lot of trust with our parents and caregivers. We had a lot of positive feedback from our new group!

In the inaugural year of the Indiana Youth Advisory Board, we met with parents and guardians to discuss the work that board members would be pursuing. We also created a parent/caregiver meeting presentation, which included an overview of the IDOH and DMHA, an overview of the IYAB, details of the next meeting and, most importantly, an opportunity to ask any questions.



Pay Structure

We encourage you to view youth serving on the board as consultants/employees and, therefore, treat them as such. It is essential to change the landscape and view youth as key stakeholders in public health who are paid for their time. Providing pay also helps improve members' level of engagement and can help cover costs, paid for through outside work, that may prevent them from having time for board participation.



Although Indiana pays IYAB members, not all states can provide compensation. Other incentives like hosting fun events, creating goodie bags, offering gift cards and providing swag can show the youth how much we appreciate their time, energy and dedication to improving health outcomes in the community. We encourage you to be intentional when thinking about pay structure due to its impact on the benefits your board members and their families may receive. Another consideration when determining pay is the age of your board members. In some states, youth under a certain age may not be eligible to work and receive compensation. Thus, they may not be able to receive pay at all, work after certain hours or may not exceed a specific number of hours. If you are interested and able to pay your board, this is how Indiana was able to accomplish this:

The IYAB is funded by a combination of grants held by both the Indiana Department of Health and the Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction.

We used a combination of funding from the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Grant, the Sexual Risk Avoidance and Education Grant, the Title V MCH Block Grant and the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant. Indiana can pay IYAB members as a "board member" through the Indiana Department of Health. This also allows them to have state emails, state time reporting and access to platforms like Microsoft Teams. This could be a viable option in your state systems. Other states have hired people with lived experience as contractors, provided gift cards or used money-sending applications such as Venmo.



Game changer: Our HR team really helped us problem solve and gave us this option. We gave them some fun swag items as a thank you for helping us navigate the options. We could not have done it without them.

A great option for states with more restrictions, but we didn't want the youth further removed and not directly work with them.

Participation often looks different each month. An individual member may work one hour one month and ten the next. This is determined by what activities you have going on at any point in time.



Another option if you are unable to pay youth at the state level is to contract with a third party to administer and pay the Youth Advisory Board. While paying board members does involve some time to navigate and can be a lot of paperwork, it is a manageable process. We recommend implementing an effective sorting/filing system to streamline this. We pay members monthly and ask them to submit their hours each month in the Excel spreadsheet below. These are compiled and submitted to our payroll team via email.

IYAB Timesheet

| Date | # of hours worked | Description of work | Total hours worked |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
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| | | | |
| | | | |

Total Pay \$ 0

Hiring Documents

For youth advisory board members to be paid for their expertise, it is likely that they will require the following documentation: W-4 form, your state’s tax withholding form, direct deposit form and a voided check. Hiring practices will vary based on your employer. We recommend knowing the entire process to best prepare your youth for success. You may also have to navigate pay for youth who do not have a work visa. Be sure to work alongside your human resources and payroll teams.

Photo Release

We encourage developing and sharing a photo release form. This allows the usage of photos of board members on your website and promotional materials for the Youth Advisory Board. All photo releases for board members under the age of 18 require parental or guardian permission. See below for an example.



Authorization to Use and Release Information, Story, Words, Photo or Voice

I hereby grant _____ permission to use my information, story, words, as well as likeness in a photograph/video in any and all of its publications, including website entries, without payment or other consideration.

I understand and agree that these materials will become property of the _____.

I hereby irrevocably authorize the _____ to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish, or distribute as needed for any lawful purpose.

In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my information or likeness appears. I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of this information, photograph/video.

I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the _____ from all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate have or may have reason by reason of this authorization.

I am at least eighteen (18) years of age and am competent to contract my own name. (I have read this release before signing and fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

Description of activity:

_____ is requesting permission to publish your FIRST name, country of residence, and headshot on our website. This information will be included on a page about the Youth Advisory Board. No additional information is requested or included at this time. This information will be viewable to anyone who visits our website.

Signature

Date signed (month, day, year)

Printed Name

If the person signing is under eighteen (18) or not competent to contract, there must be consent by a parent or legal guardian, as follows:

I hereby certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of and do hereby give my consent without reservation to the foregoing on behalf of this person.

Signature of parent/ legal guardian

Date signed (month, day, year)

Printed Name of parent/ legal guardian



Membership



Benefits

Offering a wide range of learning and growth opportunities is essential to keep members involved. Indiana provides members with the following:

- **Professional Development Opportunities:** IDOH offers job shadowing experiences where we invite young people to learn about our work. These experiences were inspired by feedback from members, who have since spent time in our office and learned more about IDOH's entire scope of work. This is also a great opportunity to spend time with members in person. If they are interested in other work, IDOH does its best to match members with someone in their network who has the expertise they are interested in.
- **Upcoming Opportunities Listserv:** This is a valuable resource for members to stay updated on opportunities beyond the scope of IYAB's work. It is a gateway to internships, jobs, youth boards, speaking opportunities, community events and more.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Teams should make sure to be intentional about setting time aside for requests such as this, as they are important to cultivating a positive board culture and relationships with members as they plan for their futures.
- **Presentable Work:** Members often present their work at state and national conferences, which can be great for networking. Agencies should take this opportunity to introduce members to stakeholders and partners.



Pro tip: Make sure to let them know you are here for recommendations and have a process for doing so. We are here to help them grow and this has been a key service used by IYAB members.

Lesson learned: You will need a travel policy in place that accommodates youth of all ages and their families or caregivers. Make sure to plan for any events far in advance!

Term Limits

Creating term limits for the IYAB was intended to increase innovative ideas and avoid stagnation of perspectives. These two points are particularly important with youth advisory boards, as different generations have different life experiences. We must ensure members are in the board's age range to be aware of current topics and issues that are important to adolescents. In Indiana, a full board term is one calendar year. Note: We kept our inaugural board on for two years as we built and designed the IYAB. All youth had the option to end their term after one year or continue for a second year. Do what works for you!



Incomplete Term

Losing a board member can be difficult, and we like to learn from these occurrences. We created an anonymous exit survey for board members who leave before their term is officially over. We recommend that you carefully tailor your exit survey to ensure that you collect the best feedback for your board. Our survey is conducted via Google Forms, with each question marked as required. The IYAB exit survey questions are as follows.

Exit Interview

- What prompted you to leave the Youth Advisory Board?
- Do you feel you received the support you needed to succeed on the Youth Advisory Board?
- What did you like best about being a part of the Youth Advisory Board?
- What did you like least about being a part of the Youth Advisory Board?
- What suggestions do you have for the leadership of the Youth Advisory Board?
- Would you recommend the Youth Advisory Board to a friend? Why or why not?
- Please share any other feedback you have for us.

Graduation

Celebrating board members after a complete term is essential to show your agency's appreciation for their hard work – and your own! Below are examples of certificates and thank you letters used to celebrate a member's graduation from the board and express the IDOH's appreciation for their dedication and valuable feedback.

Thank You Letter

Thank you for your service to the State of _____. Your participation and leadership on the _____ have been instrumental in advancing our agencies' missions. This role carries immense responsibility, and you've taken it on with wisdom and integrity. We and many others are deeply honored to have had the opportunity to work with you.

Your dedication, passion, and expertise have significantly impacted _____. We appreciate your unique perspective and careful deliberation on new initiatives, and we wholeheartedly commend you for your outstanding personal growth and achievements over your term.

Your journey has been inspiring, and we are truly proud of you. We look forward to future collaborations and hope to follow your journey as you continue to reach new heights.

Congratulations!





Alumni

Engagement and connections don't have to end after your board members' terms ends. We highly suggest creating Alumni pages and groups on social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook, where you can continue building a network of board alums. This network will serve not only as a way for previous board members to stay in touch but also provide them with professional growth opportunities. It's also a great way for your agency to share marketing materials.

IYAB Member Suggestion: This was a recommendation from one of our youths, and we are pleased to now have an alumni group on LinkedIn.



Youth Leadership

Over time, you may find that decision-making is being driven by adult leadership. One way to share decision-making power with board members is to create a leadership committee. In Indiana, this committee is comprised of alumni members who have completed at least one year with the board. The first time we will collaborate with this committee will be in the upcoming third year. Below you can find the job description, application questions and questions used during interviews.



Lesson learned: A lot of youth expressed interest in the Leadership Committee but did not make time to apply or to schedule their interview. We do not recommend sending countless reminders asking them to apply - we want a leadership team who is responsible,

Leadership Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Assistance with YAB meetings

- Helps develop a comprehensive agenda for meeting
- Responsible for presenting information at board meetings
- Interviews potential speakers prior to them attending a board meeting

Establishment of goals for the YAB

- Develops action items to guide the board towards achieving their goals
- Evaluates board activities on a quarterly basis to assess alignment with mission and vision. This evaluation will inform suggestions for the following quarter.
- Assists with year-end wrap up and YAB annual report, which is shared to state agencies and Indiana communities

Facilitation of events

- Hosts the annual youth summit.
- Helps coordinate annual YAB in-person meetings
- Identifies training topics and activities

Review of new YAB applications

- Review new YAB applications and assist with selection
- Participates in new member recruitment



Leadership Committee Application Questions

- What does engagement with the YAB mean to you?
- In this role, how would you help new board members feel comfortable sharing their voice?



- What are some new ideas you could bring to the table?
- What is your biggest strength as a leader?
- How do you collaborate with others who have different opinions than your own?



Leadership Committee Interview Questions

- Why do you want to serve on the leadership committee?
- Please share what you think is your biggest accomplishment.
 - Follow-up: What strengths helped you to achieve it?
- How you would bring together members together to accomplish a goal.
 - Follow-up: How would you handle different perspectives?
- How do you hold yourself accountable to ensure you fulfill your commitments?
 - Follow-up: What would you do to monitor progress on projects and hold other YAB members accountable?
- How would you support other YAB members to grow as people and professionals?
- Tell us about a time when a project or plan was not going the way you wanted. What did you do?
- Describe a time when you led by example.

Activities & Engagement



It is essential to plan and facilitate time together. How will you communicate regularly with your board? How often will you meet with your board members, and how will these meetings be conducted? What types of goals will be set for this time? What kinds of activities will you facilitate during board meetings? How will you cultivate cohesion and participation?

Meetings

Get ready to meet with your members regularly. This will often change over time, with some months being more high demand than others. Regardless, checking in a few times each month makes sure everyone is on the same page. Here is our structure:



Pro tip: Keep meetings the same time every month. Most of the time, youth appreciated having a consistent meeting. For example, we met on the last Monday of every month from 5:30 – 7 p.m.



Meeting Structure

| Meeting Type | Frequency | Length of Meeting | Meeting Place |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| All Board Meeting | 1 per month | 1.5 hours | Virtual |
| Committee Meetings | 1 per month (per committee) | 1 hour | Virtual |
| Annual Get Together | 1 annually | All day | In-Person |
| Additional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check ins, • Project meetings, • Leadership meetings | As needed (5-10 per month) | Varies | Virtual |
| Events (speaking/presenting) | As needed | Varies | In-person |

Monthly Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and icebreaker
- Updates about ongoing initiatives or guest speakers
- New business, projects, etc.
- Membership discussion
- Thank you, wrap-up, questions and concerns



Making it Special

Anything you can do to engage your new board for a virtual meeting is worthwhile, and nothing generates more excitement and bonding than snacks! We recommend using Snack Magic, a customizable service that can create individual snack boxes, grab-and-go trays and goodie bags. We paid for each youth to order \$50 boxes on their website and made sure they were received before our first virtual meeting.



Activities

One of the most crucial responsibilities of youth advisory board leaders is to prioritize projects that members will be interested in and passionate about. Consider using application responses to learn members' interests and create a mind map to identify potential projects for final board members. See our 2022 and 2024 "mind maps" below:



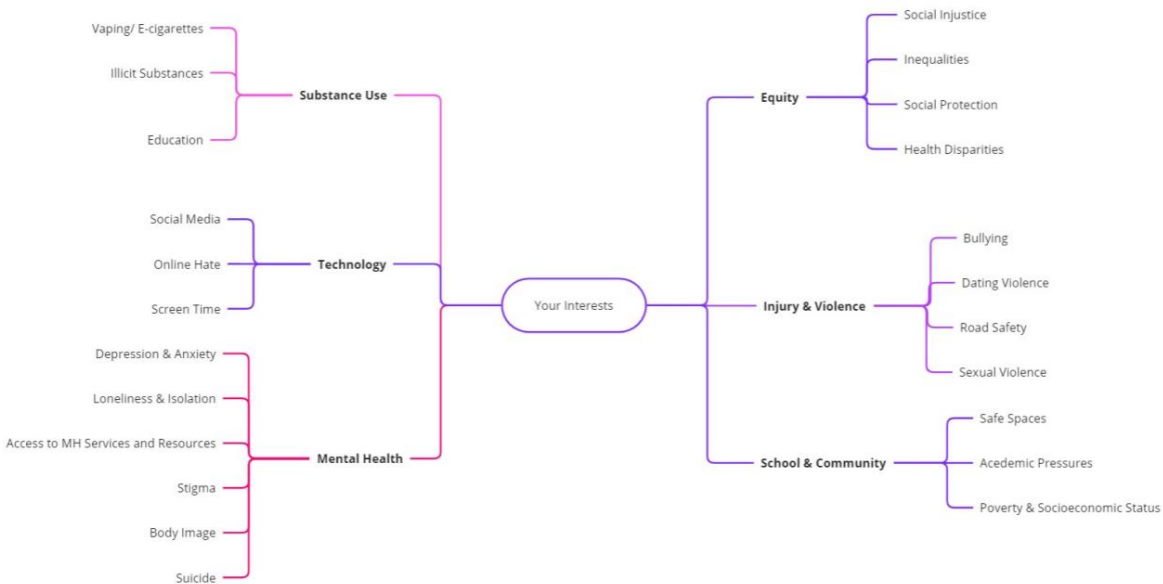
Mind Maps

IYAB 2022

Mind Map



IYAB 2024



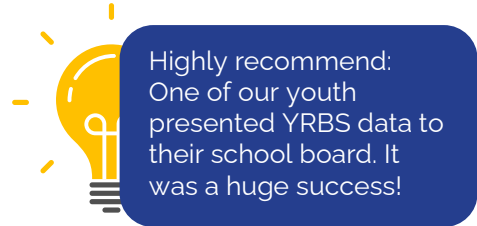
Project Ideas

The IYAB members have been busy over the first two years. Below is a list of items we engaged members to work on:

- Governor’s Proclamation for Adolescent Health Month
- Webinars/Panel Discussions
- Social Media Messaging/Press Releases
- Story Telling Videos/Podcast/Blogs



- Art, Music, Poetry, Short Story Galleries/Photo Voice
- Program Evaluation
- Leadership & Skills Training
- Presentations – Staff Meetings, Conferences, Public Events
- Conference Attendance
- Data Walks – YRBS
- Monthly Virtual Meetings
- Tri-Annual In-Person Meetings
- Committee Groups
- Resource Tables at Community Meetings
- Create Mission, Vision and Values Statements
- Develop Toolkits
- Job Shadowing
- Newsletters and Publications
- Community Events: suicide prevention walks (Out of the Darkness), tabling, public health promotion opportunities, Summer 2025 Youth Conference



Opportunities for Partnership and Collaboration

Below are some of the conferences and partners we engaged to bring new opportunities and learning to our board:

- Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
- National MCH Workforce Development Center
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
- Mental Health of America
- Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP)



Social Media

The Indiana Youth Advisory Board has led multiple social media initiatives on topics such as menstrual health, teen dating violence and sexual assault awareness. These posts were shared across three social media sites (Instagram, X and Facebook) by dozens of partners and stakeholders. Their successful campaigns received thousands of points of user engagement, including views, likes, shares and reposts. This is an excellent opportunity for a youth advisory board looking for impactful, time-effective and low-cost opportunities for education and advocacy.



Website

Creating a website for your board is another way to connect with peers and stakeholders. The IYAB website hosts pictures of our board members along with their first names and county of residence. It also provides a short description of our work, displays highlights and accomplishments, and shares the contact information of the board facilitator. Building an identity and brand for your board helps forward your mission and increases collaboration. <https://www.in.gov/health/mch/families/indiana-youth-advisory-board-iyab/>.

Communication

Youth Advisory Boards require constant and consistent communication. Reminders need to be sent out often. Consider sending out a questionnaire on how members would like to be contacted and then use the most preferred contact outlet to reach out to members. Sometimes, a mixed-method approach works best. For example, Indiana uses email, text and GroupMe to connect with members. We also recommend regularly checking in with members to see how they feel about their board participation and any suggestions they might have. You can do this during meetings with anonymous polls, discussion or post-meeting evaluations.



Conclusion

This work is not easy, but it is worth it. This is some of the best and most exciting work that we do at IDOH and DMHA. Throughout this toolkit, you have heard from us and got a look into everything we have done to make the IYAB as successful as possible. We also recognize that this work continues to be an ongoing journey. We hope our lessons learned are helpful as you start or grow your youth voices. If nothing in this toolkit stays with you, we hope the following comments shared by our youth members will.

Kylie

"In my time being on the IYAB I have learned countless things about myself and about mental health and wellbeing for youth. The opportunities we have been given and offered are a huge way to keep youth engaged. These events have been an honor to attend and absolutely wonderful to experience and speak at. The IYAB has shown me that my voice matters and that my voice is wanted. The best tip I can give is to always remember that! Youth want to be heard and to know that their thoughts and feelings are valued/ wanted. Be willing to be collaborative and let the youth express their open ideas, hear everyone out!"

Bethanie

"Some of my favorite experiences on the Indiana Youth Advisory Board have been at conferences where I am learning from others, sharing my experiences, and growing in community with my fellow IYAB members. Additionally, I love opportunities where IYAB members all collaborate on a single task because I have always been proud of the end products we produce. Overall, being on the IYAB has allowed me to flourish and explore areas of public health that I am passionate about."

Lucia

"When I applied to the Indiana Youth Advisory Board (IYAB) I didn't know it would be as impactful as it has been. I have been a part of the IYAB since it was created and now I am on the leadership committee. Although it was a slow start with everyone trying to find their footing, we managed to gain momentum and make an impact. The IYAB has opened doors for me professionally allowing me to learn more about my leadership style and gain confidence in the impact I can make. On a deeper level, personally, I feel more fulfilled and connected to the change I always wished there was. I think the success of the IYAB is allowing members the ability to spread our wings while still having support, direction and protection from the amazing adults that form part of the leadership team. I am so grateful to have been chosen and hope that the voice of youth continues to be a part of the conversation when making change."



Nancy

"My favorite part of the IYAB was all the incredible opportunities and events I attended that I otherwise wouldn't have known of. For example, being able to speak at the Indiana Mental Health Roundtable and meet other impactful advocates in the mental health space was one of the opportunities I'm most grateful for. Additionally, my work with the IYAB encouraged me to be the first student presenter at my district's school board meeting, where I was able to advocate for changes that would benefit students' mental health in my high school. Most importantly, I feel truly empowered and thankful that the IYAB allowed us so much freedom and self-direction in our work. This has been one of the few opportunities that I've felt that youth voices were truly valued and respected equally compared to adult perspectives. The IYAB was amazing in letting our work truthfully be youth-led, not just youth-focused."

Jayma

"I have been a part of the Indiana Youth Advisory Board since the start, and I will be beginning my third year as a member of the leadership committee. Being a part of this board has allowed me to grow as a leader and as an advocate. I loved being able to provide my perspective on all things related to mental health and engaging youth. A couple of my favorite things I have done include taking part in various conferences, being able to create toolkits, and taking part in campaign reviews. Over these last couple years, a great way I have been able to stay engaged in this work is through all the new opportunities I have been given throughout my position. This has given me the chance to express my opinions and share all my perspectives."

Hannah

"One of the things that I've really loved since working on the Indiana Youth Advisory Board is the amount of public speaking opportunities that it offers. Prior to being a member of the IYAB, there weren't many of these kinds of opportunities available to me, but I've now had many opportunities since joining! The IYAB has also taught me the importance of effective communication. We often work on various projects virtually, so it's important for us to maintain ongoing communication so everyone is on the same page! The IYAB has also taught me the importance of widely available access to opportunities, especially in terms of young people! It can be difficult to see engagement from young people if the process of involvement is complicated. Working on the IYAB has been such a lovely experience for me and I look forward to seeing what amazing things young people continue to do!"

Amya

"Being accepted to the Indiana Youth Advisory Board has been one of my greatest accomplishments! There have been so many things about this experience I have absolutely loved! From the 1:1 engagement with state personnel, to in person events where deeper relationships and connections were built, to even presenting at an international conference in which many professionals took great interest in youth voices (my personal favorite), the IYAB leadership team is always looking to provide and promote opportunities for each and every



board member to grow and learn. Among my time with the IYAB I learned many valuable lessons such as the importance of teamwork and leadership, the power of youth voices, and the communication with leaders of other great organizations! My best advice to keep young people engaged is to start by laying the foundation that you are there to guide and support them every step of the way. This in turn will allow them to feel safe and confident to continue to build their program for themselves and their peers! - also, snacks! We love to be given snacks”

Resources

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

Youth engagement can be difficult, and it is easy to create a negative environment accidentally. To guide engagement with youth, it is important to refer to resources and tools, like Hart's Ladder. We encourage using this tool to empower youth to evaluate their adult leadership but, it may also be helpful when performing self-evaluations.



Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

- Rung 8:** Young people & adults share decision-making
- Rung 7:** Young people lead & initiate action
- Rung 6:** Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people
- Rung 5:** Young people consulted and informed
- Rung 4:** Young people assigned and informed
- Rung 3:** Young people tokenized*
- Rung 2:** Young people are decoration*
- Rung 1:** Young people are manipulated*

**Note Hart explains the last three rungs are non-participation*

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992) Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
Created by The Freechild Project - <http://freechild.org>

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Helpful Links

- Alaska Department of Health and Human Services: Nothing About Us Without Us: Compensating Community Members: <https://publichealthforward.debeaumont.org/case-study/nothing-about-us-without-us-compensating-community-members>
- Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs: Adolescent Health: <https://amchp.org/adolescent-health/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Balancing Youth Leadership with Adult Support: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yac/balancing_support.htm#:~:text=Adults%20must%3A%20Take%20youth%20seriously.%20%20Listen,make%20real%20change%20for%20themselves%20and%20their%20peers.
- Indiana Department of Health: Indiana Youth Advisory Board: <https://www.in.gov/health/mch/families/indiana-youth-advisory-board-iyab/>
- National Network of State Adolescent Health Coordinators: Youth Engagement: <https://nnsahc.org/key-topics/youth-engagement/>
- Office of Population Affairs: Take Action for Adolescents: <https://opa.hhs.gov/takeactionforadolescents>
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: Meaningful Youth Engagement: <https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/positive-youth-development/meaningful-youth-engagement>
- Youth.gov: Youth Engagement and Partnerships: <https://youth.gov/pathways-for-youth/goal-3-youth-engagement-partnerships>

Contact Us

If you have a question that wasn't answered in the toolkit, need further explanation or are interested in setting up a time to chat, send us an email!

Samantha Mundt, MPH, CHES
Adolescent Health Coordinator
smundt@health.in.gov

Kate Schedel, MPH
Director of Maternal and Child Health Programs
kschedel@health.in.gov

