

SERVICE LEARNING

YOUTH COUNCILS WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PLAN AND PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE LEARNING /OUTREACH EVENTS UNDER THE COORDINATION OF THE TEEN SPHERES OF INFLUENCE AREA COORDINATORS.

LINK TO THE NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

All of the Teen Spheres of Influence Service Learning requirements are based off of the NYLC Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice: <https://www.nylc.org/page/standards>



WHAT QUALIFIES AS A TEEN SPHERES SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

To qualify as service learning, the youth from the teen council need to have been part of the decision making process of “who, what, when, where, why, how.” To begin with, the options of what the activity will be should be pretty wide open. The youth should decide what social issues or community problems are important to them, and choose an activity that stems around them.

In addition to learning about caring for other people and their community, the experience needs to target learning specific skills to qualify as service learning. There needs to be learning objectives tied directly to the service.

At least one of the funded activities needs to be near-peer mentoring to meet the **grant purposes**. This means that the teen council youth should be working directly with younger kids on a new skill or concept. This is important because one of the goals of the grant is for the teen council youth to serve as mentors to the younger kids. This is more than just preparing an activity for them. The younger kids need to learn from the older ones directly.

GRANT PURPOSES TO ADDRESS THROUGH NEER-PEER MENTORING:

- Research shows that participation in quality service learning and near-peer mentoring decreases risky behaviors in both the youth leaders and the younger participants.
- Service learning and near peer mentoring have a positive correlation with development of resilience-the ability to bounce back from failures, disappointments, and difficult experiences.



EXAMPLE:

Let's say an advisor had a planning meeting with their teen council, and asked them about some of the community problems they might be able to help solve. In an effort to focus on service learning, they might specifically emphasize that they should have some ideas focus on helping younger kids. The youth may come up with ideas such as: the town park is always a mess, kids are on computers too much and don't get enough exercise, and the homeless people they see by the freeway look really cold. The advisor would then discuss the pros and cons of the ideas, and the youth vote and decide that, at least for now, they want to focus on helping kids be more healthy.

This doesn't have to be one meeting. The next time the youth council meets, the advisor designates 15 minutes to this activity. The youth decide that they like the idea of teaching about healthy living through hiking, so they start to plan a family hike for four months from now. Two youth are assigned to scout out a good location that all family members could manage. Two decide that they want to be in charge of healthy snacks, and teaching the kids about fueling their bodies. Another pair plans "leave no trace" and plant identification talks for along the trail. From there, the advisor will spend about 15 minutes of each meeting letting each group give updates on the assignments and deciding next steps. It is important to note that the project doesn't have to take over the whole meeting each time, and the advisor/youth can do some research together on the things the youth will be teaching along the way. On the day of the activity, the youth take the lead as much as possible.

This activity meets the criteria: Youth chose the activity and self-assigned positions with some mentor guidance. As they planned the service, youth learned about one or more topics (hiking practices, healthy snacks, leave no trace, natural resources). Youth served directly as mentors, hiking with and teaching the youth.

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REFERENCES

National Youth Leadership Council: Service Learning Standards: <https://www.nylc.org/page/standards>



INDICATORS OF QUALITY SERVICE LEARNING

We will be measuring youth participants' service learning progress throughout the Teen Spheres of Influence program. To help advisors understand if their service learning experiences are meeting grant requirements, they should ask if youth will respond positively to the following questions after the activity:

BECAUSE OF MY YOUTH COUNCIL MEETINGS...

- ... I understand why service is important.
- ... I know how to transfer knowledge of service from one setting to another.
- ... I know how to examine service through reflection.
- ... I know how to identify different points of view to understand others.
- ... I have new knowledge and skills to lead a service activity.
- ... I know how to reach out to others for more help during service activities.

WHEN I'M AN ADULT I INTEND TO...

- ... seek out important service opportunities on my own.
- ... use the skills I learned during youth council to continue offering service to others.
- ... use service to combat societal issues in my community.
- ... engage in service that recognizes and overcomes stereotypes.
- ... engage youth in my community to help provide service to others.
- ... leverage organizations in my community to work together to offer service.

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