

The Youth Advocacy Training Institute's Position on Youth Development

Since the inception of the Youth Advocacy Training Institute (YATI) program in 2004, the Ontario Lung Association (OLA) has adopted and promoted *youth development* as a theoretical foundation and approach to working with youth in terms of health. OLA commits to continue to champion *youth development* amongst partner and government agencies.

Definition of Youth Development

YATI recognizes that “youth development” can be defined in many ways and understands it as a process of natural growth from being in an environment that offers opportunities that allow them to reach their developmental potential.

YATI supported factors that influence *youth development* and related work:

1. belief in the worth of all youth and in their possession of innate capacities;
2. commitment to enabling all youth to fulfill their potential;
3. recognition of the developmental power of parents;
4. recognition of the developmental power of adults outside the family;
5. recognition of the developmental power of peers;
6. dedication to identifying and responding to problems faced by youth;
7. maintenance of a positive, strengths-based, asset-oriented approach;
8. application of a holistic perspective of assets and needs;
9. insistence on understanding, educating, and engaging youth in productive activities;
10. respect for adolescents' autonomy and right to exercise control over their own lives;
11. appreciation of the need for youth to be challenged, take risks, and broaden their horizons;
12. appreciation that youth can benefit from a measure of stability and continuity;
13. understanding of development as a process, rather than an event;
14. awareness that no one group has the responsibility or ability to meet all youth's needs; and,
15. awareness that youth need to receive and also to give back. (Hannant, 2009)

Youth Engagement as an approach

Youth engagement is the meaningful and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity focusing outside the self. Full engagement consists of a cognitive component, an affective component, and a behavioral component - Head, Heart, Feet. (Centre of Excellence in Youth Engagement, 2009)

Youth Development as an approach

Youth development is the meaningful and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity that focuses outside the self while providing opportunities that enable personal growth. Opportunities for growth are self-initiated and may support cognitive, social and/or emotional development. OLA youth development as an approach will be realized through effective youth-adult partnerships.