

# Youth Development Institute Supervisor Guide Adolescent Development

## Defining Adolescence

### Prep Time:

5-15 minutes to compile and set out materials

### Activity Time:

30-60 minutes

### Outcomes:

- Staff members will deepen their understanding of adolescence, beyond traditional definitions.
- Staff members will work to overcome negative stereotypes of adolescence by considering the many strengths of the students in their programs.

### Materials:

- Index cards (3 per person)
- Markers
- Poster board
- Double sided tape
- Paints, other art supplies (optional)



### ASK:

- How would you define adolescence?
- What was the definition given in the Adolescent Development course on the Youth Development Institute?

Use these definitions as ideas to start a short discussion about how adolescence is defined.

- “The state or process of growing up” (*Merriam Webster Dictionary Online*).
- “A state of development prior to maturity” (*Merriam Webster Dictionary Online*).
- “Time of life from onset of puberty to full adulthood” (*Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*)
- “Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. This transition involves biological (i.e. pubertal), social, and psychological changes, though the biological or physiological ones are the easiest to measure objectively. Historically, puberty has been heavily associated with teenagers and the onset of adolescent development. In recent years, however, the start of puberty has seen an increase in preadolescence and extension beyond the teenage years, making adolescence less simple to discern.
- The end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood varies by country as well as by function, as even within a single country there will be different ages at which an individual is considered mature enough to be entrusted with particular tasks, such as driving a vehicle, having sexual relations, serving in the armed forces, voting, or marrying” (*Wikipedia*)

## Defining Adolescence

### Explain:

Definitions of adolescence are often combined with negative myths or stereotypes about adolescence. This combination can affect our outlook about the work and about the young people with whom we spend our time.

#### Quick!

This next activity staff will write down (on the post cards) strengths about the young people in the program

TRANSITION

“I want you to think about all the young people in our program - or with those that you have worked with in the past. Think of them as a group, but also think about one individual young person.”

**Discuss** and share ideas about the following questions:

- What about the group makes you smile?
- What about the young people amazes you?

TRANSITION

“Now, I want you to think of **three** strengths of the young people in the program. Use the index cards and markers to describe one strength on **each** card. The descriptions can be one word or a phrase.”

TRANSITION

“Now I want us to share the information you wrote on the card. When you share, I want you to phrase it as such: ‘The youth in our program...’ and then say what is on the card.

**For example:** The youth in our program are clever and witty.”

The next staff person shares the description from one of his or her cards the same way. Continue this activity until each staff person has shared three times. (*Of course you may want to vary this if you are working with a large group*)

#### Quick!

You have your choice on how to close this lesson: Option 1 will take about **2 min.**, Option 2 could be **20+ min.**

## Defining Adolescence

### Option 1:

Ask the staff to tape each card on to a poster board and place the poster board in a place where all staff can be reminded on a regular basis of the strengths and qualities they have identified.



“Take your index cards, and come post them on the poster board at the top of the room”

### Option 2:

Spread the cards out on a table or counter and ask staff members to reflect on what they have heard and what they see in front of them.



#### ASK:

- Are there duplicates?
- Are there common themes?
- Are our interactions with adolescents shaped with these descriptions in mind, or with more negative, deficit-based descriptions in mind?

### GO BEYOND!

The staff can create a project—a poster or collage, a poem, a motto, or some other representation of the collection of strengths on the cards—to help to put a face on the definition of adolescence.

## *Physical Facts*

### **Prep Time:**

**10 minutes** to copy and cut “Physical Facts” cards

### **Activity Time:**

45-55 Minutes

### **Materials:**

- “Physical Facts” cards, copied double-sided\* and cut apart. (*Card stock or heavier paper will work best*)

*\*The handout provided is designed to be copied front and back so that each card has a topic on one side and facts on the other.*

In this activity you want the staff to recognize that:

- Adolescents have a wide range of needs associated with their physical development.
- Program staff can work to respond to the changes adolescents are experiencing to help make the program more meaningful for each participant.

**Setup:** Arrange the “Physical Facts” cards, fact-side down, on a table or counter.

### **Outcomes:**

- Staff members will begin to familiarize themselves with the range of physical changes and needs adolescents experience during puberty.
- Staff members will begin to recognize how the physical aspects of puberty manifest themselves in youth programs.
- Staff members will begin to brainstorm how to respond to the needs of adolescents during puberty.

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### **Explain:**

In the physical development section of the Adolescent Development module, we learned that during puberty adolescents experience a variety of changes related to sexual maturation and growth spurts. We learned that these changes occur differently for each adolescent and that the changes can be difficult for them. As we think about how we create programs that provide an environment where youth feel comfortable in spite of these changes, we can also begin to think about how our program can support the unique needs of adolescents.



### **ASK:**

What first comes to mind when you think of adolescent physical development?

- Most people will respond with “puberty” or “raging hormones” or “changing bodies”.

### **Explain:**

There are multiple, often simultaneous, physical tasks related to an adolescent’s physical development that warrants attention in youth programs. This phase of physical development is complex, especially when viewed within the context of new adolescent brain research.

## *Physical Facts*

### **Quick!**

These activities are asking staff to reflect on how adolescents physical changes affect their behavior and how adults may interpret the behavior.



*Break the group into 5 smaller groups*

TRANSITION

“I want each group to select a Physical Facts card from the table. I want you to read the information on the card and spend some time discussing examples of how this aspect of adolescent development reveals itself in the program.

***For example:** Say your group draws the sleep card which discusses *sleep hormones and adolescent sleep requirements*. You might discuss what it’s like when one or more adolescents in the program are overly tired.”*

*Give groups about 2-5 minutes to discuss*

TRANSITION

“Now I would like each group to prepare a short skit or scenario that

- 1) Teaches other groups about the Physical Fact your group selected
- 2) And that demonstrates how this fact affects adolescents in the program and
- 3) how youth workers and other adults often respond.

*Give groups about 10-15 minutes to develop a skit or scenario*

**NOTE:** Adult responses to adolescents are often aligned with some of the negative stereotypes and labels assigned to adolescence:

- She’s just lazy
- He’s irresponsible
- They are all airheads

*Bring the groups back together and have each group present their skit to the group - but instruct them not to tell others what physical fact they are presenting*

*After each skit:*



### **ASK:**

Can anyone guess which physical facts that were presenting?

*Then have the actors review the information on their cards with the rest of the group.*

## *Physical Facts*

### **Discuss:**

At the end of these presentations, ask staff members to keep these aspects of adolescent physical development in mind as they observe youth and staff interactions until the next staff meeting. Ask staff to pay attention to youth behavior and how being hungry, tired, sluggish, or irritable may be related to what's happening with the young person physically. Let the staff members know that their observations will be used during an activity the next time there is a staff meeting.

## ***Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Two Dozen Adolescents Right Over!***

### **Prep Time :**

**15 minutes** to prepare and post flip charts/newsprint posters

**Activity Time:** 40-60 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

Staff members will identify ways to connect their youth program's design/structure to the physical development needs of adolescents.

### **Supplies:**

- Flip chart or newsprint pages
- At least one marker per participant

### **Setup:**

1. Write one of the following headings on each of 6 flip chart pages:
  - ***Nutrition, Fuel for the Mind and Body***
  - ***Physical Activity***
  - ***Physical Skill Development***
    - New activities
    - Coordination
    - Team building
  - ***Sleep, Rest, Down Time***
  - ***Adolescent Brain Development***
    - Windows of opportunity
    - Windows of sensitivity
  - ***Consistency and Routine***
2. Post the flip charts or newsprint pages around the room.



### **ASK:**

Ask the staff members what they have noticed since the last meeting about adolescent physical development?

### *Guiding questions might include:*

- What were the signs that a young person might not have eaten or slept well in the past 24 hours?
- What kinds of behaviors did you notice that might have been related to the Physical Facts we reviewed at the last meeting?
- How did you respond?

## ***Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Two Dozen Adolescents Right Over!***

### **Discuss:**

Lead the group in a discussion about the structure of the program or service from beginning to end.

- What happens when adolescents walk through the door?
- What are the expectations?
- What is the schedule?

TRANSITION

“Now I want you to think about this “*day in the life of your program*” within the context of adolescent physical development.

Is our program designed and operated to both meet the needs of rapidly growing adolescents and to support them in ways that build on their strengths, rather than focusing on their deficits?”

*Discuss this for a few minutes, maybe identify some things that you think DO work in line with adolescent’s physical development and some that DON’T*

### **Quick!**

The staff will participate in a “walk about” - visiting each poster that you have posted on the walls



*Divide the staff into six groups.*

TRANSITION

“Each group will move around the room, visiting all the posters hanging on the walls. Your group will have 3-4 minutes at each poster. I want you to

- 1) identify all of the ways the program, and how we help to address this need related to adolescent development,
- 2) brainstorm things that could be added or changed to do a better job of meeting this need, and
- 3) write your ideas on the poster.

I will walk through some examples with you.”

## ***Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Two Dozen Adolescents Right Over!***

### **Quick!**

Review each of the posters and provide examples of questions they can consider at each poster.

*There are examples for you to review with your staff.*

#### ***Nutrition, Fuel for the Mind and Body Poster***

- Knowing the needs adolescents have for caloric intake and various nutrients, what can we do to help ensure our participants are eating well-balanced meals and are supported in making wise choices related to food?

#### ***Physical Activity Poster***

- Since adolescence is a time of decreased physical activity, what can we do to help our participants find ways to remain physically active?
- How can we connect students to opportunities that they might not otherwise be exposed to, and how can we encourage physical activity even among students who believe they don't like sports and aren't athletic?

#### ***Physical Skill Development Poster***

- new activities
- coordination
- team building
- Within structured time for physical activity and during other activities, are there opportunities to build gross motor skills, try something new, and participate in a group without competition?

**EXAMPLE:** A service project that involves gardening or construction could incorporate all of these elements

#### ***Sleep, Rest, Down Time Poster***

- Does the program structure adequately address adolescents' circadian rhythms? Does the start time fit their needs? Are we asking them to do activities at the points during the day where their brains are sharpest? Do we provide adequate down time?

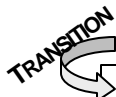
#### ***Adolescent Brain Development Poster***

- How are we providing opportunities for our students to develop skills and neuron connections related to the windows of opportunity that occur during adolescence? What are we doing in our program to address windows of sensitivity with students?

#### ***Consistency and Routine***

- Consistency and routine creates a sense of physical and emotional safety for students. What are we doing to help ensure that participants have a sense of routine when in our programs? How can our consistency and routines help support the adolescents' needs related to growth? How does this consistency and routine help create a safe place for adolescents who might be feeling awkward about their development?

## *Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Two Dozen Adolescents Right Over!*



“At this point I want your groups to go to a poster - where you will have 3-4 minutes - to

- 1) identify all of the ways the program and how we help to address this need related to adolescent development,
- 2) brainstorm things that could be added or changed to do a better job of meeting this need, and
- 3) write your ideas on the poster

*Encourage staff members to consider:*

- The information they learned in the Adolescent Development module about physical development.
- The information they learned and ideas they presented in their skits during the Physical Facts activity.
- Their observations since the group last met.

**NOTE:** *It is important to specify that each group needs to stay at the particular poster until you ask all groups to move on.*

*As groups add ideas to each poster, you should wander around to different posters remind the group of the prompting questions if they seem to be struggling.*

*After 3-4 minutes, ask each group to rotate to a different poster. Continue this process as time allows. Afterwards ask the group to come back together and review the ideas generated. Discuss.*

### **ASK:**



- In what areas is the program strong?
- In what areas are the staff members strong?
- What areas need improvement?
- Is it possible that some of the things you do (or don't do) as a staff contribute to the challenges you identified earlier?

**EXAMPLE:** Adolescents and program staff are better equipped to deal with adolescent mood swings when there is consistency and routine in the program. Are boundaries and expectations clear? Are staff members predictable in their own moods and interactions with the young people? Do the students feel safe in expressing their feelings? Are young people able to make mistakes and learn from them?

### **Taking Action:**

As a group pick one or two items from a poster heading selected as an area for improvement, and make a plan to implement some small actions to better align the program and staff interactions to meet the physical development needs of the youth in your program. At each staff meeting evaluate what you have done and if it is working.

## *Label with Language*

### **Prep time:**

**20 minutes** to copy and cut game cards

### **Activity Time:**

40 minutes

### **Materials:**

- Set of game cards (located at the end of this lesson plan), copied and cut. (*Card stock or heavier paper will work best*)

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### **Introduction:**

In the cognitive development section of the Adolescent Development module, we learned that during adolescence a young person develops the ability to:



**5 Minute Teach!**

- Think abstractly and reflect
- Reason effectively
- Use symbols such as metaphors
- Analyze situations logically using cause and effect
- Evaluate alternatives
- Problem solve
- Set personal goals
- Plan for the future

Research tells us that these cognitive abilities develop primarily between the ages of 11 and 16. These abilities do not develop automatically or in the same way for all adolescents. Just as infants need stimulation from and exposure to colors, sounds, shapes, textures, movement, words and human interaction to maximize their brain development, adolescents need opportunities and experiences to help them fully develop their cognitive abilities.

One of the first things we identify with adolescent “thinking skills” is the ability to shift from concrete to abstract thinking. Another is the ability to reason—that is to approach a situation logically and to think through consequences and implications of a particular action.

It takes practice and support to apply abstract concepts to daily situations in adolescence and adulthood. One way adults can support youth in developing cognitive skills is to label with language the behavior, outcome, or character trait we’re discussing.

## *Label with Language*

TRANSITION

“The following game is based on several popular board games, including Taboo, that are built on this concept. The objective of the game is to get your team members to guess the word on your card based on your descriptions of that word. However, you MAY NOT use any of the other words on the card in your description.”

***For example:*** The word on the card is **overwhelmed**

The words that I am **not allowed** to use in the description are **stress**, **busy**, and **too much**.

So you might say, “You feel like you have a lot on your plate. You feel like you can’t do it all.”

### **Explain:**

The cards included in this activity were developed based on words and concepts used frequently in youth programs. Listen to the abstract terms or concepts related to adolescent cognitive development in conversations among staff and adolescents, and add some cards of your own!



*Depending on the size of the group, split staff into teams of **three** or two.*

TRANSITION

“Here are your directions.

The members of the team will take turns being in the role of contestant, guesser, and judge. *(For two people it would just be the contestant and guesser).*

The contestant will pick up a card and *(if needed)* share it with the judge - but don’t share it with the guesser!

The contestant will then have **1 minute** to get the “guesser” to guess the right word.

*If needed*

The judge is there to time the contestant and ensure that the rules are followed.

*If you want to/can make it a competition... The contestant earns a point when the guesser - guesses correctly, within the allotted time.*

## *Label with Language*

*Let the game go on as long as you want! Afterwards bring the group back together*



### **ASK:**

*These are some possible discussion questions:*

- How did it feel to have to describe a word without using some of its most common synonyms?
- What was it like to hear your teammates ‘label with language’ the thing they wanted you to say?
- Are there words from the game (organized, clean) that can mean different things to different people?
- What would it look like in our program if staff members were using only abstract terms without helping adolescents develop meanings for these terms?



“Let’s look at the words again and, as a group, identify ways to more deeply define the words for the young people in our program.”

***For example:*** “How will we know the craft area is **clean**?”

“Okay, the supplies will be put where they belong in the cabinet, the counters will be wiped with the sponges, and all the trash will be in the trash can.”

“What do we need to do to **plan** ahead for this activity?”

We need to paint the boxes first so they have time to dry. When can we do that? Let’s look at the calendar....”

*Continue this with your staff.*

### **GO BEYOND!**

Ask staff if there are words that they use often with youth that may be a word that can be added to the “label with language” cards. Create your own set of cards for your program!

Talk with staff about ways to discover what the youth know - in terms of labeling with language - for instance, having staff ask the questions “Hey class, how should the classroom look when it is **clean**?” etc.

## *Getting to Know You*

### **Prep Time:**

**5 minutes** to copy “The Iceberg” worksheet

### **Activity Time:**

60-70 minutes

### **Materials:**

- Copies of “The Iceberg” worksheet
- A clock or watch
- Blank paper
- Writing utensils for each person

In this activity you want staff members to recognize that:

- The ways in which they interact with youth model how to build and use social and emotional skills.
- Every aspect of our interaction with youth matters, including verbal and nonverbal communication.

### **Outcomes:**

- Gain an increased understanding of how their daily interactions with youth can help shape emotional and social development.
- Recognize characteristics that help promote relationships with adolescents.

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### **Explain:**

In the Adolescent Development module, we learned about the various aspects of emotional and social development for adolescents. We know that the young people we work with are developing their own sense of identity, and we also learned about appropriate ways to interact with others. As we think about emotional and social development during adolescence, it is important that we ensure we are ready to serve as active supports systems for the youth with whom we work. We need to be prepared to serve as a sounding board for youth who are learning skills and establishing their own place in society, and we need to create safe places for youth to think through and discuss their ideas, as well as practice their relationship skills.

We must be prepared to have conversations with adolescents in ways that are non-threatening and nonjudgmental, and we must be thoughtful about how we interact with young people. It is important that we are continually working on developing relationships with all of our youth. Our goal should always be “getting to know them.”

If we think we know everything there is to know about a young person, we have gone wrong somewhere along the line. There is always more to learn. As we work on learning and getting to know them, we must make sure we are not using the information we have to make judgments.

***For example:*** A young man in your program likes to play basketball so you always have him participate in sporting events, but never give him the opportunity to do crafts.

## *Getting to Know You*

### **Quick!**

Staff will share about who they are - as an example of the common phrase "You can't judge a book by its cover."

TRANSITION

"In this next activity, we will work on getting to know our youth.

Think for a moment about an iceberg. What we see on the surface of the water is not even 10% of the whole iceberg. 90% lies below the surface of the water.

Humans are much the same. The characteristics we see when we look at someone are just at the surface level of who that person is. 90% remains invisible and we must work to understand, acknowledge, and value that additional 90%.

### *Handout The Iceberg worksheet*

TRANSITION

"We will take five minutes to complete the top and bottom portion of The Iceberg worksheet.

In the top 10% portion, write in your readily apparent features such as gender, height, skin color, etc.

In the bottom 90% portion of the iceberg, list your individual characteristics not readily apparent, such as values, beliefs, expectations, cultural norms, cultural traditions, spirituality, etc. Write down what you feel is inherent to who you are and that others wouldn't know by looking at you?"

*You can model this for staff members before they begin.*

**ASK** them what your 10% is. What do they see just by looking at you?

- They will likely mention your height, weight, gender, eye and hair color, etc.

Then, think of a few traits in your 90%.

- Ask the staff if they could tell you were \_\_\_\_\_ (a mother, a wife, an uncle, an artist, whatever the case may be) just by looking at you.

*Give staff about 5 minutes to complete The Iceberg worksheet.*

## Getting to Know You



*Ask each participant to select a partner*

TRANSITION

“For the next five to ten minutes, I would like you to share your Iceberg worksheet with your partner. **You do not need to share everything you wrote, only those things you feel comfortable sharing.**”

*Once 5-10 minutes is over, gather the group back.*



### ASK:

*These are some possible discussion questions:*

- How easy or difficult was it to fill the top 10% versus bottom 90% of your Iceberg?
- How did it feel to share information from your Iceberg with your partner?
- What struck you from listening to your partner’s information?
- In a new relationship, how much information is shared from the bottom portion?
- How do we typically share our “Iceberg information” with others?
- Have individuals experienced interactions with others based on assumptions made from only the top portion of the Iceberg?
- How does thinking about our students’ Icebergs help us shape our interactions with them?

*You now have two options - you can either stop here or you can move into the second part.*

*Mostly this will be dependent on how much time you have left.*

### GO BEYOND!

Give staff a blank “Iceberg” worksheet. Ask them, during the course of the next week, to closely observe what they learn about that youth, and have them fill out the “Iceberg” worksheet for that youth.

If you are working with teams (team teachers, team leaders) then ask the team to fill out one large Iceberg that includes everything they have learned about the youth in their “team,” - identifying as a whole, what the 10% and 90% of their youth.

## Getting to Know You

*If you have time, you can continue on with this lesson...*

*If not, you can always use this second part as its own meeting plan*

### Quick!

In this meeting plan, staff will practice active listening. Staff members will pair off and use one of the reflection questions from the Adolescent Development course.

## PART 2

### Explain:

As adolescents are developing their identities and their abilities to interact with others, their “Iceberg information” and the ways in which they feel comfortable sharing it are continually changing. In this next activity, we will think about how we shape our conversations with adolescents to help them feel comfortable interacting with us in ways that allows for deep and meaningful connections.

TRANSITION

“I want you to think back to a reflection question you answered in the Adolescent Development Course on the Youth Development Institute. This question concerned *who* was important in your identity development?”

During your adolescence, who in your life helped you become the person you are today? Who did you talk to about your problems? Who encouraged you?

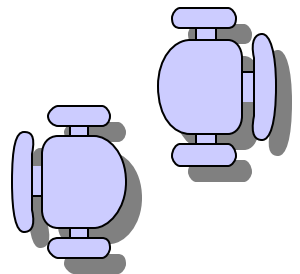
Think of one person in particular and jot down some notes about that person. How did this person help them develop their identity? What characteristics did this person possess?



*Give staff about 5 minutes to jot some notes down.*

*After this ask staff members to find a partner.*

Have the partners turn their chairs so they are facing each other but off-set as illustrated. Partner 1's right knee should be near Partner 2's left knee.



TRANSITION

“There are two roles in this next activity. One role is ‘the listener.’ The listener’s job is to have his or her ears open and mouth closed. The listener can give nonverbal feedback, but cannot speak at all.

The second role is ‘the talker.’ The talker’s job is to continuously respond to the question without stopping.

Both partners will have a chance to try both roles, but determine who will be the listener first and who will be the talker.

## ***Getting to Know You***

*Have the listeners raise their hand.*

*Remind them it is their job to **LISTEN** without interruption.*

*Tell the talkers they will have 2 minutes to share with their partners.*

*Remind them that they must **TALK** the whole time.*

***Ready...Set...GO!***



*While the pairs are going you should:*

- *Keep careful track of time. Give a 1 minute warning and a 30 second warning.*
- *Walk around among the pairs to make sure the “rules” are being followed.*
- *Listen to the things that are being shared.*

***TIME IS UP!***

**TRANSITION**

“Time to switch roles. The people who were the listeners are now the talkers”

*Have the listeners raise their hand.*

*Remind them it is their job to **LISTEN** without interruption.*

*Tell the talkers they will have 2 minutes to share with their partners.*

*Remind them that they must **TALK** the whole time.*

***Ready...Set...GO!...***

***TIME IS UP!***

**TRANSITION**

“I imagine that you may have questions you had wanted to ask one another during this time. For the next three minutes you can both ask questions of one another about what you have just heard.”

*Once they are done, bring the whole group back together for discussion.*

## Getting to Know You



### ASK:

*Here are some discussion questions:*

- What were some of the qualities of the individuals you or your partner described?
- How can you make sure you are using or modeling some of those qualities when you are interacting with youth?

Have staff members debrief their conversations:

- What was it like to be the listener?
- What was it like to be the talker?
- What was it like to have the conversation?

*Listen for them to mention:*

- Wanting feedback from the person listening
- Nice to see someone smiling or nodding
- Enjoyed having an opportunity to talk about themselves
- Enjoyed listening to other people's stories.

### Explain& Discuss:

Sometimes, if we don't take time to listen to what adolescents are telling us, and instead, immediately begin asking questions, we can change the direction of their story. They have a message to share and we need to let them share it.

Ask questions in a way that doesn't judge. – "Tell me how you came to that conclusion?" vs. "Why would you think that? or What were you thinking?"

What feedback makes you want to share more? How do we make sure we are providing adolescents with time to talk with us to help them think through topics that are important to them?

How can our ability to listen to a young person impact *their* social and emotional development?

Think about nonverbal cues you are giving youth.

Remember that one of the functions of the Prefrontal Cortex that is under construction during adolescence is reading emotional cues. You might think you have a "neutral face" or are smiling, and an adolescent might read that cue as you being angry or smirking. How can help ensure we are not having a communication problem with adolescents based on their ability to read our cues?