

National Collaboration for Youth Competency Observation Assessment Tool

This assessment tool accompanies the 10 competencies for front-line youth workers adopted by members of the National Collaboration for Youth (available at <http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/Competencies.pdf>). The tool can be used by front-line youth workers, peers, mentors and coaches to provide examples of what each competency looks like and by supervisors to assess the level to which a youth worker has developed the competencies needed to work effectively with youth. It can also be used as a training outline to assist trainers in describing an organization's expectations for youth worker behavior and attitudes. Assessment tools are designed to be coaching tools, not performance reviews, so that individual staff member's competencies can be gauged and plans made to ensure progress toward skills development.

Adapt, adapt, adapt...the tool is flexible. Use all or parts of this tool as relevant to your own organization. Some providers may choose to shorten or condense this tool to make it more practical for a quick assessment for a short-term employee (see short observation cards—available on nydic.com). Others may decide to focus on only one competency at a time so as to not overwhelm the youth worker.¹



An Initiative of the National Human Services Assembly

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	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Understands and applies basic child and adolescent development principles.				
Divides large groups of youth into smaller, more age appropriate groupings for learning.				
Uses activities that are well suited to the age and ability range of the group.				
Provides multiple opportunities for positive growth and development.				
Ensures that program and activities are intentionally designed to build skills and abilities.				
Nurtures a sense of optimism and hope in the future as well as the young person's belief about his/her role in it.				
Keeps up to date on youth culture and trends.				
Recognizes transitions and the role of rites of passage in youth development.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Communicates and develops positive relationships with youth.				
Engages in active listening while youth are speaking: keeps focused on the speaker, eyes are attentive, gestures are appropriate, etc.				
Encourages youth to build positive peer relationships.				
Responds positively to the range of youths' feelings, temperaments and emotions; comforts upset youth.				
Establishes rapport easily with young people.				
Shows concern about the well-being of young people.				
Is aware of what is going on in youths' lives, neighborhoods and schools.				
Helps young people feel welcome and part of the group.				
Demonstrates appropriate boundaries with young people.				
Helps youth make informed and responsible decisions.				
Fosters a sense of connectedness by encouraging and nurturing positive relationships among young people.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Adapts, facilitates and evaluates age-appropriate activities with and for the group.				
Recognizes when an activity is inappropriate for an age group (too difficult, too easy, too long, too short).				
Demonstrates skill in choosing appropriate activities and in adapting, during the session, when the activity must be changed.				
Supports mistakes as opportunities for learning and reinforces appropriate risk-taking.				
Asks questions to provide deeper opportunities for learning.				
Involves youth in expressing ideas, making suggestions for improvement and encourages youth to determine the direction of the activity and their own learning.				
Encourages youth to set goals and reflect on process of completing activities.				
Adapts speech appropriate for age group.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Respects and honors cultural and human diversity.				
Affirms and respects each youth's culture, religion, home language and family values in all verbal and non-verbal exchanges.				
Makes appropriate challenges to stereotyping and discriminatory statements or practices.				
Accepts youth representing all dimensions of diversity (gender, race, culture, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, family configuration, religion).				
Selects materials (coordinates displays) that reflect the language, music, stories, games, and crafts from various cultural traditions.				
Invites youth to share traditions, stories and photos representing their culture and experience.				
Speaks to all youth in a caring and non-judgmental way.				
Uses language that is respectful and bias-free.				
Speaks with youth and families in their own language whenever possible.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Involves and empowers youth.				
Expects that youth will make decisions and determine the direction of the program and individual activities.				
Involves youth in their own assessment and determination of the consequences.				
Plans programs with youth so that they are meaningfully engaged from beginning to end.				
Encourages youth to seek guidance from other youth.				
Develops skills in youth to speak confidently about their power and find ways to contribute to the program.				
Ensures that the youth voice directs activities more than the youth worker.				
Promotes two-way and multi-way communication.				
Gives youth opportunities to choose what they will do and with whom.				
Fosters a sense of connectedness by creating positive relationships with and among young people.				
Encourages youth to reflect on their level of involvement and make suggestions on how to increase that level.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Identifies potential risk factors (in a program environment) and takes measure to reduce those risks.				
Prepares the program space to be free of foreseeable hazards.				
Reinforces positive and safe behaviors.				
Provides program opportunities that match the physical, motor and emotional development of participants.				
Intervenes when potentially unsafe situations arise that put others at undue risk.				
Correctly states reporting requirements for child abuse in the state where the program is located.				
Plans groupings in particular activities that minimize problems due to group size, personality clashes, or wide range of ability levels.				
Plans progressive activities, assuring that participants have the lead up skills for safe involvement and skill development.				
Observes constantly and is prepared with preventative interventions, alternate approaches and added support.				
Arrange activities to ensure adequate adult supervision is available.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Cares for, involves and works with families and communities.				
Communicates to families about individual youth strengths, successes and achievements.				
Responds in a respectful and timely manner to family questions.				
Greets family members warmly and invites family members into program and activities.				
Looks for opportunities for involving families in activities (i.e., intergenerational activities).				
Actively pursues information and understanding on issues and culture(s) of the youth, families and communities.				
Brings volunteers into the program who are reflective and knowledgeable of the community.				
Can name key organizations in the community to refer youth to for special needs (e.g., depression, substance abuse) or knows who to go to for help.				
Advocates on behalf of the unique needs of youth, families and communities.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Works as a part of a team and shows professionalism.				
Demonstrates a sense of purpose for their work tied to a broad vision of youth development.				
Models ethical behavior.				
Protects and appreciates the need for confidentiality in youth programs.				
Can articulate standards of professional conduct for youth workers.				
Practices appropriate boundaries and limits with youth, volunteers and other professionals.				
Strives for self-improvement through professional development opportunities.				
Fulfills responsibilities for assignments as expected – on time and with attention to high-quality.				
Takes personal responsibility for both successes and failures.				
Functions as an advocate for youth.				
Articulates a personal vision of youth development that aligns with the organization's vision, mission and goals.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Demonstrates the attributes and qualities of a positive role model.				
Knows youth names, uses names, shows a genuine interest in youth as evidenced in the body language, questions asked and responses to comments made by youth.				
Is truthful with youth; answers their questions. If unable to answer the question, he or she explains why.				
Models strong peer-to-peer relationships.				
Does what he/she says they will do. Follows through, exhibits trust.				
Disciplines in private and with dignity (using “I” statements not “you” statements).				
Uses body language, facial expressions and approach to youth that show respect (no rolling eyes or folded arms in a combative stance).				
Demonstrates a healthy lifestyle (e.g., Selects and enthusiastically engages in physical activities (both moderate and rigorous) within the program and in the presence of youth, and; selects, eats and appears to enjoy fruits, vegetables, healthy grains and low-fat dairy products in the presence of children; selects and drinks water and juices over soda or sugar-drinks).				
Walks away from a situation when stress and anger builds. Comes back when he or she feels composed.				
Addresses instead of avoids conflict. Uses appropriate words to express anger; is direct; works toward problem solving.				
Has fun as evidenced in smile, words, attitude, activity selection.				

	DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCY	IN PROGRESS	YET TO BE ADDRESSED	COMMENTS
COMPETENCY: Interacts with and relates to youth in ways that support asset-building.				
Uses vocabulary consisting of “can do” words, like strengths, assets, youth leadership, opportunity and support versus words with a negative connotation like weakness, at-risk, deficient, deficit, criticism, or problem.				
Focuses on identifying, celebrating and building on the strengths and capacities of all young people.				
Understands and uses asset-based approaches in interactions with youth, parents and community.				
Offers encouragement and praise to youth who take initiative and leadership.				
Encourages self-direction and personal responsibility for choices.				

¹ Tool created by Kirk Astroth, Randal Batchelor, Pam Garza, Marge Scanlin, Barbara Taylor with inputs and revisions by the National Collaboration for Youth Program Group