

# Getting on the Balcony: Strategic Youth Engagement

Johanna Bergan and Madeline Zielinski  
Youth MOVE National  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



*This session is hosted by Youth MOVE National, a partner in the National TA Network for Children's Behavioral Health, operated by and coordinated through the University of Maryland.*

*This presentation was prepared by the National Technical Assistance Network for Children's Behavioral Health under contract with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Contract #HHSS280201500007C. The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).*

# Learning Goals

- Build understanding and buy-in to the value of youth engagement
- Develop understanding of what youth engagement and leadership looks like in and out of FYSPRTs
- Highlight and discuss youth engagement best practices
- Establish rapport with FYSPRT leadership and offer ongoing technical assistance

# Overview/Agenda

Welcome

Setting the Stage

Building Understanding and Buy-In

Youth Engagement Best Practices

Visioning for Youth Engagement

Close Out for Today

# Youth MOVE National

- Unite the causes and the voices of youth while raising awareness around youth issues.
- Advocate for youth rights and youth voice in systems that serve us.
- Empower youth to be equal partners in the process of change.

## What We do....



# Youth MOVE National

- Unite members by convening young people and connecting chapter to chapter.
- Identify best practices around TAY engagement in services
- Engaging young people as advisees to organizations, policy and systems design
- Develop resources and training for meaningful engagement.
- Represent youth voice at the national level.

## How we do it...



# Youth MOVE National

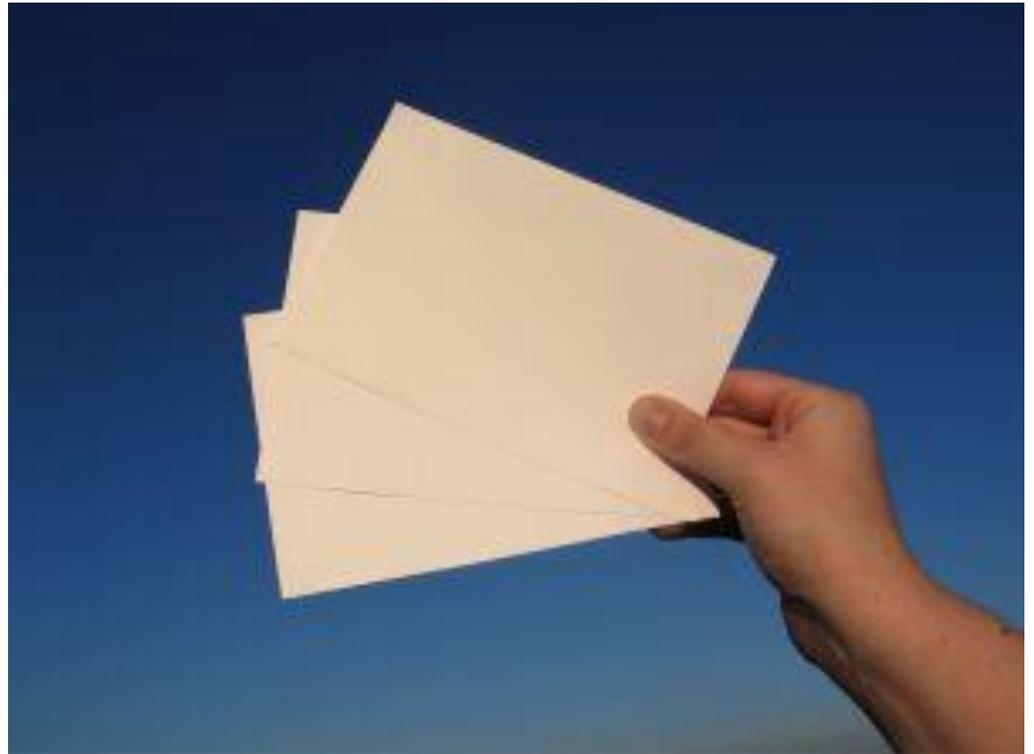
We envision a future in which every youth is recognized and accepted as an individual and a human who can make change — not just treated as a number, problem, or caseload.

**Why we do it...**

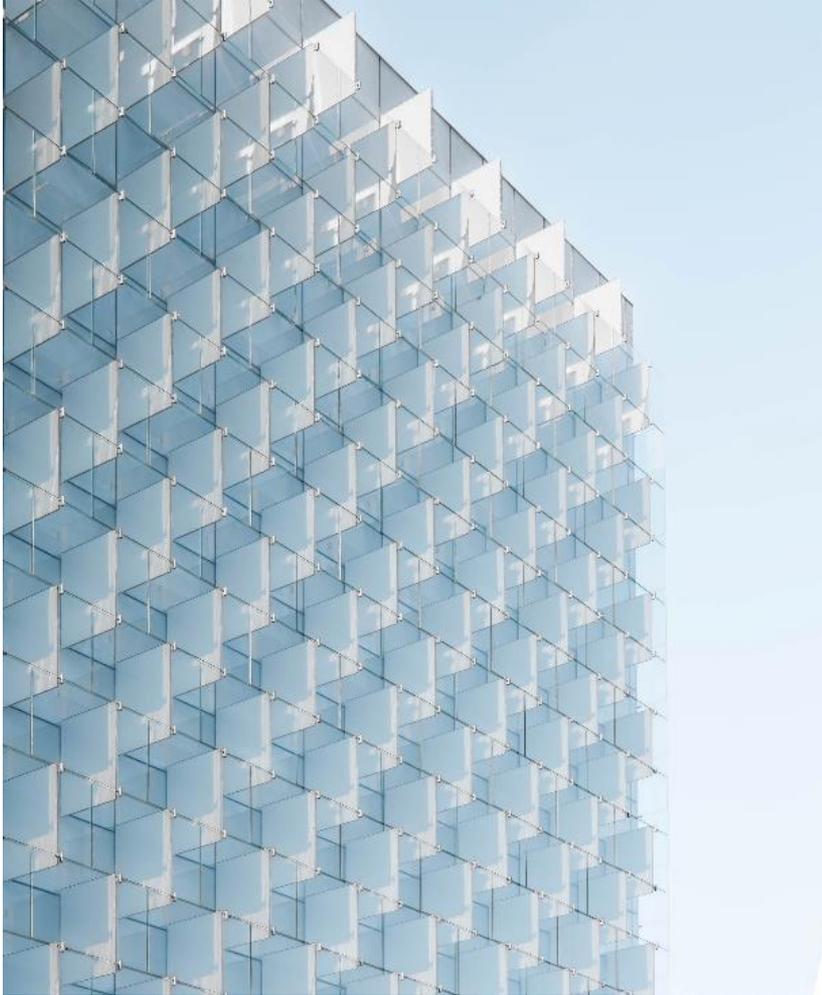


# Pair Share

- Share one reason youth voice is vital to our work.



# What is Youth Engagement?



## Building a Foundation

A strategy in which youth are giving meaningful input and have roles where they are authentically involved in working towards changing the service systems that directly affect their lives.

# Building Understanding and Buy In

# Value Added of Young Adult Voice

- Changes institutional culture and practice
- Can help design and implement new policies that better serve youth and young adults
- Builds awareness and understanding
- Builds self efficacy
- Builds sense of community
- Improves individual and organizational outcomes



<http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/other-resources/engaging-youth-in-community-decision-making.pdf>  
<http://youth.gov/youth-topics/effectiveness-positive-youth-development-programs>  
[http://thirdsectorimpact.eu/site/assets/uploads/page/documents-for-researchers/TSI\\_impact-report\\_sports-leaders-literature-review-dec-2014.pdf](http://thirdsectorimpact.eu/site/assets/uploads/page/documents-for-researchers/TSI_impact-report_sports-leaders-literature-review-dec-2014.pdf)

# Foundation of Youth Development

**Object “To”**

**Recipient “For”**

**Resource “With”**

## Style #1

## Style #2

## Style #3

The adult is in control with no intention of youth involvement.

The adult is in control and allows youth involvement.

There is a Youth/Adult Partnership (Shared Control)

### **The Objective**

Personal growth of young people.

### **The Objective**

Personal growth of young people.

### **The Objective**

Increased organizational effectiveness.

### **The Byproduct**

Conformity of young people and acceptance of the program as it is.

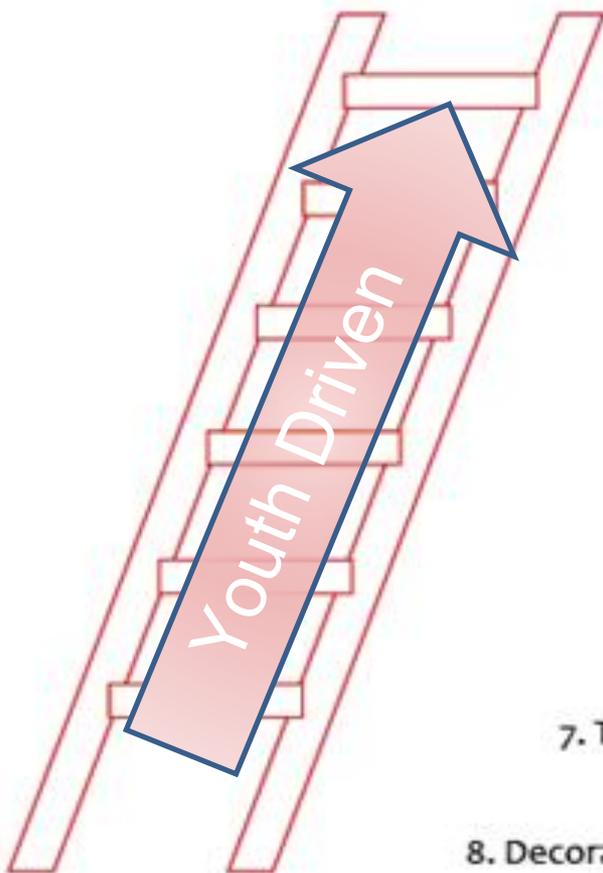
### **The Byproduct**

Increased organizational effectiveness.

### **The Byproduct**

Personal growth of young people and adults.

# Ladder of Youth Involvement



## 1. Youth Initiated and Directed

- Designed and run by youth and decisions made by youth

## 2. Youth Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults

- Designed and run by youth who share decisions with adults

## 3. Youth and Adult Initiated and Directed

- Designed and run by youth and adults in full partnership

## 4. Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions with Youth

- Minimum Youth Participation, designed and run by adults who share decisions with youth

## 5. Consulted and Informed

- Designed and run by adults who consult with youth, Youth make recommendations that are considered by adults

## 6. Assigned and Informed

- Youth do not initiate, but understand and have some sense of ownership

## 7. Tokenism

- Symbolic representation by few, may not have genuine voice, may be asked to speak for the group they represent

## 8. Decoration

- Adults use youth to promote or support a cause without informing youth

## 9. Manipulation

- Youth are not involved in design or decisions; Youth involvement used by adults to communicate adults' messages



**YOUTH MOVE NATIONAL**

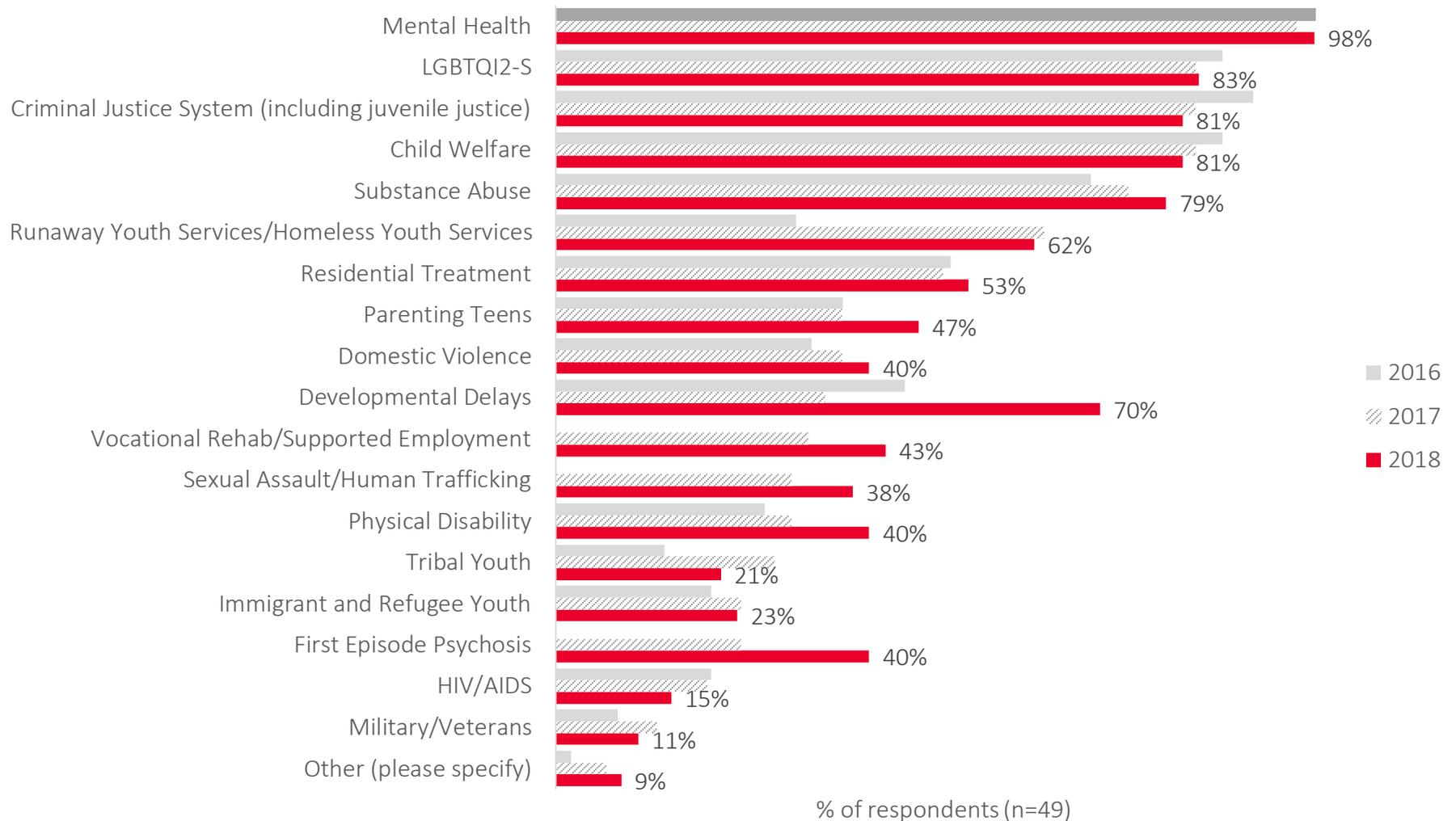
WE ARE CHANGE AGENTS 'MOTIVATING OTHERS THROUGH VOICES OF EXPERIENCE'

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship, UNICEF



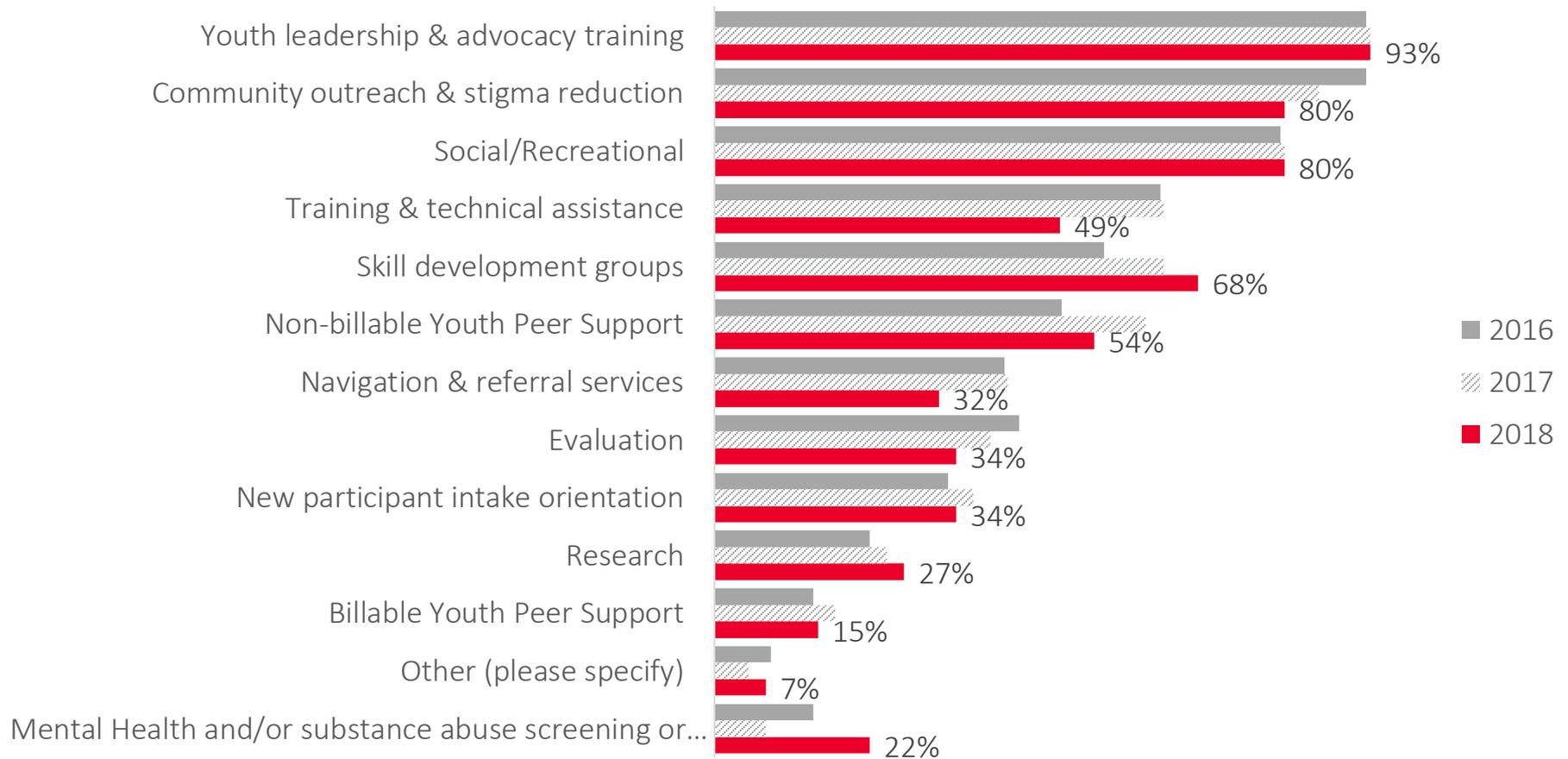
[More Information Available Here](#)

# Populations served



# Chapter services offered

What services and programs do you currently provide? (n=41)



Video Break

# Meaningful Partnerships

What youth want:

- Choice of how to participate
- Options that build on skills/interests
- Clear understanding of roles, tasks, and expectations
- Support and coaching
- Be a meaningful partner
- Grow with opportunities to participate in the work
- Connection with others who share a common experience



# Helpful Tips for Adult Allies



## Adults looking to build partnership and better engage youth:

- Be open minded and flexible
- Respect the readiness of youth
- Create respectful and nurturing learning environment
- Don't over promise and under deliver
- Be supportive and communicate expectation, yet be willing to ask what support looks like

# What is the Y-VAL?

- Provides a framework of key indicators of meaningful and successful Y/YA voice in program design
- Assessing allows for a collective and reflective process to better understanding where the agency with Y/YA Voice
  - Promotes a shared vision for success
  - Identifies strengths and needs
  - Supports with moving towards sustainable engagement
- Help young people advocate for meaningful participation and support
- Aids in assessing impact of technical assistance

# Y-VAL & Y-VOC Themes

- 1. Overall vision and commitment (8 items)**
- 2. Collaborative approach (5 items)**
- 3. Empowered representatives (5 items)**
- 4. Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation (3 items)**
5. Workforce development (4 items)
6. Participation in developing programming/program policies (5 items)
7. Participation in evaluation (4 items)
8. Leading initiatives and projects (3 items)

# Overall Vision and Commitment

- Is there a shared (written) vision for youth engagement in your agency/collaboration?
- How do express gratitude, respect, and welcome to youth?
- Are roles for youth clearly defined?
- How are youth able to share ideas with decision makers in your agency/collaboration?

# Collaborative Approach

- How are youth engaged in planning stages of efforts in your agency/collaborative?
- Do you meet and communicate with youth in a way that works for them?
- Are decision making pathways transparent to youth?

# Empowered representatives

- How are youth representatives trained and orientated to their role and your agency/collective's work?
- What does preparation and de-briefing of meetings and events look like?
- Are there multiple roles youth can hold?  
Grow into?

# Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation

- How do you actively remove barriers to youth participation?
- How are youth fairly compensated for their time?
- Do agency/collaborative staff have dedicated time to invest in youth engagement efforts?

# Visioning



# Visioning

- How are youth engaged in your regional FYSPRT today?
- How are youth engaged in youth driven, community based efforts today?

# Visioning

- In the future, how will youth engage in your regional FYSPRT?
- In the future, how will youth engage in youth driven, community based efforts?

# Wrapping Up

- What is one commitment you are taking away from today?

# Next Steps

- Continued learning and connection amongst peers
- Access to the Y-VAL/Y-VOC assessments to gather data and develop strategic plans
- Region specific planning assistance with Youth MOVE National

# Next Steps

What do you need to consider next steps in developing robust and community based youth engagement strategies?

# THANK YOU!



# Resources

- [Youth Engagement Guide – SAMHSA Store](#)
- [#Things2Consider: Youth Advisory Boards](#)
- [#Things2Consider: Stipending Youth and Young Adults](#)
- [#Things2Consider: Measuring Success](#)
- [A Guide to Recruiting Youth](#)
- [Other Resources from Youth MOVE National](#)

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

Johanna Bergan

[jbergan@youthmovenational.org](mailto:jbergan@youthmovenational.org)

Madeline Zielinski

[mzielinski@youthmovenational.org](mailto:mzielinski@youthmovenational.org)

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)