



FACTSHEET

Strategies for Fostering Positive Youth Development (PYD) Outcomes in Sport Programs for Youth

Content developed from the YouthREX Research to Practice report, *Game On: Sport Participation as a Vehicle for Positive Development for Youth Facing Barriers* by Corliss Bean and Sara Kramers

In recent years, research on positive youth development (PYD) in sport programming has extended beyond merely identifying the psychosocial outcomes of participation in these contexts, to working to understand the strategies and best practices needed to structure these programs in order to foster psychosocial development and support youth wellbeing.

This factsheet offers practical strategies within five program areas that can be used by staff when developing and implementing a sport-based program that supports PYD for youth facing barriers.



01 Program Structure

- Integrate a concrete program structure for your program that builds in opportunities for life skills learning and relationship building.¹
- Allow your structured program to have flexibility in order to adapt to inevitable changes that occur as part of community-based youth sport and physical activity programming. This flexibility allows program staff to be constantly listening, learning, and adapting the program to best meet youth's needs.



02 Relationship with Youth

- Check-in with youth regularly at a personal level, whether formally as part of an icebreaker activity at a program session's commencement, or by simply having informal conversations with youth.

¹ See examples in Section 2.2 of the YouthREX report, *Game On: Sport Participation as a Vehicle for Positive Development for Youth Facing Barriers*



03 Youth Voice and Youth Engagement

- Incorporate a youth-centered approach that includes opportunities for youth voice and the development of youth's autonomy. This can be done by asking for youth's input regarding both process (i.e. how things are done) and content (i.e. what things are done, such as program activities or outcomes they hope to achieve). Moreover, youth voice should be incorporated throughout program planning, delivery, and evaluation.



04 The Importance of Intentional Incorporation of Life Skills

- Intentionally incorporate life skills as a regular part of the sport or physical activity program, rather than assuming that life skill development is a by-product of participation for youth in these programs. See the factsheet *How to Intentionally Teach a Life Skill in a Youth Sport Program* for a case study example on how to do this.



05 Leverage the Power of Reflection and Evaluation

- Utilize teachable moments, open-ended questions, and reflection periods to attain feedback from youth and help to instill life skills development. Ensure discussions occur around how life skills development within the sport programming context can be utilized in other areas of the youth's lives (e.g., school, home, and one's community).
- Build evaluation into regular programming so that program staff can learn from previous actions and adapt new actions for the program to best attend to youth's needs. For example, you can conduct a 'post-game' interview with youth to gain their feedback, which also doubles as a program activity (i.e. will save time, is fun, engaging, and creative).