

# Youth Advisory Councils

**The Power of Youth Voice  
in Community Development**



# Topics of Discussion

- ✓ Why Youth Advisory?
- ✓ Purpose and Goals
- ✓ Youth Councils Around The U.S.
- ✓ Youth Advisory Council on Substance Abuse-  
Tucson, Arizona
- ✓ Successes and Challenges
- ✓ How Will We Know We're Succeeding?



# Why Youth Advisory?

- ✓ Prevalence of uninvolved, uninformed communities
- ✓ Youth often viewed as negative; are not consistently supported with trust and guidance
- ✓ Schools too overwhelmed or resistant to involvement
- ✓ Wondering why teens rebel? Use drugs? Commit crimes? Ask them!



# Purpose and Goals

- ✔ Promote a positive image of youth
- ✔ Involve youth in community event planning and decision making
  - Places to go, things to do
  - Get businesses involved
  - Work with and in schools
- ✔ Involve youth in policy development & legislative processes
  - Invite public officials to meet with youth
  - Allocate more funding to youth programs and services
  - Educate lawmakers on principles of positive youth development



## ✓ Raise awareness through education

- Advisory Boards in schools
- Public Awareness campaigns
- Get parents & families involved
- Peer-to-peer education
- Mentoring programs

## ✓ Involve youth in creation of better services for prevention & treatment

- For rehabilitation facilities
- For counseling programs
- Involve detained/incarcerated youth



# Youth Councils Around The U.S

## ✓ Mayor's Youth Advisory Board of Las Cruces, New Mexico

- Advise on public policy issues pertaining to youth
- Local programs: raise public awareness of youth issues

## ✓ DC Youth Advisory Council

- Influence youth-related legislation
- Monitor local youth programs and policies

## ✓ Nevada Governor's Youth Advisory Council

- Awareness of youth issues through education, advising public officials, working with youth.



# Youth Advisory Council on Substance Abuse

- ✓ YACSA: A Youth panel of 6-10 members age 13-19
- ✓ Advise the Pima County Youth Substance Abuse Committee (PCYSAC)
  - Community professionals
  - Monthly meetings
  - Reduce adolescent substance abuse
  - Improve current services in Pima County
  - INFORM** through outreach
  - ADVOCATE** youth-related measures
  - COORDINATE** with other organizations



# YACSA Mission Statement

- ✓ The purpose of the Youth Advisory Council is to act as a liaison between the community and the Youth Substance Abuse Committee in order to effectively address issues related to youth substance abuse in Pima County. By representing the youth of Pima County in the Youth Substance Abuse Committee, we hope and believe that progress will be made in resolving these issues.



# Challenges of YACSA

## ✓ Recruitment

- Lots of talk, little action

## ✓ Retaining members

- How do we know they're listening?

- Transportation, meeting times, meeting places

## ✓ Community Support

- Cycle of distrust between adults and youth

- Cynical attitude of citizens

- Limited funding for youth programs

## ✓ Financial

- Little money available for advertising and hosting events



# Successes of YACSA

- ✓ Including a youth voice in development of treatment and prevention programs
- ✓ Unity of community: building trust between adults and youth
- ✓ Youth empowerment
- ✓ Youth led, Adult sponsored community events

-CALLING ALL YOUTH!

-Apex: The First Annual Meeting of the Minds



# How Will We Know We're Succeeding?

## ✓ **More positive attitudes about youth**

- Community involvement in the lives of young people
  - Youth centers, youth organizations, more volunteers & mentors, increased funding for youth-related programs
- More positive relations between youth & adults

## ✓ **Recognition of the importance of youth voice in decision making**

- Boards with youth members
- Youth involvement in community planning
- Youth involvement in legislative processes



## ▼ **Involved families**

- Increased parental involvement in schools
- More comprehensive family service centers

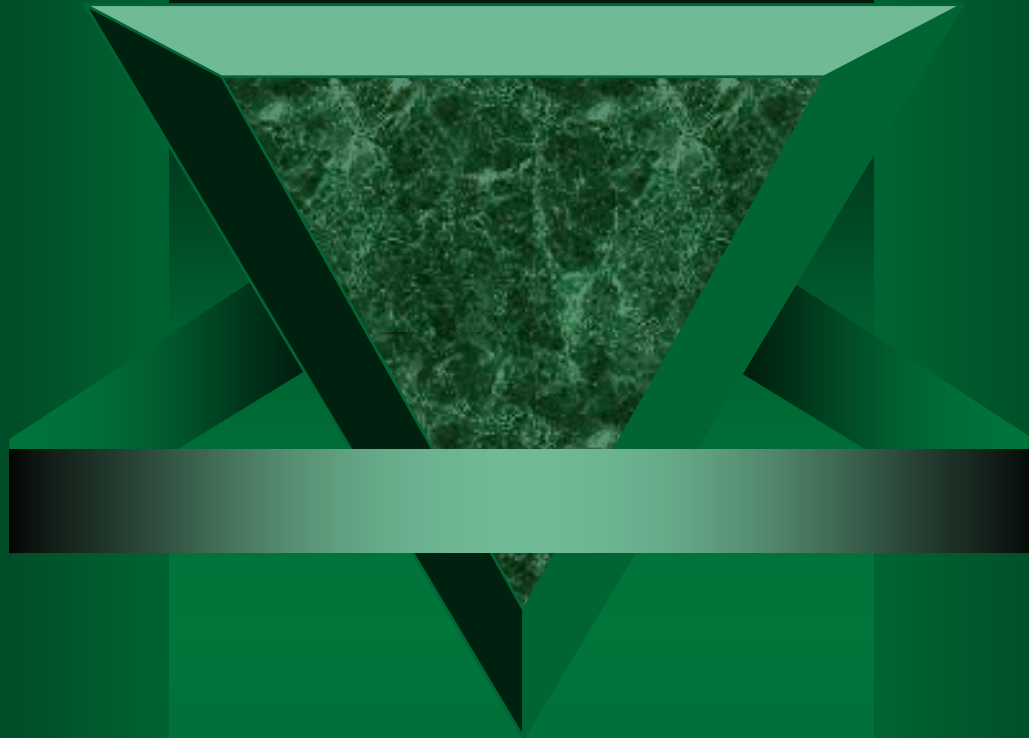
## ▼ **Improved services for youth**

- Treatment & counseling services specifically catered to the needs of youth with addiction and/or co-occurring mental disorders and/or a history of incarceration or detention
- Increase of drop-in centers and recreation centers
- Peer-to-peer education programs

## ▼ **Improvements in academic performance**

## ▼ **Lower rates of harmful behaviors such as**

- Violence, substance abuse, dropout, suicide



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