

Recording: <https://youtu.be/uGM5RhIF83s>

CoC Training: Adulthood and Working With Youth and Young Adults

7.15.24





please mute yourself

Housekeeping

1

Respect the
trainer(s)

2

Respect
attendees

3

Make and
take space

4

Share the mic

5

Acknowledge
power and
privilege

Training Norms & Agreements

About

- **Continuum of Care Trainings**: Monthly trainings for homeless service providers covering information or skills considered essential by HUD or our system of care
- Hosted by H3 the **2nd Monday** of every month from **10am-Noon**
- **Required** for direct service staff (case managers, care coordinators, etc.) and program managers.

Required Trainings

- Some trainings such as **Housing First** are required by our funder, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**) to ensure all programs and staff in our CoC operate under the same principles and practices
- Other trainings are relevant trainings H3 and/or providers has identified as important such as **Housing Focused Case Management**

Required Elements for This Training

HUD

- None

CoC Written Standards

- CoC/ESG Written Standards (Cultural Competence)

Monitoring

- Attendance is monitored by H3 staff and discussed during monthly/quarterly provider check-ins with CE Manager and/or CoC Administrator
- **Providers/programs lacking attendance at trainings can be subject to Corrective Action Plans**

Equity questions to consider

- Have you noticed inequities in your own work on this topic?
- Have you contributed to or interrupted inequities?
- What barriers still exist? How might they be addressed?



Trainers

- *Matthew Aronson and Nikhe Braimah,
Matthew Aronson Consulting*

Understanding Adulthood

Brought to you by



Matthew Aronson Consulting
The Goal is to End Youth Homelessness

Introductions

- **Name?**
- **Pronouns?**
- **Who are you representing today?**
- **What has been your favorite summer experience so far?**

Group

Values

- Authentic YYA partnership
- Community participation, community commitment, co-interpretation, shared ownership
- Equity-centered lenses
- Transparency
- Consistent & respectful communication
- Challenge existing practices and beliefs

1. Experiences with Adulthood
2. Defining Adulthood
-----Stretch Break!-----
3. Scenarios and Reframing
4. Bringing it Home

Agenda

Experiences with Adulthood

Think of a specific example...

1. What did you think when that happened?
2. How did you feel about the other person?
3. How did it impact your decision making?
4. Were you right and did it matter?

Adultism

Adultism is the systemic mistreatment and disrespect of young people which in turn disregards their power and rights as full human-beings. It is based on a set of behaviors and attitudes that **assume adults are better than young people**, entitled to act upon young people **without their permission**, and **unable to trust young people to know what is right or best for themselves**.

**You're too young
to...**

**Wait until you're older,
then...**

**You'll understand when you're
older...**

**It's good for you
to...**

**You need to learn
that...**

It Sounds Like...

Consequences

- Shame and self-doubt
- Limit contribution
- Limit power, agency, self-efficacy
- Limit passion and participation
- Disengagement
- Lost trust, bitterness, anger

Would I...

...treat an adult this way?

...talk to an adult in this tone of voice?

...make this decision for an adult?

...have this expectation for an adult?

...limit an adult's behavior this way?

Reframing

6 keys

1. Understand and respect
2. Consider intersections and power
3. Sacrifice expediency and profit
4. Defer to their decisions
5. Compensate with money
6. Self-reflect

Reframing

Stretch



Break

Scenarios

Instructions

1. Read each scenario.
2. Ask the following questions:
 - a. If you were this young person, how might this interaction make you feel?
 - b. How might it affect your relationship to the staff? To the organization?
 - c. What about this scenario is adultist?
 - d. What could the staff do differently?

What is one way...

...*you* plan on incorporating what you've learned today into your work?

...*your organization* can combat adultism in its programming

...the *homelessness system* in the county can undo adultism?

Bring it Home

Thank You!

Brought to you by



Adulthood Lesson Participant Instructions

Contra Costa County H3

Introductions

Name

Pronouns

Who are you representing today?

What is the best or most delicious thing that you've baked during coronavirus?

My Experience with Adulthood

Think of a time in your life when someone acted as if you didn't know what you were doing, thinking, or feeling specifically because of your age. Take a few moments now to find an example

In breakout rooms answer the following questions:

- What did you think when that happened?
- How did you feel about the other person?
- How did it impact your decision making?
- Were you right and did it matter?

Really important: Don't say a word while your partner shares with you. Just listen without comment or judgment.

You have 5 minutes. We will then discuss thoughts as a group.

Adulthood Role Playing

[Link to the Role Playing Scenarios](#)

There are nine scenarios that explore a situation between a staff person and a client/guest/young person. One person in each group will read the scenario outloud and the whole group will consider the following questions:

- If you were this young person, how might this interaction make you feel?
- How might it affect your relationship to the staff? To the organization?
- What about this scenario is adultist?
- What could the staff do differently?

Finish with a list of ideas for reframing the scenario in an anti-adultist way.

Start with the scenario that your group has been assigned and then go through as many as you can.

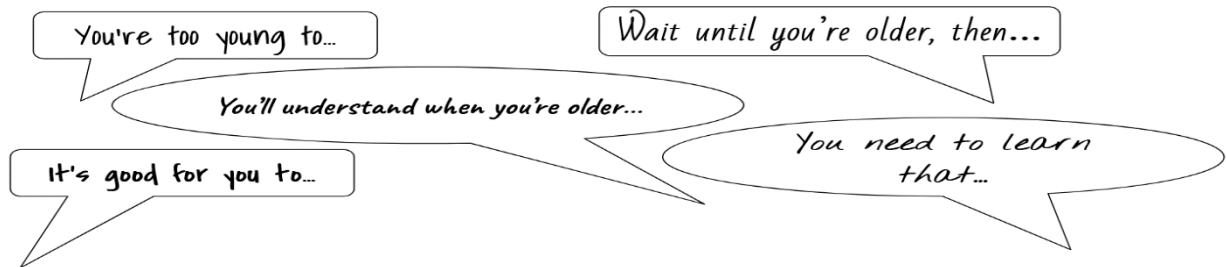
Back in the main group, each team will present their scenario and tell the group how they would reframe.

Understanding and Undoing Adultism

Developed by Ayala Livny, Matthew Aronson, and Morriah Bosco

Adultism: Young people are often mistreated and disrespected simply because they are young. Adultism is a set of behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people and entitled to act upon young people without their permission.¹ Additionally, it is the belief that simply by virtue of age, young people cannot be trusted to know what is right or best for themselves. Adultism is the power and privileging of adulthood over youth and young adults.²

This can sound like...



Consequences of Adultist Behavior on Young People:

- Feelings of shame and questioning self-knowledge
- Limits young people's opportunities to contribute
- Limits young people's power, agency, self-efficacy
- Limits young people's passion and willingness to participate
- Young people disengage and the project loses their ideas and expertise
- Young people lose trust in the adult partner - they may feel a sense of being on a different side, bitterness, or anger

The consequences of adultist behavior can be both direct (obvious) and subtle (hidden from adult view)

How to reconsider (or reframe) your interactions with young people³:

- "Would I treat an adult this way?"
- "Would I talk to an adult in this tone of voice?"
- "Would I make this decision for an adult?"
- "Would I have this expectation for an adult?"
- "Would I limit an adult's behavior this way?"

Suggestions for replacing adultist behaviors⁴:

- Understand that young people know things you don't. Extend respect to their expertise and ask how you can support the lives *they* desire for themselves.
- Always, always, always use an intersectional lens! How is your adult-young person power dynamic layered with race, gender, sexuality, class, or citizenship in your nonprofit? Examine who holds power and where.
- Sometimes anti-adultist work means sacrificing expediency and profit. But in the end, who does expediency and profit truly serve?
- Real youth and young adult leadership means deferring to their decisions, even when they're not the ones you'd make. Allow young people to tell *you* what's important. Give them the tools to make the right decisions.
- Compensate young people for their time and expertise in the same ways you would your adult colleagues (payment in money, not pizza or gift cards).
- Reflect on yourself: How does your adult privilege show up in your relationships with young people? How are you invested in this power

Activity⁵

Instructions: 1) Read each scenario. 2) After each scenario, ask the following processing questions:

- If you were this young person, how might this interaction make you feel?
- How might it affect your relationship to the staff? To the organization?
- What about this scenario is adultist?
- What could the staff do differently?

ONE

Scenario: Jacob (YA) confides in Jennifer (staff) that he has started injecting heroin. Jennifer is worried that Jacob will develop an addiction or overdose. Hoping to change his behavior, she tells him this is the stupidest decision he has ever made and asks if he is trying to ruin his life.

TWO

Scenario: Chris stops by the drop-in center to shower and eat after being released from jail. George (staff) sees him and says “I’m so happy to see you. And.... I told you that you would end up in jail if you kept up that behavior.”

THREE

Scenario: Terrance walks into a group session with bloodshot eyes and has a hard time writing his name on the sign-in sheet. Assuming he is under the influence, Benny, the group leader says, “You can’t participate in the group while you’re high.”

FOUR

Scenario: After reviewing his monthly budget with his case manager, Frank learns that he has overspent for the month. His case manager tells him, “You need help managing your money, we can find someone who will be your rep payee (a person who receives the clients check and pays their bills for them).”

FIVE

Scenario: Jose is invited to tell his story at a fundraising dinner. Afterward, he is greeted by a caseworker who tells him, “I had no idea you were so articulate. Thank you for your story. It is so hard to hear about all you have had to go through, and I just feel so sorry for you.”

SIX

Scenario: A group of young people with lived experience of homelessness has been assembled to provide feedback on how to improve services in their community. For two hours, they are asked to share their personal experiences with basic direct services. They receive a \$10 gift card and pizza for their participation.

SEVEN

Scenario: Jill and her girlfriend have just broken up and Jill is devastated. Jill confides in Ahmed (staff) about how upset she is and Ahmed says “it’s your first big breakup. You’ll get over it.”

EIGHT

Scenario: Chris is at a community meeting with Jamal, the Director of the organization. At the meeting Jamal introduces Chris as one of “my kids.”

NINE

Scenario: While Tasha is doing street outreach, she sees Lee on the corner appearing to be soliciting sex for money. The next day, when Lee comes into the drop-in center, Tasha, concerned about Lee’s safety, approaches him and says she is really worried that he is putting his life at risk by doing sex work.

Answer/ Discussion Guide

General Themes:

- Respect young people's autonomy to make decisions and mistakes - even risky ones
- Be aware of the assumptions you are making - about what they are doing, what is "good" for them, what they want
- Your job as a support person is to build a trusting relationship and support young people to consider their actions and make conclusions based on their own values and goals
- If you want an honest relationship where a young person can tell you the things they are concerned about, reward honesty with appreciation and curiosity, not judgement or lectures.
- "[Young people] are always asking three questions: Am I seen? Am I heard? Am I valued? Everything [adults] do provides the answers to these questions." - Brené Brown

Notes on Specific Scenarios:

Scenario One

- Assumption of desire and ability to change behavior
- Assumption that the decision was "stupid" and irrational
- Jacob came to Jennifer and confided in her, which may have been a very vulnerable experience. A consequence of her response may be that Jacob will not disclose anything to her in the future

Scenario Two

- "I told you so" does not create or build a relationship.
- By not asking questions, George doesn't support Chris to process the meaning of his experiences or come to his own conclusions

Scenario Three

- Benny assumes Terrance has been using, rather than just having not slept the night before
- Benny does not talk to Terrance individually
- Benny focusses on a rule rather than any consequence of Terrance's behavior on the group

Scenario Four

- Frank is not given an opportunity to make mistakes and learn how to manage his money better
- Assigning him a rep payee removes Frank's agency

Scenario Five

- "I had no idea you were so articulate" is a [micro-aggression](#) - an insult wrapped in a complement
- Saying "I feel so sorry for you" is disempowering and doesn't highlight the individual's strengths and resilience ("Pity feels shitty")
- When staff says "It's so hard to hear..." the conversation shifts to being about the caseworker's feelings and fragility, and it is not the client's responsibility to take of the care of workers feelings

Scenario Six

- YAs time is not valued in the same was as the adults (pizza is cute, but it is not cash)
- YAs are asked about their personal experiences, not about their insights on systems change

Scenario Seven

- Ahmed's response diminishes Jill's emotional experience and does not communicate that she is "seen, heard, and valued".
- Adults should consider the impact of communication that we might think of as "joking" or "light"

Scenario Eight

- When Jamal says "my kid", it indicates ownership of young people. Always examine dynamics of power and privilege.

- Many young adults do not like being called “kids”, they feel that it diminishes the seriousness of what they have gone through. Adults can rephrase to “colleague” instead.

Scenario Nine

- Tasha doesn’t ask Lee questions and makes assumptions about what he is doing
- The focus is on Tasha’s worry and feelings, not Lee’s safety
- Tasha does not ask about harm reduction strategies that Lee might have already taken

Further Reading

[Trauma Informed Consequences \(TICs\) for Youth Experiencing Homelessness: Putting Theory into Practice](#)

[Navigating the Ethical Maze: Storytelling for Organizations Working with Vulnerable Populations](#)

[The challenges, opportunities and strategies of engaging young people who use drugs in harm reduction: insights from young people with lived and living experience](#)

[Youth Collaboration Toolkit](#)

Endnotes

We used our own experience and the following sources to develop this guide:

1. National Conference for Community and Justice, nccj.org/adultism
2. Kel Kray, <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/02/everyday-adultism/>
3. Jon Bell https://www.nuatc.org/articles/pdf/understanding_adultism.pdf
4. Kel Kray, <https://everydayfeminism.com/2017/04/adultism-shows-up-youth-nonprofits/>
5. Based on activity developed by True Colors United for its Youth Collaboration Toolkit: <https://truecolorsunited.org/wp-content/uploads/Youth-Collaboration-Toolkit.pdf>