



## **Youth Worker Practice Network: Information for Organisations**

The Youth Worker Practice Network (YWPN) is a Community of Practice for youth workers in the ACT. The YWPN is coordinated by the Youth Coalition of the ACT, and advised by a steering group of experienced youth work practitioners from a range of community organisations and youth programs.

All youth workers in the ACT & surrounding region are invited to apply for membership to the Youth Worker Practice Network. 'Youth Worker', for the purpose of membership in the YWPN, is defined as:

- A worker currently employed in a role where their job title or position description includes 'youth worker', *or*
- A worker currently employed in a role where they work with young people (aged 12-25), and utilise youth work skills.

### **Aims of the Youth Worker Practice Network**

The Youth Worker Practice Network will:

- Bring together new and experienced youth practitioners from a range of programs and organisations working with young people in the ACT;
- Enable workers to share their knowledge and insight into current and/or common issues faced by young people in the ACT;
- Provide an opportunity for workers to identify gaps in their own individual learning, or in practice knowledge in the sector, and for these gaps to be addressed;
- Provide an avenue for experienced workers to pass on the skills and knowledge gained from working in the youth sector over a period of time; and,
- Develop the practice of frontline workers, as they raise questions and discuss the issues they face in both their individual practice, and in the programs in which they work.

### **Why should my staff team be involved in the Youth Worker Practice Network?**

The Youth Coalition's 2010 Youth Sector Workforce Profile found that less than 25% of ACT Youth Sector workers had access to mentoring opportunities. While most workers had an interest in accessing more training and professional development activities, over 50% of workers identified cost as a barrier to participating in professional development. The YWPN provides an opportunity for youth workers to further develop their professional skills and knowledge, and engage in reflective practice, while being supported by experienced practitioners from across the youth sector.

Membership in the YWPN will enable workers to form professional connections with practitioners from a variety of organisations, and allows for peer-to-peer learning as well as reflection on individual practice. Active participation and collaborative decision making by individuals within the community are encouraged.

Members of the YWPN will have the opportunity to identify and address both personal and organisational knowledge gaps, and develop problem solving tools and practice strategies that will assist them in their unique roles.

As the YWPN operates under a Community of Practice framework, the activities and specific outputs of the network are determined and developed by the members as the community progresses. Led by a steering group comprised of experienced youth work practitioners, YWPN activities will include:

- Engaging in group reflective practice. Members will also develop the skills to continue to reflect on their individual practice within their own workplace;
- Identifying and addressing knowledge and practice gaps within the youth sector;
- Developing common practice tools and resources to be used in a variety of programs across the youth sector, community, and education sectors;
- Documenting common problem solving tools and practice strategies, and developing these into a resource for workers who are new to the Youth Sector and/or the ACT; and
- Discussing developments within a particular area of practice (such as new funding arrangements for services, or new policies that affect a common client base), sharing insight as to how these developments may affect clients or youth work practice, and identifying ways to ensure that new developments have a positive impact on youth programs and young people wherever possible;

The YWPN will cultivate a 'high value for time' principle, ensuring that the time members allocate to being involved in the network will see a return on investment through:

- Improved individual practice;
- A better informed and more cohesive youth sector;
- Opportunities for individual support and mentoring, leading to a reduction of 'burnout' and increased staff retention across the youth sector; and
- Improved outcomes for the programs that members work in and the young people they support.

### **How do I support my staff team to engage in the Youth Worker Practice Network?**

All youth workers in the ACT & surrounding region are invited to apply for membership to the Youth Worker Practice Network. There is a one-off administration fee of \$10 per person to join the network.

Employers are encouraged to provide information on the YWPN to all new staff employed in a youth work role, as well as support existing staff members to join the Network and attend YWPN training events and forums, as an ongoing part of their training and professional development.

If you would like further information about the Youth Worker Practice Network, or to register for membership in the YWPN, please visit [members.youthcoalition.net/ywpn](http://members.youthcoalition.net/ywpn) or contact the Youth Coalition on 02 6247 3540 or [info@youthcoalition.net](mailto:info@youthcoalition.net)