

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Quality standard for
youth engagement



Ontario Centre of Excellence
for Child & Youth Mental Health
Centre d'excellence de l'Ontario en santé
mentale des enfants et des adolescents





Introduction:

Hi there! Welcome to “What’s in it for me?!” This resource is made BY young people FOR young people to better understand [the quality standard for youth engagement](#)

The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (the Centre) developed the quality standard for youth engagement to help young people, service providers and community partners understand what they need to consider when they’re practicing meaningful youth engagement. Along with the measurement survey*, the quality standard can be used to determine how your community is doing with youth engagement.

*Contact the Centre at cymhstandards@cheo.on.ca for more information

You and your community gain a lot from putting the quality standard for youth engagement into practice.

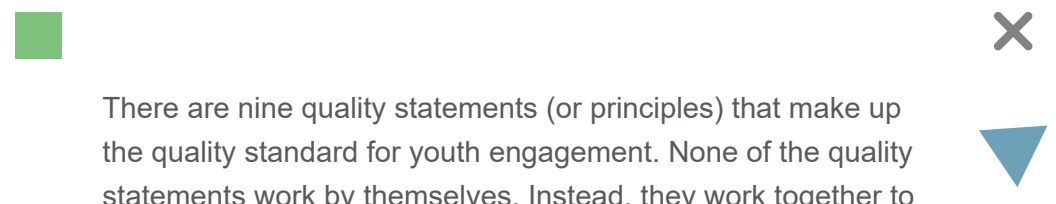
The quality standard:

- supports consistent practices for youth engagement.
- formalizes youth engagement practices and expectations for the system.
- validates the lived experience of youth who engage at the system level.
- shows commitment to youth engagement.



What is youth engagement? Youth engagement is about empowering you as a young person. It ensures all young people are being treated as valuable partners when decisions are being made or addressed ----- especially decisions that affect you personally or that matter to you (Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2021).

How is “youth” being defined? At the Centre we don’t define youth by a certain age. Instead, we take into consideration how people define themselves, and where they are in different parts of their development as they move towards adulthood (Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2021).



There are nine quality statements (or principles) that make up the quality standard for youth engagement. None of the quality statements work by themselves. Instead, they work together to form high-quality, meaningful youth engagement. Let’s take a closer look at each statement and unpack what they mean for young people like you.



Youth:

“a fluid
notion depending
on context”

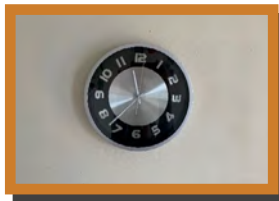
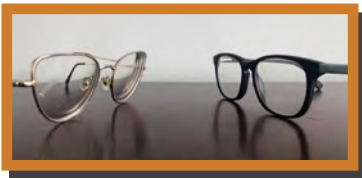


Accessibility

You're engaged in places and ways, and during times, that work for you. You're asked about your needs, to ensure you have everything you need to participate.

Examples:

- You can engage online or in-person.
- You're offered transportation to and from the activity or meeting.

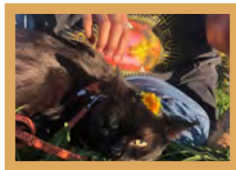
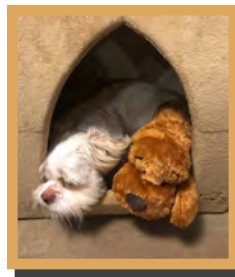
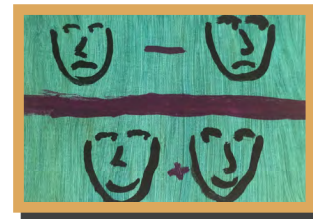
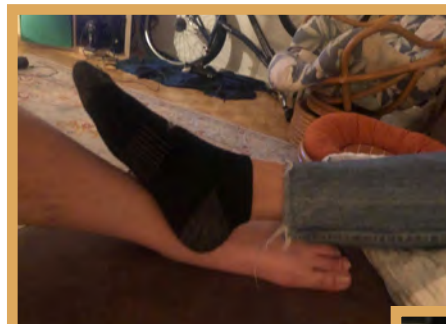


Authentic relationships

You feel heard and supported to share your expertise and experiences. Your voice and ideas are valued and matter as much as others.

Examples:

- People you trust (including adult allies) share with you how decisions are made and how your voice is guiding the work.



Commitment

Your engagement and your voice are valued and taken seriously by staff and those in agency leadership roles such as directors, community coordinators, managers and CEOs. You feel inspired and confident to participate in various engagement activities.

Examples:

- Your agency or community has a youth engagement policy.
- You're given opportunities to speak about things that are important to you.

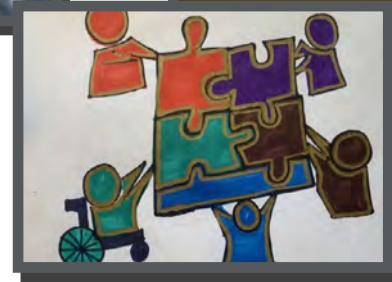
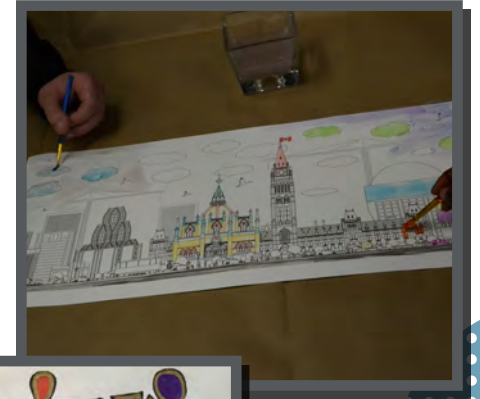
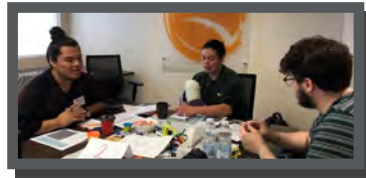


Co-development

You are provided with opportunities where you can share your skills and knowledge to create or improve things.

Examples:

- You work with adults to co-facilitate presentations.
- You co-develop youth engagement trainings.
- You are on a project team to review an agency's service.

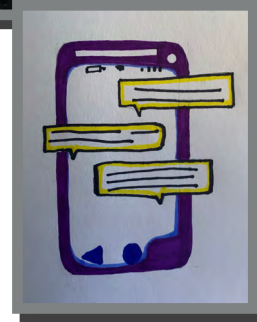
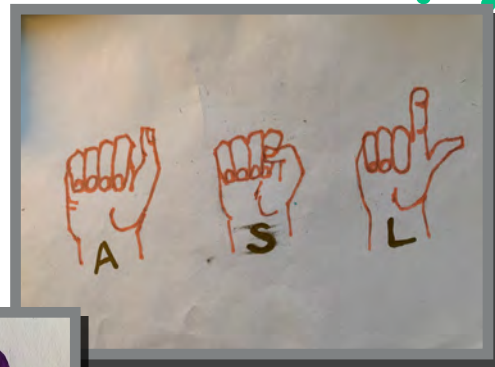


Communications

You're able to communicate with others in a format that works for you (text, email, in-person, phone, etc.). You feel comfortable with the communication style used by adults or staff and you feel comfortable sharing your experiences with them.

Examples:

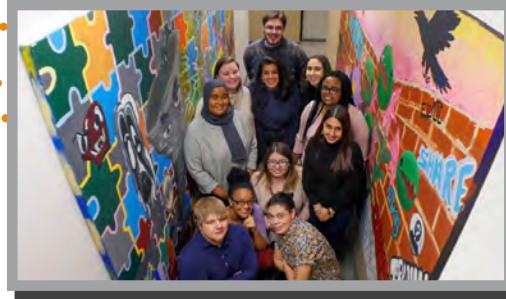
- You can receive information about meetings, projects or activities through email or text messages.
- You can easily understand what adults and staff are talking about during meetings, events or projects.



Diversity and inclusion

All the parts that make you who you are (e.g. age, experience, race, gender, sexual orientation, education, personality, etc.) are valued. Any obstacles that make it hard for you to participate are identified and staff work hard to remove those barriers. Examples:

- Gender-neutral language is used in all activities or projects.
- You are asked how things can be improved when sensitive questions are asked.

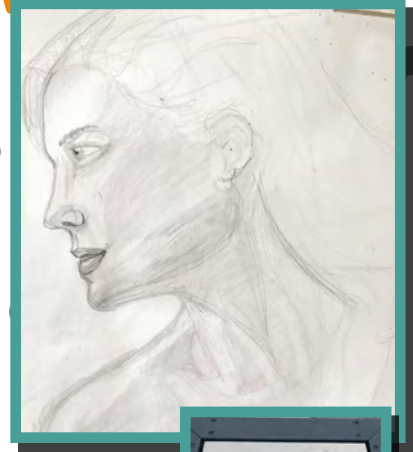
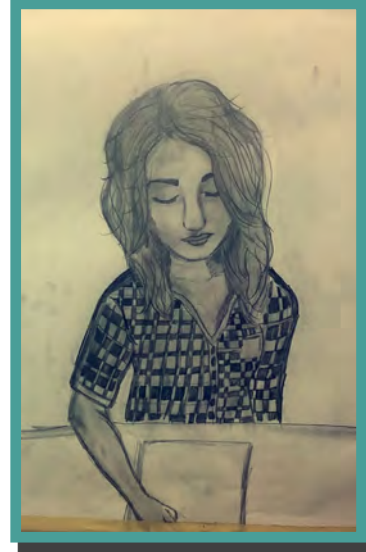


Ongoing learning

You are given opportunities to learn new knowledge, skills or tools that support your ability to participate.

Examples:

- You are given opportunities to participate in youth engagement training.
- Adult allies provide you with guidance on tasks.

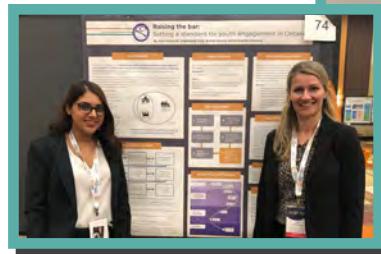
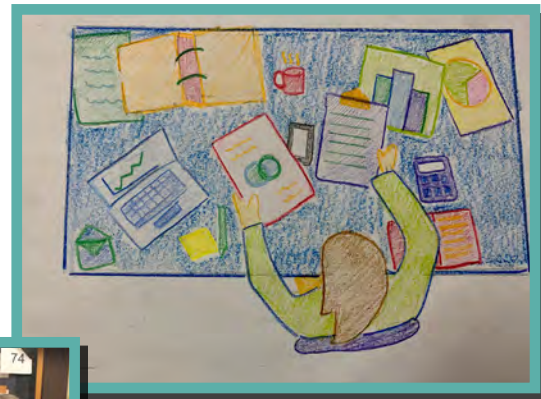


Research and evaluation

You have opportunities to gain new skills and take part in research and evaluation activities. Your unique voice and experiences help build a better child and youth mental health system and youth engagement processes.

Examples:

- You can co-create surveys with adults or staff.
- You can co-facilitate focus groups.

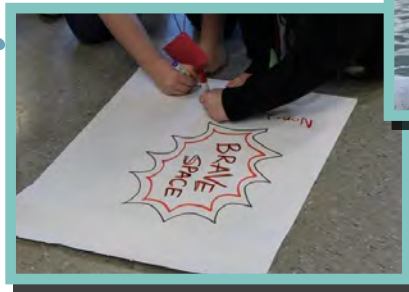


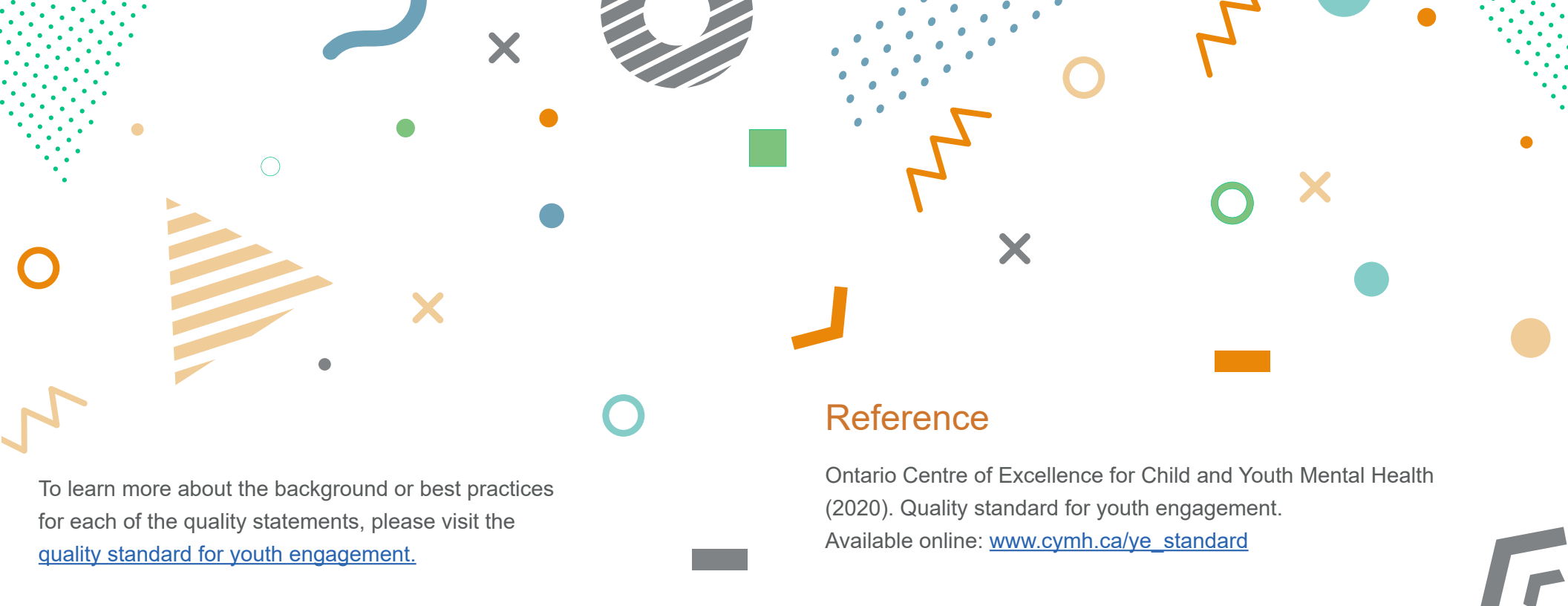
Safer spaces

You have a large role in co-creating spaces that make you and others feel comfortable to learn and grow, with others that share the same space.

Examples:

- You co-develop community guidelines or posters that promote respect and acceptance at the agency.





To learn more about the background or best practices for each of the quality statements, please visit the [quality standard for youth engagement](http://www.cymh.ca/ye_standard).

Reference

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (2020). Quality standard for youth engagement. Available online: www.cymh.ca/ye_standard



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