

Professional Development Pathway for Youth Workers

Introduction

In the social service sector in Singapore, there is currently no common definition of a ‘youth worker’ nor the pre-requisite training and qualifications to carry out youth work.

2 This Professional Development Pathway (PDP) is a first step towards mapping out job areas commonly undertaken by youth workers and identifying requisite competencies and relevant training programmes. Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) and youth organisations may refer to the PDP to access a list of available training to help their staff build up the relevant competencies.

Youth Work and Youth Workers

3 According to Ireland’s National Youth Advisory Committee’s definition of ‘youth work’, ‘youth work’ refers to ‘a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training and is provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.’¹

4 Thus, youth work is focused on the growth and development of youth, with programmes that are geared towards developing the competence and potential of youth. Youth workers play an important role in delivering quality youth work. Many youth workers in Singapore perform a wide variety of roles and functions, working with youth as well as their family members, teachers and the larger community.

¹ Ireland’s National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 Available online at http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/NYWDP_Part_Two.html (accessed 5 December 2005)

Pre-Employment Training Pathway to become a Youth Worker

5 There is currently no standardised educational requirement for youth workers. Youth workers possess a range of educational qualifications from 'N' levels to post-graduate degrees. Many youth workers possess qualifications in social work, counselling or psychology. Agencies employ youth workers based on their specific organisational needs as well as the applicant's suitability to become a youth worker.

Professional Development for Youth Workers

6 As youth work is still relatively new as an established profession, the professional development path for youth workers is still evolving. Generally, youth workers can expect to become senior youth workers or supervisors after a few years of experience. Youth workers can also advance to management positions of VWOs or youth agencies.

Competencies for Youth Workers

7 The core competencies in this document are developed primarily from the extensive findings of the Core Competencies Workgroup for Youth Workers and Volunteer Youth Workers, spearheaded by the National Youth Council (NYC) and National Council of Social Service (NCSS), and made up of representatives from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), SSTI and experienced practitioners from VWOs and youth organisations. The core competencies were developed through surveys and focus group discussions with VWO and youth agency staff in 2005.

8 The competencies are organised into two levels: youth workers (0-5 years experience) and senior youth workers (> 5 years experience). Youth workers at a higher level of practice are expected to be equipped with the competencies of youth workers at the entry level as well.

Limitations of the PDP

9 The PDP is not without its limitations. First, as the settings that youth workers work in are wide-ranging, the PDP focuses on the core competencies that are consistent for youth workers across the board. These serve as a guide for agencies as they chart the training needs for their staff. Agencies are also encouraged to refer to PDPs developed by SSTI for other professions (such as social workers and counsellors), as well as other sources for competencies and courses that are not incorporated here but are relevant to their work.

10 Second, the possible training programmes in the pathway are not exhaustive. Agencies and their staff should exercise discretion and enrol in courses that are relevant to their work. SSTI will continue to work with relevant partners to develop new training programmes where there are gaps. As the PDP serves as a guide for the continuing training of youth workers, **the training programmes listed in the pathway are not meant to serve as pre-requisites in hiring a youth worker or to gain employment as a youth worker.**

11 Besides formal training, developmental opportunities for staff to acquire the competencies could also include in-house learning sessions, on-the-job learning assignments and mentoring.

12 It is hoped that this framework will serve as a useful tool in the development of youth workers in VWOs so that the youth sector will grow in professionalism, competence and dynamism.

Social Service Training Institute

March 2006

Core Competencies and Training Programmes for Youth Workers (0-5 years)

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
1	Stages of Development for Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Knowledge and understanding of stages of youth development b. Understanding and awareness of youth culture and behaviour c. Awareness of all aspects of a young person's life d. Awareness of current youth trend and issues e. Ability to apply fundamentals of positive youth development f. Ability to apply theoretical knowledge on risk and protective factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Working with Youths – Introduction b. Understanding Youth Mental Health and Wellness
2	Mentoring and Engaging Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability to model, demonstrate and teach positives values b. Ability to develop and maintain a relationship of trust with youth c. Skills in fostering youth participation d. Ability to recognise and respond to youth needs and interests e. Ability to involve youth in planning and goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Working with Youths – Introduction b. Working with Youths – Intermediate c. Working with Youths - Advanced d. Understanding Play: Its Therapeutic Roles for Working with Children and Young Persons

		<p>setting</p> <p>f. Ability to identify and capitalise on youth strengths</p> <p>g. Understanding the value of youth voice/input</p>	<p>e. Developing Youths through Effective Mentoring</p> <p>f. Helping Youths/Youth-at-Risk in making career choices</p> <p>g. Dance/Movement Training with Children</p> <p>h. Delivering Impactful Training to Youths</p>
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Core Competencies and Training Programmes for Youth Workers (0-5 years)

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
3	Managing Behaviour - Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Intervention skills pertaining to different youth issues (e.g. conflict resolution, adventure counselling, crisis management) b. Skills in implementing appropriate strategies to meet youth's needs c. Ability to identify potential issues, signs and symptoms that require intervention or referral (e.g. suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, violent tendencies) d. Supervision techniques to supervise youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Working with Youths – Intermediate b. Working with Youths - Advanced c. Working with Involuntary Clients (Youths) d. Working with Youths on Sexuality Issues e. Youth Gangsterism and Violence f. Bullying Issues Among Youths & Its Prevention Approaches g. Restorative Justice: Theory, Practice and its Use in Youth Justice h. Using Narrative Theories in working with Youths i. Tackling Cyber Addiction in Youths j. Therapeutic Story-telling with Children (Mandarin)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> k. Trauma Counselling for Children l. Understanding and Managing Suicidal Youths m. Managing Substance Abuse in Youths n. Helping Youths cope with Anger
4	Programme Development (Planning, Implementing and Evaluating)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Understanding the need for developmentally appropriate activities b. Ability to formulate / plan programmes with goals and measurable outcomes c. Ability to implement activities/ programmes based on clear objectives d. Skills in designing programme evaluation and assessment tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Programme Planning: From Needs Assessment to Evaluation

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
5	Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Skills in engaging family members in programmes and community initiatives b. Ability to work with parents and caregivers c. Knowledge and understanding of family structures d. Ability to recognise family assets, resources, supporting networks within the community e. Understanding the greater community context in which the youth and family lives in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Working with Youths – Introduction b. Supporting and Enabling Children and Families in Divorce: Introduction c. Management of Family Violence: Introduction to Child Abuse and Child Protection d. Management of Family Violence: Talking to Children and Managing Abuse Related Disclosure
6	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Understanding roles of the various stakeholders and partners in youth work in Singapore b. Awareness of the array, information and referral processes with various stakeholders, community agencies that serve youth and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaboration Skills for Effective Youth Programmes within the Social Service Sector b. Finding Common Ground: Effective Interdisciplinary Work in the Social Service Sector

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
	Community Engagement (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Relations management skills with stakeholders and partners d. Understanding the workings in the legal system e. Knowledge of school system and career options for youth 	
7	Facilitation and Groupwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Skills in facilitating and managing group sessions b. Ability to set groupwork goals and role of individuals during groupwork sessions c. Maintaining flow of discussion and participation d. Ability to manage teamwork and group dynamics 	a. Working with Youths – Intermediate

Additional Core Competencies and Training Programmes for Senior Youth Workers (>5 years)

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
1	Managing and Supervising Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Supervision, mentoring and appraisal skills b. Skills to develop staff training and development plans c. Team building skills d. Ability to conduct in-house training for staff pertaining to youth work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Effective Supervisory Skills for NPO Managers b. Developing your Coaching and Mentoring Skills for NPO Managers

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
2	Programme Planning and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Awareness and understanding of agency goals b. Assessment skills to ascertain adequacy of youth programmes offered by agency c. Ability to chart broad direction of agency's development and planning of youth programmes d. Ability to oversee, manage and evaluate programmes developed and run by staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Programme Planning: From Needs Assessment to Evaluation
3	Research and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability to conduct research and identify youth trends and needs b. Knowledge of different types of research methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research Methods in Social Sciences b. Survey Research and Quantitative Analysis c. Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis

S/N	Key Job Areas / Competency Dimension	Knowledge and Skills	Relevant SSTI Training Programmes
4	Volunteer Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability to develop and implement framework for development of volunteers b. Ability to work with volunteers effectively c. Selecting and interviewing volunteers d. Training and developing volunteers e. Ability to guide and supervise volunteers in the course of their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Principles and Practice of Volunteer Management in VWOs