Montgomery County
Collaboration Council
FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
A LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Youth Program Quality Tool for In-Person Programming

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Background and Instructions

Overview

The **Youth Program Quality Tool for In-Person Programming** **[YPQT-IN]** was commissioned by the Collaboration Council as a part of their mission to support quality youth development programming. Developed by Sharp Insight, LLC, the instrument is specifically designed for youth program personnel to evaluate their program's quality and improve on key program components that lead to positive development for both youth and staff. This observation-based tool is structured around five categories: Program Structure, Program Content, Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction & Engagement. In addition to the observation tool itself, there is a supplemental worksheet to support scoring, reflection, action planning, and follow-up visits, as applicable. The YPQT-IN is meant to accompany quality improvement processes such as health and safety compliance, self-assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and improvement planning.

Community of Practice

The Montgomery County Collaboration Council's Youth Development Community of Practice offers professional learning opportunities for youth development practitioners serving young people in the County. The Community of Practice brings to our youth development practitioners a coordinated system of ongoing training with experienced and knowledgeable facilitators, expert-led symposia, online courses, and access to e-learning resources, such as a library and recorded webinars. At the core of the Community of Practice is peer networking to share best practices and innovative program strategies that promote positive youth outcomes in the County's young people. As part of a full range of professional learning opportunities, our Community of Practice offers capacity build opportunities that address each of the five domains included in the Excel Beyond the Bell Youth Program Quality Tool: program structure, program content, safe environment, supportive environment, interaction & engagement. For information and registration for upcoming workshops please visit: https://collaborationcouncil.org/online-calendar/

About Us

Since 1992, The Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families has brought together public and private service providers to address the needs of Montgomery County, Maryland's children under the age of 18, and their families. One in four county residents fits this youthful profile. Designated as a Local Management Board by the State of Maryland, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council's purpose is to be a catalyst so that agencies and other groups can collaborate to achieve positive results in the community. Now a quasi public non-profit, the Collaboration Council's work continues to grow and change to meet the ever-evolving needs of the county's residents. For more information, please visit: https://collaborationcouncil.org/

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Recommended Instructions for Planning, Observation, and Follow-Up

BEFORE: Prior to the use of the YPQT-IN, it is recommended that Program Observers and Youth Program Personnel:

1. Familiarize themselves with the tool so they are aligned in their understanding of the purpose, process, categories, and items.

2. Determine how the tool will be used in the program (e.g., peer, internal leadership, and/or external assessment).

3. Schedule TWO one-hour blocks, including: a) the <u>site visit</u> so the staff member(s) being observed are aware of the visit and can prepare for this structured opportunity for observation, learning, and growth, and b) the <u>follow-up meeting</u>, ideally within 2 weeks of the site visit, for a review of evidence and scoring, reflective discussion, and action planning.

DURING: When observing an online program, it is recommended that Program Observers (e.g., peer, internal, or external observers):

1. Prepare for their site visit by confirming with staff the time and location, ideally allowing one hour of observation time.

2. Bring a notebook and pen or a laptop to complete note taking; observers are asked to not complete the YPQT-IN while observing.

3. Upon arrival, find an out-of-the-way spot where they can still see and hear the staff when working with youth.

4. Throughout the observation, take notes that are factual, specific, and, when possible, include quotes from staff and youth.

5. If feasible without program interruption, thank the program personnel and review next steps, including the follow-up meeting date.

AFTER: After visiting a site, it is recommended that Observers (e.g., peer, internal, or external observers):

1. Review and then use the program observation notes as evidence to include in the YPQT-IN's "Evidence" boxes.

2. After documenting the evidence on the YPQT-IN form, determine the appropriate score (1, 3, or 5). If an item was not observed (e.g., conflict), indicate this by writing an "X" in the Evidence box. Complete the Summary by Category table and Observer Notes.

3. At the follow-up meeting, BEFORE sharing the scoring, invite program personnel to engage in a Reflective Discussion (see YPQT-IN for questions). Grounded in this initial discussion, provide program personnel time to review the YPQT-IN evidence and scoring. Then work with the program personnel to develop Action Planning Steps, as appropriate for their program context and driven by program personnel.

4. Within 2-4 weeks of the meeting, follow up with relevant resources, professional development opportunities, and/or other supports.

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Observation Scoring Tool

Field		Field	
Agency / Organization	_____	**Observation Date**	_____
Program Name	_____	**Total Minutes Observed**	# Minutes:
Grade(s) Served by Program	_____	**Total Staff & Youth**	# Staff: ___ # Youth: ___
Name(s) of Staff Observed	_____	**Name(s) of Observer**	_____

Type(s) of programs/activities observed: ☐ Literacy ☐ Tutoring/Homework ☐ STEM ☐ Social-Emotional Learning
☐ Service-Learning ☐ Leadership/Advocacy ☐ Arts ☐ Health & Wellness ☐ Other _____

Full adherence to health protocols observed: ☐ Yes ☐ No (specify):_____

Rating Scales are based on the consistency of strong evidence for each item observed. Please use this guide to help you with scoring:
N/A or X (not able to be observed or not applicable to the session) **3-Some Evidence** (emerging and/or inconsistent evidence)
1-None or Minimal Evidence (negatively or not observed; minor or minimal evidence) **5-Extensive Evidence** (strong and consistent evidence throughout session)

Instructions: Following the observation, use your detailed notes to document evidence and determine appropriate scores for each item.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE *To what extent is there evidence that…?*	**N/A** **X**	**None or Minimal Evidence** **1**	**Some Evidence** **3**	**Extensive Evidence** **5**	**Evidence** *Must include evidence for 3 or 5*
A. Prior to program start, staff sufficiently **prepared** the program space AND relevant materials for all youth to access?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
B. The program **schedule** is followed (within 10 minutes) AND allows for appropriate activity timing (i.e., positive engagement, activity/session introduction, and closure)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
C. Staff give clear **instructions** AND provide instructions using multiple (2+) techniques (e.g., oral, visual, modeled, repeat-back)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
D. Staff provide multiple (2+) opportunities for youth to **collaborate** (e.g., pairs, small groups, and full group)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
PROGRAM CONTENT *To what extent is there evidence that…?*	**N/A** **X**	**1**	**3**	**5**	**Evidence** *Must include evidence for 3 or 5*
E. Staff clearly communicate to youth AND follow through with the program's specific **objectives** (i.e., learning, skill-building, and/or developmental objectives)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
F. The program content, strategies, and skills **build** on each other, culminating in products and/or performances that reflect the ideas and efforts of the youth within or across program sessions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
G. The program content is developmentally appropriate, and the offering is scaffolded, as needed, to provide **appropriate challenge** for all youth?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
H. Staff provide youth the opportunity to engage in **active learning** (e.g., creating, combining, reforming materials or ideas) and/or **skill development** for *at least* half of the program time?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

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SAFE ENVIRONMENT *To what extent is there evidence that…?*	N/A X	None or Minimal Evidence 1	Some Evidence 3	Extensive Evidence 5	Type(s) of Evidence	Evidence *Must include for 3 or 5*
I. There is *no* bias AND there is *explicit* evidence of mutual respect for the **diversity and inclusion** of all participants with respect to: religion, ethnicity, English fluency, class, gender, physical ability, developmental ability, sexual orientation, and/or appearance?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
J. The **emotional climate** of the session is predominantly positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, supportive; characterized by teamwork, camaraderie, inclusiveness, and an absence of negative behaviors OR appropriately mediated negative behaviors)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
K. The **physical environment** (e.g., space, furniture, equipment) is safely used AND adjusted by staff and youth to meet program needs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
L. Staff and youth demonstrate AND reinforce **pro-social norms**, including expectations, guidelines, routines, and/or traditions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT *To what extent is there evidence that…?*	N/A X	1	3	5	Type(s) of Evidence	Evidence *Must include for 3 or 5*
M. Staff are **actively involved** with youth (e.g., providing directions, answering questions, checking in)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
N. Staff model for and **encourage** all youth by providing specific feedback to participants about accomplishments, positive behavior, and/or individual and group performance expectations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
O. There are **positive interactions** within groups of various size and formation (e.g., one-on-one, small group, large group)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
P. If conflict arises, staff use **conflict as an opportunity** for youth voice, learning, or growth and/or youth participate in conflict mediation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	

INTERACTION & ENGAGEMENT *To what extent is there evidence that…?*	N/A X	1	3	5	Type(s) of Evidence	Evidence *Must include for 3 or 5*
Q. Youth have opportunities to make open-ended **content choices** (choosing "what") AND **process choices** (choosing "how") within the content framework of the activities?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
R. There are opportunities for youth to demonstrate **leadership** (e.g., contribute to program responsibilities, teach others, lead a discussion or project)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
S. Youth actively **share** their ideas, experiences, and feedback which are then meaningfully included in the program activities and/or structure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	
T. Youth engage in an intentional process of **reflection** regarding what they have experienced in the program?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Staff-to-Youth ☐ Youth-to-Youth	

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Summary by Category

	Program Structure				Program Content				Safe Environment				Supportive Environment				Interaction & Engagement			
Item Letter	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Item Rating *Fill in with X, 1, 3, or 5*																				

Observer Notes

Review the summary of item ratings above. What stands out? What patterns, if any emerge?

Successes

Recommendations

Reflection and Action Planning

Reflective Discussion

What did we do well? What contributed to those successes?

If we could start today's session or the program cycle over, what would we do differently? Why?

Action Planning

Identify <u>no more than</u> 3 items for focused program improvement this program cycle.

Domain(s)	Item of focus (e.g., Item A, Item B)	Specific steps to improve this focus area	Timeline
☐Program Structure ☐Program Content ☐Safe Environment ☐Supportive Environment ☐Interaction & Engagement			

When will the follow-up observation take place?_____

For follow-up visits, observers may complete the full tool OR the selected domains or items that align with those identified through action planning.

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Sources

Grounded in high-quality program research and tools, this **Youth Program Quality Tool** was developed by Sharp Insight, LLC, with feedback from the Montgomery County Collaboration Council and partners. Key sources include:

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