

Let Them Lead!

*Strategies for Developing or Enhancing your
Peer Leadership Groups*

Emil Ramnarine

Emil.Ramnarine@fairfuturesny.org

Purpose & Benefits of Peer Groups

A Peer Group is a youth-led group that provides opportunities to:

1. Develop and practice leadership skills.
2. Experience what it's like to exercise power and effect change.
3. A place to feel safe and discuss issues that are important to them.
4. Use positive peer influence to promote responsibility and respect.
5. Improve self—esteem and develop problem-solving skills.

What You Need to Get Started

1. **Be Clear On Your Purpose & Goals** – *Is it for support? project-based? personal goal?*
2. **Support from the larger agency community** – *consistent, committed adult leadership*
3. **Who Is This Group For?** – *Be specific – Open/closed participation? Are there any requirements?*
4. **What is the meeting format and protocol?** – *What time? How often? Where? Who is going to set the agenda and take notes? Is there a cap on the # of participants?*
5. **Create a safe, trusting environment** – *set group promises and decide how this will be maintained; Allow room for mistakes, risks, reflection and feedback*
6. **Identify a leader**

Qualities of a Leader

- Ability to influence others
- Ability to encourage others and establish goals
- Can demonstrate empathy and understanding of others
- Comfortable taking calculated risks
- Basic organizational skills
- Accepts criticism and feedback; Can listen to other opinions

Peer Group Best Practices

- Allow the Youth Leader a chance to shadow and co-facilitate before having them facilitate on their own
- Be clear with the Youth Leader around what their role is IN the meeting and OUTSIDE of the meeting
- Can demonstrate empathy and understanding of others
- Comfortable taking calculated risks
- Basic organizational skills
- Accepts criticism and feedback; Can listen to other opinions