



**Step Up for Youth**

# Orange County Youth Bureau: Youth YPQA Introduction

(A youth assessment instrument developed from the High Scope Educational Research Foundation Youth Program Quality Assessment)



## Introduction:

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) is a validated instrument designed by The High Scope Foundation to evaluate the quality of youth programs as well as identify training needs of youth workers. Divided into four *subscales*: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement, these four areas are believed to make up a quality youth program. Orange County has been working with this form since 2008 and presently has 6 trained external assessors observing youth programs. With interest in youth input overtime a certain question was raised: If we are using this form to assess youth programs and these programs are for the youth, who better to assess the programs than youth themselves? The Orange County Youth YPQA assessment form was developed to do just that. It enables youth ages 14-21 to externally assess the programmatic quality presented within youth programs.

## How was the Youth YPQA developed?

In order to ensure the youth assessors were able to understand the material presented to them and provide accurate feedback on their findings the instrument itself had to be simplified to the age appropriate level. The instrument was meticulously reviewed by two trained external assessors whom withhold a large level of awareness in youth development and appropriate cognitive levels of functioning. A conclusion was made to use certain indicators from each subcategory when developing the youth version. These indicators were selected based on two (2) contributing factors: First the indicator held enough value that the youth input would truly be beneficial and knowledge building. Secondly the indicator was not overly complex and puzzling to the youth. Once the indicators were selected from each category the two trained assessors formatted the layout of the Youth YPQA. The next step in developing this youth version was to have youth input. The idea was then presented to a first year college student interning in the office for the summer.

Intrigued by the research and youth engagement, she took the idea and ran with it. She restated the indicators of each subcategory to reflect the same meaning as the original language used, making it reader friendly for youth assessors. It was a joint decision that the language within the Youth YPQA would be written at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.

Once developed the Youth YPQA was presented to two high school summer interns (The curricula for this presentation provided). Incorporated into their training was a follow up discussion to address any questions or concerns they may have about their roles and expectations. The youth would work in pairs and would be accompanied by one adult who has been trained as a YPQA external assessor through the High Scope Foundation. Similar to the follow up conversations held when two adult assessors conduct an external assessment follow up conversations would also be held with the youth assessors and the adult whom accompanied them after every assessment.

O.C. Youth Bureau [www.orangecountygov.com/youthbureau](http://www.orangecountygov.com/youthbureau)

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