
The Importance of Youth Engagement

**Presented by the Maryland Youth Advisory Council
Healthy St. Mary's Partnership Meeting Presentation**



Introductions



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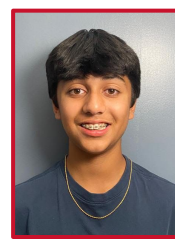


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Maryland Youth Advisory Council 2023-24 Council Members





What is the Maryland Youth Advisory Council?

Mission:

As a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders from across the State, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council addresses relevant issues by:

- Influencing legislation,
- Conducting public awareness, and
- Serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers.



What is the Maryland Youth Advisory Council?

The Council's responsibilities include:

- Informing the Governor and the General Assembly of issues concerning youth, including offering testimony before legislative bodies.
- Examining issues of importance to youth and provide a platform for young people to advocate for issues impacting youth.



What is the Maryland Youth Advisory Council?

The Council's responsibilities include:

- Recommending one legislative proposal each Legislative Session concerning an issue of importance.
- Conducting a public campaign to raise awareness of the Council among Maryland youth.
- Reporting it's activities to the Governor and General Assembly.



Why Does Engagement Matter?





What is Youth Engagement?

Youth Engagement is a powerful way for organizations to include the young people they serve, in moving their work forward to better serve them.

Youth Engagement is the result when young people are involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change.



Healthy Development



Executive Functions:

- Advanced reasoning abilities
- Expanded capacity for abstract and critical thinking
- Understanding 'how' and 'why' questions
- Analysis of complex issues
- Evaluation of alternatives before making decisions.



Expertise



Youth engagement offers the **expertise and partnership of young people**, helping adults fully understand what it is like to grow up in a rapidly changing world while navigating the various systems and policies impacting the lives of youth each day.



Civic Engagement



Youth who volunteer...

- More likely to become adults who vote and engage in service to their community
- Strengthen relationships and networks that build social capital
- Significant predictors of a state's economic opportunity and resilience.



How Can Adults Foster Youth Engagement?





Principle 1: Outreach Strategies

Effective youth engagement strategies must have strong and continuous outreach strategies.

- Be intentional about recruiting young people that represent a range of perspectives, experiences, and skill-levels.
- Concentrate on places where young people are: Schools, youth-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, community centers, malls, and recreation areas (parks, sports fields, rec centers).
- Long-term recruitment planning – create a “revolving door” of youth leaders.



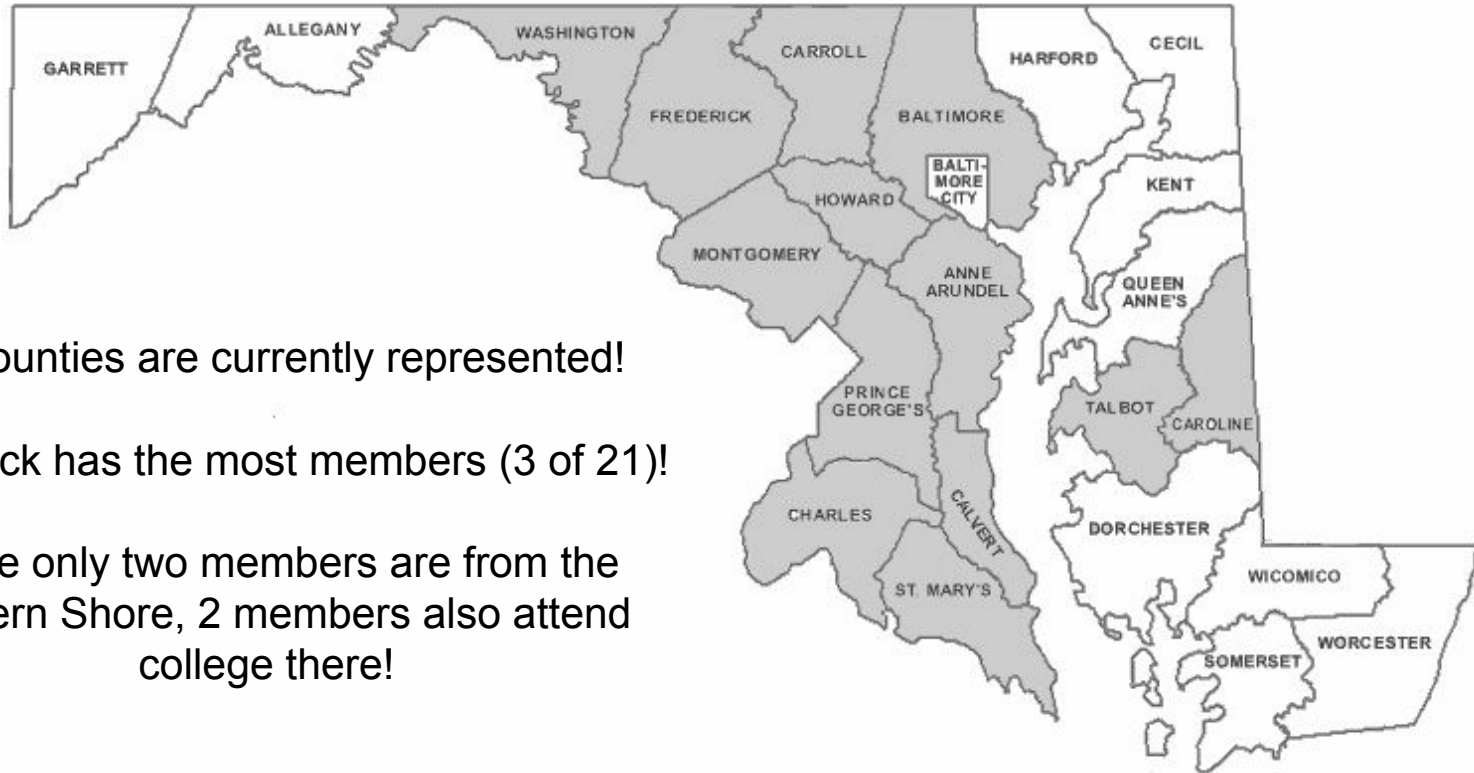
Principle 1: Outreach Strategy - *MYAC Edition*

- Recruits from various appointing bodies at the state and local level
- Represent youth from ages 14-22
- Council has an active presence on social media and in the community
- Word of mouth is very effective





Council Membership 2023-24



13 counties are currently represented!

Frederick has the most members (3 of 21)!

While only two members are from the Eastern Shore, 2 members also attend college there!



Principle 2: Create a “Home Base”

Effective youth engagement strategies creates a “home base” for young people.

- “Home base” provides a system of supports to adults and organizational resources.
- “Home base” must be a designated work space with the necessary equipment and supplies to do their job. It should be physically accessible and located in or near the neighborhood or community that the youth will work in.



Additional Considerations



Staff Buy-In



Funding + Compensation



Meeting Dates & Times



Excused School Absences
+ Service Learning Hours



Transportation



Food



Using technology



Adult allies



The rule of three



Principle 2: Create a “Home Base” - *MYAC Edition*



Our AMAZING advisor Mrs. Christina Drushel Williams.

- Oversees all Council activities and provides materials, agendas, and meeting space.
- Primary support figure for the Council.
- Her expertise in public policy, government, and youth development helps the Council successfully carry out its mission.



Principle 3: Develop A Philosophy

Effective youth engagement efforts are driven by an intentional philosophy about change that young people and adults understand and own.

Be clear why you are engaging youth and articulate clear roles for the youth and adults.

- Have a clear roadmap that includes short and long-term goals, as well as strategies to achieve those goals.
- Help youth understand how they can create a “ripple effect” to expand their impact to their peers, families, neighborhoods, cities, and beyond.



Youth Engagement Continuum

Youth Services Approach

- Defines young people as clients
- Services for individual problems
- Programming defined around treatment and prevention

Youth Development

- Services and support, access to caring adults and safe spaces
- Opportunities for the growth + development of young people

Youth Leadership

- Builds authentic youth leadership opportunities within programs/ organizations
- Builds youth's skills to be decision-makers

Civic Engagement

- Engages youth in political education
- Build collective identity of young people as social change agents

Youth Organizing

- Youth are part of core staff and governing body
- Engages in direct action and mobilizing
- Engages in alliances and coalitions

Intervention – Development – Collective Impact – Systematic Change



Principle 3: Develop A Philosophy - *MYAC Edition*

Our mission matters because it...

- Informs our activities and legislative priorities
- Provides structure for our meetings
- Gives us purpose in operating
- Serves as a template for other youth advisory councils and groups across the state



Principle 4: Identify Core Issues

Effective youth engagement strategies take issue identification seriously and define clear focal points for action.

- Give youth authentic decision-making power.
- Connect the youths' lived experiences to the issues and the issues to the broader agenda.
- Conduct research to help youth and adults better understand the root causes of an issue and develop effective responses.



Principle 4: Identify Core Issues

- *MYAC Edition*

- Clearly defined legislative platform.
- Annually create legislative priorities under our agenda.
- Legislative priorities and community partners both guide our tracked legislation.
- **MYAC focuses on issues that affect young people in Maryland.**



Legislative Platform

I

**Youth
Representation**

II

**Youth
Leadership**

III

Education

IV

School Safety

V

**Health and
Social Issues**

VI

**Environmental
Issues**



2022-2023 Legislative Priority

Student & School Safety

- A. Improve Student-SRO (Student Resource Officer) Relations
- B. Reducing School Shootings and Violence

Educational Reform

- A. Increased Free/Accessible Mental Health Resources in Schools
- B. Health Curriculum Reformations
- C. Promote Inclusivity in School Curriculum
- D. SMOB Voting Rights

Student Government

- A. Environmental Justice
- B. Anti-Discrimination
- C. Reduce Economic Inequality



Principle 5: Create Youth/Adult Partnerships

Effective youth engagement strategies have at their core a youth and adult team/partnership.

- Both partners have equal opportunities to utilize skills, make decisions, and independently carry out tasks to reach a shared goal or purpose.
- Both partners' views are equal to the other.
- Both partners are held to the same standard of accountability. Youth must be compensated for their work.



Principle 5: Create Youth/Adult Partnerships - *MYAC Edition*

- MYAC partners with legislators and community partners to accomplish our mission.
- This requires a mutual respect between youth and adult as well as a willingness to listen on both ends.
- Some of the projects and partnerships MYAC has worked on are...



Partnerships With:

- National Academies of Science
- Young Professionals Network of Calvert
- MD Consortium on Coordinated Community Services
- Mentor MD | DC



Ongoing Collaborative Projects



Youth Townhalls

The Council is hosting youth townhalls across the state in collaboration with local delegations. We previously hosted in Montgomery & Calvert County, and our next townhall is slated for Talbot County.

Collaborations

The Council is working with the BecomeOne Mental Health Project, MD Consortium on Coordinated Community Support, and the National Academy of Sciences to assist in youth-related events and advocacy efforts.



Youth Opportunities Fair

MYAC is working with the Young Professional Network under the Calvert Chamber of Commerce to plan a youth opportunity and networking fair. The event will feature businesses from across Southern Maryland, employment, community, and youth organizations.

October - Youth Justice Action Month (Co-Host an event with the Emerging Leaders Committee) and Small Grants Project



Principle 6: Build Youth and Adult Capacity

- Effective youth engagement strategies are intentional about building youth and adult capacity. Have a dual focus on building skills and awareness.
- Youth can work on building personal, leadership, team, and administrative skills in the process.



Principle 6: Build Youth and Adult Capacity - *MYAC Edition*

Youth in the Council take charge and lead meetings/Council initiatives. Members build important skills like:

- Communication and Networking (especially with community leaders and organizations)
- Organizing and Event Planning
- Delegation of Tasks
- Knowledge of the Legislative Process



Principle 7: Provides Individual Support

Effective youth engagement strategies balance the need for individual supports with the goal of community change.

- Youth must feel safe and supported.
- Accountability and supports must range from personal health and safety to quality of work and professional development.
- Balancing what is good for the young person and what is good for the community.



Principle 7: Provides Individual Support - *MYAC Edition*

On the Council, we strive to:

- Encourage each other to set and reach goals
- Balance the interests of Councilmembers with the perspective of Maryland youth at large
- Learn more about the legislative process and challenge ourselves to make meaningful change
- Have fun!



Principle 8: Sustain Access and Influence

Effective youth engagement strategies create opportunities for sustained access and influence.

- Cultivate an audience, create demand, and connect the work of the youth to other organizations and initiatives.
- Guide the youth to develop a communication place, which will ensure that the youth's voices are heard by the public at large.
- Create clear channels for youth to present their findings and recommendations to key decision-making bodies.



Youth Engagement Approaches

Youth in Research & Evaluation

Young people are engaged in activities that **INFORM** the planning, design, delivery, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of programs and practices designed by youth.

Youth in Community Organizing/Advocacy

Young people are engaged in activities that **INFLUENCE** the development and the implementation policies, programs, and practices that address problems in their community.

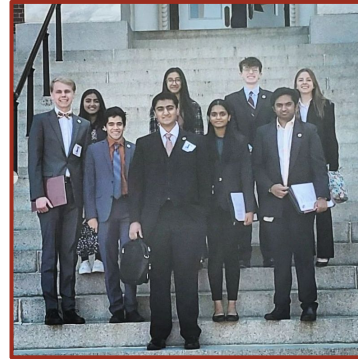
Youth in Decision-Making & Governance

Young people are **MAKING DECISIONS** about policy issues, programs, and practices that affect their lives, their peers, and their communities.



Principle 8: Sustain Access and Influence - *MYAC Edition*

- HB 119 Press Conference and Legislative Meetings in Annapolis
- Youth Town Halls with State Delegations
- Social Media





Authentic Youth Voice Happens When Young People...



- Are equal partners in all aspects of their own individual planning and decision-making;
- Are equal partners in making decisions and determining the direction of programs and activities, agency policy development, service design, training design and delivery;
- Expect to, and receive, consistent opportunities to set goals, devise strategies, and act;
- Are respected for their ideas and opinions and are comfortable to state them;
- Participate in challenging experiences with the necessary support to help them succeed; and
- Thrive when adults listen to them, respect them, and empower through meaningful programs and activities.



?? Questions ??



Connect with Us!

<http://goccp.maryland.gov/myac>

INSTAGRAM

[**@mdyouthcouncil**](https://www.instagram.com/mdyouthcouncil)

FACEBOOK

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