INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that determine our health. Structural Determinants of Health are the circumstances interwoven through the social determinants of health that create social hierarchies which distribute power differently and lead to inequities and inequalities (Wang et al., 2020). Social Determinants of Health are defined as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age (World Health Organization).

As Adult Allies, how can we address the Social Determinants of Health to:
- Foster communities that are healthier for our young people as they grow, live, and age?
- Support the mental, emotional, and social health needs of young people as they develop?
- Support and uplift youth voice as an essential element of efforts that build community resilience and address community trauma (Weisner, 2020)?

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

The Social Determinants of Adolescent Health (SDoAH) focus on the systemic and structural issues that impact the lives of adolescents (Hagell et al., 2019). Sometimes, we keep our focus on the individual young people who engage in our programs or settings without considering the broader context in which they live, work, learn, and play. One way to shift our thinking from the individual to the broader context is to consider the story of the fish.

When we see a single dead fish, we might wonder what is wrong with the fish. But when we see a lake full of dead fish, we often wonder what is wrong with the lake. Shifting our focus from the individual fish to the lake symbolizes how society and its structures determine the health of the individual. By assessing these areas of the environment, youth-led programming allows young people the opportunity to go upstream to determine what is happening in their own lakes. When young people create change that impacts systems to make them more equitable, sustainable, and relevant to the populations they serve, youth not only directly impact their communities, they also become better equipped to succeed and feel a sense of belonging in their communities.

REFLECT

With this reflection tool, we encourage you to take time to reflect on how you and your organization can foster an environment that supports young people through the lens of the Social Determinants of Adolescent Health (SDoAH). For each section below, there are a series of reflection prompts. We encourage you to consider the prompts most relevant to your work and to the young people you support. Each section of prompts are accompanied by resources (articles, videos, podcasts, etc.) that allow you to explore deeper.

REFLECTING ON THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

CONSIDER HOW TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES IMPACT SDoAH

Trauma is experienced by many young people and can affect each person in a different way. Trauma-Informed Care requires a system to make a paradigm shift from asking, "What is wrong with this person?" to "What has happened to this person?" (Harris, M. & Fallot, R. D., 2001). It is important for adult allies to be able to recognize the effects of trauma and build protective factors without retraumatizing young people in the process. Protective factors exist at every level: individual, family, community, or larger society. When present, protective factors work against risk factors by promoting health and resilience in young people as they develop into adults (childwelfare.gov, 2020). The prompts below can help you reflect on how you can support young people impacted by trauma by focusing on protective factors.

REFLECT

What can you (or your organization) do to incorporate a trauma-informed approach in working with young people?

What can you (or your organization) do to build community resilience?

How can you (or your organization) impact the SDoAH by intentionally focusing on protective factors that impact young people?

EXPLORE

If you have 2 minutes to learn more:

Watch one of these short videos about protective factors and discussing how to build trust with youth.

Getting Candid: Protective Factors
https://youtu.be/nHwIP7I3nW0

Getting Candid: How to Build Trust
https://youtu.be/-fMBgJXpV5k

If you have 10 minutes to learn more:

Watch *are you okay?* an award-winning short film on the impact of support from peers:
https://youtu.be/tJsGGsPNakw

If you have 15 minutes to learn more:

Choose one of these articles to read:

This article explores protective factors - what they are, why they matter, and how to implement them:
https://www.childwelfare.gov/pub-pdfs/protective_factors.pdf

In this article, Shawn Ginwright encourages adults to consider a shift from trauma-informed care to healing-centered engagement:
https://ginwright.medium.com/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c

REFLECTING ON THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

CONSIDER HOW CULTURALLY RELEVANT APPROACHES IMPACT SDoAH

Youth-led programs in Ohio are grounded by two evidence-based frameworks: the Youth Empowerment Conceptual Framework (YECF) and the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). Inclusion is a core component of both of these tools, through Group Cohesion with the YECF and Cultural Competence with the SPF. Group Cohesion is the group's capacity to cooperate in the completion of a common objective or goal is reflective of the group cohesion. Cohesive groups get along well and members demonstrate respect for each other. Cultural Competence is the ability of an individual or organization to understand and interact effectively with people who have different values, lifestyles, and traditions based on their distinctive heritage and social relationships (SAMHSA, 2017). The YECF clearly articulates that youth-led community change efforts produce impacts at multiple levels: the individual, the group, and the community (Collura, Raffle, Collins, Kennedy, 2019). Similarly, we should consider how these multiple levels can impact our young people and their development. The prompts below can help you reflect on how you can support diverse young people as they navigate individual, group, and community/systemic dynamics.

REFLECT

How can you help make your community more welcoming to young people?

Where are the places in your community where young people can show up with their whole selves? What can we learn from those spaces about how they receive young people or create welcoming environments?

How do the SDoAH affect young people in our community, particularly special populations such as youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, youth with disabilities, etc. that might encounter additional barriers to inclusion?

EXPLORE

If you have 2 minutes to learn more:

Read It's Time to Talk, a poem by Lisa M. Evans, to reconsider the phrase "I don't see color."
https://www.ywcaofcleveland.org/blog/2019/02/22/its-time-to-talk-by-lisa-m-evans-ma-cdp/

If you have 10 minutes to learn more:

Watch Inclusion Starts with I, a video about the power of diversity and inclusion and consider what would be on your sign or on the signs of the young people you work with:
https://youtu.be/2g88Ju6nkcg

If you have 15 minutes to learn more:

Watch Bettina Love speak on how we can take our allyship to the next level by being "Co-Conspirator" and consider how you can be a co-conspirator to advance the priorities of the young people you serve:
https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4804332/user-clip-conspirators

CONSIDER HOW ADULTISM IMPACTS SDoAH

Adultism is the prejudice and discrimination against individuals as a result of their youth (Bell, 1995; Fletcher, 2015). It is important to recognize that youth do need age-appropriate guidance from adults, but we must make opportunities available to them where they are able to make decisions and share their input. Adultism often goes unnoticed or ignored, and includes attitudes and beliefs such as, "You're too young to understand" or "Children need to be seen and not heard" (King, 2021). Adultism should be recognized as a form of oppression that has a harmful and long-lasting impact on how individuals or groups of young people see themselves. Youth should be seen as partners, not just subjects or outcomes, of the work we are creating (Clements & Koss, 2019). The prompt below can help you reflect on how you can identify adultism and take steps to disrupt it.

REFLECT

How do you create space for young people to choose or create activities within youth-led programming?

How do you create space for them to make important decisions that impact the community in which they live?

How do you consistently ask young people for input regarding youth-led programming?

And, what do you do to demonstrate that you are responsive to the feedback that young people provide?

When working with other adult allies, how are you representing/advocating for young people?

How does this representation and advocacy impact SDoAH?

EXPLORE

If you have 5 minutes to learn more:

Read John Bell's article about understanding adultism:
https://actioncivics.scoe.net/pdf/Understanding_Adultism.pdf

If you have 15 minutes to learn more:

Watch this TedTalk by Heather Kennedy that discusses disrupting adultism in our everyday lives:
https://youtu.be/QOznObRok_4

If you have 30 minutes to learn more:

Listen to this podcast about adultism that was developed by the Ohio Adult Allies (OAA):
https://youtu.be/ISHen2_YRus

CONCLUSION

As Adult Allies, understanding how the SDoAH can impact young people's development is important to supporting them and building relationships. We hope this resource guided you in reflecting about the areas where you feel most prepared to support young people and where there are opportunities for further learning.

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For additional youth-led resources visit the Ohio Adult Allies Website OAA Website:
https://www.ohioadultallies.com/