



Youth Development Wellness Standards

PREAMBLE

New Orleans Youth Alliance (NOYA) espouses wellness as one of its core values as we pursue strategies to help young people access all they need to grow and develop holistically in mind, body and spirit. Similarly, we believe that the youth development field requires a workforce that equally prioritizes the wellness of children and youth as well as professionals within the industry. We also recognize that our industry exposes youth development professionals to a plethora of challenges to their well-being including vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue that are common for professionals in human development fields. Likewise, we recognize that all of us are navigating the impacts of systemic oppression that are embedded in the structures in which we operate daily. At the same time, our industry and the children and youth we serve rely on our capacity to deliver healing-centered, innovative, and thoughtful approaches in our work. As we endeavor to cultivate a system of high-quality, well-resourced youth development organizations that center youth leadership and racial equity in their work with young people, we know that it is incumbent upon us as the local youth development intermediary to establish a set of industry standards that outlines for youth development organizations structures, policies, and practices to support and improve the well-being of youth development professionals. The following set of Wellness Standards was developed by the youth-development professionals who participated in our first Wellness Initiative cohort.

WELLNESS STANDARDS

Standard One: Create a staffing model that allows for safe supervision of young people and high quality service delivery, while affording staff enough support to take extended breaks should the need arise without overextending other program staff.

Standard Two: Create a PTO structure that allows for flexibility and affords staff time off at least quarterly to ensure they are accessing time for their well-being.

Standard Three: Establish a sabbatical structure that supports the well-being and renewal of veteran staff at youth organizations.

Standard Four: Engage in the ongoing work of identifying how white supremacy, patriarchy and capitalism manifest in your organizational structures and actively work to dismantle those structures.

Standard Five: Prioritize *impact* over productivity.

Standard Six: In acknowledgement of the ways that collective trauma is in the backdrop of youth development work, youth programs should develop emergency response plans to address traumatic events that impact youth in your programs and the staff that support them.

Standard Seven: Incorporate social emotional wellness activities as a standard practice with your staff.

Standard Eight: Build and maintain a referral list of mental health professionals and services to make available to staff to support their emotional well-being.

Standard Nine: Center healing and wellness with intention in your staff/professional development models.

Standard Ten: Establish compensation packages (salaries and benefits) that are competitive regionally and nationally for educators/youth development professionals.