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# Changing the Rules: A Guide for Youth and Young Adults with Mental Health Conditions who Want to Change Policy

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# changing the Rules



A guide for youth and young adults with mental health conditions who want to change policy

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Also central to our work were the participants in the Stepping Up study who generously shared their wisdom, successes, challenges, and “lessons learned” about the policy change efforts they had undertaken. Contact information for the nine organizations that participated in the Stepping Up study is listed in Appendix C at the end of this document. Your experiences, shared here through quotations from the interviews, make this policy guide come alive!

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Some of the most important contributors are not aware of how much they helped us. These are the authors of the online and print policy manuals written by and for young people. We borrowed freely from these materials (with proper citation), and provided links to the online materials so that our readers can explore these documents in more detail. We profited greatly from your expertise, and from your dedication to increasing the authentic participation of youth and young adults in policy change. These contributors can be found in the Endnotes and Reference List near the end of this document.

Finally, thanks to Nicole Aue, our Publications and Multimedia Manager, who worked her magic on this policy guide. She addressed our request to make it more interesting, easier to navigate and more user-friendly. We believe that she succeeded, and we hope that our readers will agree. Thank you so much, Nicole.

# Mental Health Policy Change by Youth and Young Adults

**T**o some people, “policy” seems like a mysterious and perhaps boring topic, compared to the busyness and intensity of everyday life. However, a growing number of youth- and young adult-led groups have shown how policy issues can

influence their choices and their lives in critical ways, and that they can have substantial influence on policy. Policies may be general, and apply to all people in society (e.g., traffic laws), or they may specifically focus on particular groups of people, such as people with a mental health condition or criminal record (e.g., policies about housing or employment). Organizations such as Youth M.O.V.E. and other groups led by young people with mental health concerns have demonstrated that they can have important roles in changing flawed policies to make them better or to put positive policies in place. Examples of policy issues that might need change include rules about eligibility for housing or rent subsidies; increased young adult choice in treatment; greater availability of peer services; or more services, supports, and funding for young people entering college, among others.

***Policy** – a rule, decision, or regulation on what a person or a group of people can say, do, or have. (Friday Night Live, 2012).*

*Policy can take the form of laws, regulations...and funding priorities about a given topic enacted by a government entity or its representatives (Kilpatrick, 2000).*

## What is this guide about? Who is it for?

This guide provides information about policy and policy change in mental health and other human services for young adult groups who want to be



directly involved in policy change activities. Some of the many ways that young people can be involved in policy work include serving on advisory committees that consider areas where policy change is needed, participating on groups convened to review contract language about youth-related issues or serving on groups charged with developing rules and regulations to support recent policy change. A number of manuals or handbooks address these important roles, although few of them are specifically focused on mental health.

This policy guide is written for youth- and young adult-led groups and organizations that want to make changes in policies that affect them and other

transition-age youth. The intended audience for this guide is youth and young adults working together within a group or organization to make specific change, usually in partnership with other agencies, groups, or organizations. In fact, young adults who have been involved in successful policy change efforts often emphasize that their groups were able to accomplish their goals because they had supportive partnerships with other organizations.

## Why is this guide focused specifically on issues of concern to youth and young adults with mental health conditions?

- Young people with mental health concerns should be involved in policy change because their lives are directly affected by a variety of policies (laws, rules, and funding priorities). Although there are several policy manuals focused on youth, none specifically addresses issues related to young people with mental health conditions.
- Transition age youth who have lived experience often have much to share about policies that have supported or interfered with their hopes and goals.
- The mental health system is complex, and anyone who wants to make policy change will need to understand the complicated tangle of laws, rules, funding sources, and interagency relationships, as well as the history of how past decisions and social movements have shaped the current system.
- A great deal of stigma about mental health conditions still exists, and successful advocacy for change involves learning how to address and overcome stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs, especially those

held by people who have the authority and access to make the needed change.


- Mental health services and supports are largely funded by federal Medicaid dollars which influence local and state policy through eligibility and reimbursement policy. It is important to be aware of the potential influence of federal laws and funding on what may at first seem like local or state issues.

## Is there research about the policy change activities and outcomes of youth- and young adult-led groups and organizations?

Yes, during 2015–2016 youth and young adults from nine youth- and young-adult-led organizations, along with their adult allies, participated in a study called “Stepping Up: Successful Advocacy by Youth and Young-Adult Organizations.”<sup>1</sup> The study focused on their efforts to change policies in their states and communities. Through face-to-face or telephone interviews these young adults provided much valuable



information about their efforts to change policies that were important to them. More information about this study can be found at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pres-Proj4-SPAC-Tampa-2016-1.pdf>.<sup>1</sup>

This guide includes direct quotations from the young people who were a part of the “Stepping Up” study along with their stories about the activities, successes, and challenges faced by the youth groups. Youth and young adults who were part of the study also made recommendations for others who want to improve the lives of transition-age young people, and much of this advice is included in this guide. Whenever quotations or findings from the “Stepping Up” study are included, this symbol will be used to alert readers that we are talking about “Stepping Up”: 



## STEPPING UP

“I actually got to see with my own eyes that youth can have a voice ... and other people who are adults will actually take [their ideas] into consideration and actually change it.”





## Background: Challenges of Policy Change

**B**efore we begin the “how to” portion of the guide, let’s consider the context of making policy change in mental health and other human services, especially when the change is led by youth and young adult organizations. Several challenges may be important.

### Skepticism about young people’s ability to change policy

Youth and young adults with mental health conditions may face a double whammy: “Young people,” AND “People with mental health challenges.” First, there may be doubt on the part of some service providers, families, legislators, and others about the ability of any young person to have important things to say about policy and to make good choices about their lives, simply because they are young. Second, family members, service providers and policy-makers may have concerns about the ability of people with mental health conditions to make appropriate decisions about how they want to plan and live their lives. So in addition to doing all the hard work involved in changing policy, you and your group must establish your credibility with partners and decision-makers and overcome the myths and stigma associated with having a serious mental health condition. Having young people involved in policy issues and policy change is relatively new in many states and communities, so gaining credibility and respect is often an ongoing challenge.

## Other challenges related to the way that services are organized and funded

When one part of the service system does not communicate regularly or well with other parts of the system (for example, mental health and child welfare, or different sections of the same system (e.g., adults or children), services are often referred to as “siloesd,” meaning that each piece of the system operates in its own separate world.

### Silos in services

Some (but not all) of the need for specialized transition services is created when the mental health systems and their funding streams are organized separately for children, youth, and adults. When these separate service systems and funding streams exist, the policies that authorize them are often not coordinated and may even have contradictory requirements. Also, although young adults are often involved with multiple systems such as mental health, physical health, child

welfare, juvenile or adult justice systems, education, employment, and many others – these systems often do not communicate easily with each other. The result is that youth, their families and their advocates end up trying to bridge gaps and coordinate resources. These silos also make it difficult to identify the source of troublesome policy-related issues.

### Challenges to changing mental health and other policies in existing rules about privacy and information sharing

Sometimes rules and requirements about privacy *may have the side effect of making communication and cooperation more difficult, even though they were established for good reasons – to protect people who use services.* Many service systems have laws and standards about issues such as confidentiality that may complicate sharing of information and resources. Examples include confidentiality requirements, laws and rules related to consent, and issues related to technology and social media.



## **Confidentiality**

Although rules about confidentiality exist to protect health and mental health care consumers from unwanted sharing of private information contained in their records, these rules may also slow down the exchange of information that could help coordinate services or prevent repeating the same information to each new service provider.


## **Consent**

Questions include who may or must give consent for treatment (youth and/or parents) and whether parents can be or must be notified when a young person receives services. The rules and laws about who must give consent for sharing of information vary with location, and with the particular issue.

## **Issues related to technology**

Compared to paper files, electronic health care records increase efficiency and access, but e-records carry their own risks (e.g., hackers or inadvertent electronic sharing).<sup>2</sup> In addition, many social media tools are available to health care professionals that can assist in the sharing of medical advances and procedures, but they also must be used wisely.<sup>3</sup> Technology use in the fields of mental health and social services may also lag behind at times – for example, some service agencies still prohibit texting between service providers and the people they serve, despite the preference of many young people for texting vs. email or telephone.

## Framework for Change: The Policy Cycle

The following sections of this guide provide information about how to get started on your policy change agenda, along with links to online guides that address policy change issues in detail. We have created a fictitious example about a Youth M.O.V.E. chapter that is working to get more and better peer support in its state. We call the peer support initiative “Building Peer Support,” or BUILD-PS for short. Throughout the rest of this guide the goal of increasing high quality peer support is used as an example to discuss policy change skills and strategies. Whenever we refer to this example, we will use this symbol so you know we are talking about this “made up” policy change effort: 

Following is some background information for the BUILD-PS example, and then we will turn to the topic of “how to change policy.”

### Peer support background

Although there is much enthusiasm for peer support as a helpful source of personal support, information and connections to needed resources, youth peer support is not available to all who might benefit from this service. A wide variety of policy-related issues may come together to restrict access to peer support, including:

- **Questions about the value of peer support among service providers and funders.** Youth M.O.V.E. National provides a review of the literature about youth peer-to-peer support that addresses some of these issues at <http://www.youthmovenational.org/images/downloads/YouthPeertoPeerLiteratureReviewFINAL.pdf>.<sup>4</sup>

Information about research on peer support is also available on the Pathways website<sup>5</sup> at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj-5-AMP-peer-support-faq.pdf> and at <https://pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/><sup>6</sup>

- **Not enough trained peer support providers.**  
There are numerous training materials and workshops about peer support provided by youth and young adults, but
  - » They are not available in all communities, and;
  - » There is not yet enough evaluation of how well they work. Some evaluation of peer support training for young people has been done in Australia<sup>7</sup> ([http://www.cyh.com/library/Mental\\_Health\\_Project.pdf](http://www.cyh.com/library/Mental_Health_Project.pdf));
- **Peer support is often provided by volunteers who have lived experience but who may not be trained or have access to supervision and support;**
- **Peer support services are better developed in the adult mental health field than for youth and**

**young adult services.** Sometimes mental health administrators assume that the roles and training for adult peer support specialists can be directly applied to youth and young adults;

- **Lack of funding.** The availability of funding for peer support differs from state-to-state and across communities. States vary in their investment in peer support as a service, and in how the state Medicaid plan and other sources of state or county funding are structured.

Developing more and better peer support resources may call for a change in one or more existing policies, or for a new policy. The following discussion of the steps in the policy process uses the BUILD-PS policy change example, and proposes some ideas about how to approach each step.

# BUILD-PS

**Peer Support** – Peer support services are a promising practice that is widely accepted by young people, and has received increasing attention and support in the mental health system in recent years. Peer support specialists are young people who have experienced mental health challenges, who have learned how to get the services they needed. Peer support specialists often help other youth and young adults set goals, and get the help and support they need. Peer support providers are often able to communicate with youth who have serious mental health conditions because of their own unique perspectives and life experiences. Peer support services are not formal mental health services, but they do help build a bridge to help young people get access to the professional help they need. There are not enough services in all states and communities because there are not enough trained youth peer support providers, and many states have not yet found ways to pay for this service.



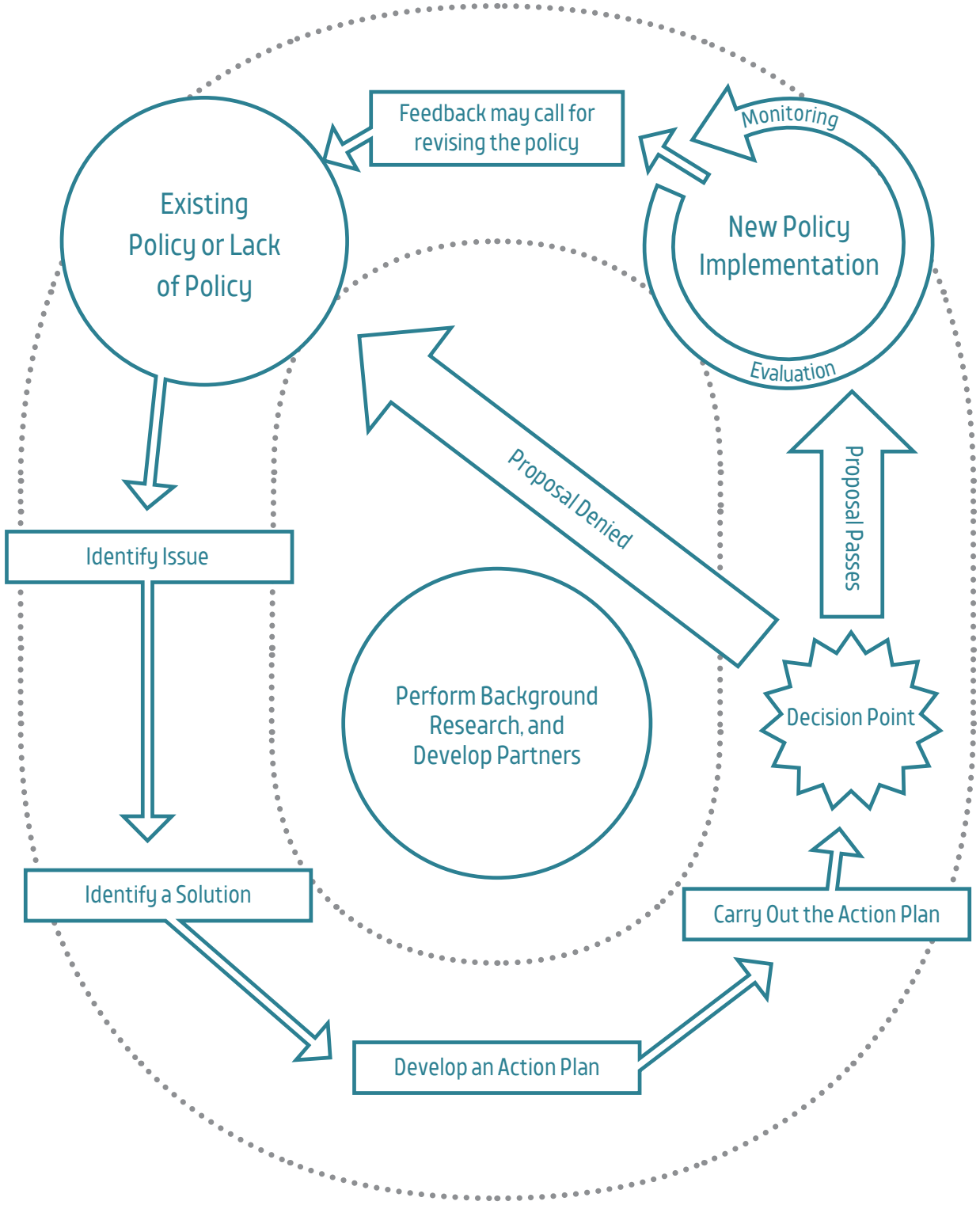
## Getting to Work: Using the Policy cycle to Make change

**M**any people working to change policy use some sort of policy “wheel,” or policy cycle as a mental guide for planning change. The idea of a policy cycle can be useful when you need to think about several steps in the policy change process at the same time.

Although the steps involved in changing policy are usually presented in an orderly fashion (A, B, C, D), in real life the actions taken in one step may overlap with others, or you may find that you are doing A, B, and D all at one time, or that the steps need to be done out of order. For example, as your group works to put together a clear statement of the policy issue you want to address, you may uncover solutions that are being tried in other places, or find out that others in your community or state are working on the same issue.

**Policy Cycle** – A framework (often presented as a picture, or diagram) that describes the steps involved in making policy change, and the process for getting there.<sup>8</sup> Our version of a policy cycle diagram is found on the following page in Figure 1.

# Figure 1. Policy Cycle Diagram



*If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.*

—Albert Einstein

## Steps in the policy change process

Reviewing the policy cycle diagram in Figure 1, the steps in the policy cycle are:

- **Defining an issue or problem** that you want to change;
- **Identifying a solution** that you want to propose, after considering several possibilities.
- **Developing an action plan**
  - » performing background research;
  - » making connections with partners;
  - » developing a strategy to move your proposed solution from a plan to reality.
- **Carrying out the action plan**, followed by a “decision point,” where the policy proposal is accepted or rejected.
- **Implementing the change.** The implementation phase comes after a policy change is approved (a legislative bill is passed, or a new regulation is written) and the new or changed policy is put into practice. Two important activities conducted during the implementation phase are monitoring and evaluation.

The following paragraphs contain a detailed description of the important tasks and activities for each step of the policy cycle.

## Identifying the problem or issue you want to address

Early activities in the “identifying the issue” phase include gathering input from young adults in your organization and others about issues that they see as important. Many chapters of Youth M.O.V.E. National have used *What Helps – What Harms* as a foundation for their policy work (<http://www.youthmovenational.org/what-helps-what-harms.html>).<sup>9</sup>

The quotes from Albert Einstein and Peter Drucker on this page emphasize the importance of *this step* – thinking carefully about the policy issue that your group might want to address. Once you have gathered information about many urgent issues, it is tempting to rush into action, looking for partners to help prepare and submit a proposal to administrators or legislators. However, achieving a clear definition of the issue that can be linked to feasible solutions is crucial because it serves as the foundation for all the next steps.

*The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong questions.*

—Peter Drucker





# STEPPING UP

“If you look at the Youth Move National website, you will see information about *What Helps What Harms*.... It really is a youth-driven needs assessment and environmental scan and it has worked beautifully here and in other places.”

“*What Helps What Harms* ... says you are asking people in all systems, all spectrums what is working, what is not working, what you feel you need in order to be successful... We address everything from violence, to racism, to mental health, to education, to community and safety ... It can be individualized by each community’s needs.”

Some ideas for getting started in defining the policy issue include:

- Viewing the situation with “new eyes,” (setting aside your own ideas, taking a fresh look);
- Considering the values and beliefs that are reflected in the definitions of the issues that you consider; and
- Thinking about what would happen if you do nothing (see PPA 670 Public Policy Analysis notes at <http://web.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa670/670intro.htm#670>).<sup>10</sup>

It is important to be alert to common pitfalls in policy issue definition. An example is defining the problem as the lack of a solution you have in mind (e.g., “we need more foster care,” vs. “parents are unable to provide their children with safe, nurturing environments”). The first definition calls for more foster care, but the second could lead to considering other alternatives such as support for struggling families. Other common traps are accepting other people’s definitions of the problem without carefully reviewing them, and looking for simple, obvious definitions. It is also important to pay attention to the political implications of the problem definition that you choose.

## ***Narrowing down the issues***

You may find yourself wanting to make many changes to the existing system. In the Stepping Up study, youth and young adults who had worked on policy change talked about the strategy of taking on one change at a time. This helps to focus effort, avoid confusion, and not mix together issues that might conflict, risking making no progress at all.



Participants in the “Stepping Up” study described how youth and young adults members of the youth organization were involved in clarifying policy issue:

“Every year, at one of our quarterly meetings ... we come up with a legislative agenda. [The members] throw out all the issues that have impacted their local chapters and say, ‘OK, what does your local chapter care about? What do you see as a lot of the issues surrounding your area?’ When we come up with that legislative agenda, we vote on it.”



If you are deciding between issues or wondering where to start within a complex issue, it may be helpful to use the Issue Checklist presented in Figure 2.<sup>11</sup> This checklist is intended to help you and your group compare different issues or problems that you are interested in so that you can narrow your focus down to one. Take a moment to think about how each issue fits the criteria and rank each criterion with “low, medium, or high.” A good issue will be rated high on many of the criteria and have few lows.

## Creating an issue statement

It is important to write a statement about what the policy issue is. Be specific. Make sure you include all of the things you wish to change and be as clear as possible so as to avoid misinterpretation. You and your group may want to work with partners to write the issue statement, which may eventually become a part of a larger policy statement.



## STEPPING UP

“In the ... Campaign ... we followed in a step by step order. There were certain things you had to do in order to get to our overall goal. It’s going to take more than 5 years to reach our overall goal, to change people’s minds.”



## BUILD-PS

The first **issue statement** drafted by the Building Peer Support workgroup was:

An issue with the mental health system is that there are not enough trained peer support specialists that are adequately utilized for their skills.

The BUILD-PS issue statement might seem like a good example at first glance. However, it illustrates the pit-



The following Issue Checklist was completed by the Building Peer Support workgroup. Two important issues, “lack of peer support,” and “forced medication and restraint,” are compared against the criteria for evaluating issues and making a decision about which policy to focus on.

## Figure 2: Checklist for Assessing and Comparing Policy Issues

Criteria: Will this issue...	Lack of Peer Support	Forced Medication and Restraint
Be felt by many people?	High	Low
Have broad support?	High	High
Be supported by data?	Medium	High
Be understood by youth?	High	High
Be understood by lawmakers?	Low-Medium	Medium-High
Respond to needs of youth?	High	High
Be achievable?	Medium	Medium
Help build alliances?	Medium	Medium
Have a clear timeframe?	Low	Low
Build youth leaders?	High	Medium
Be consistent with group values?	High	High

A blank copy of this worksheet can be found in Appendix A-1.

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>

One participant in the “Stepping Up” study reported that the results of a study helped them clarify the focus of policy change:

“The study was introduced to us by X Institute. ...[The study] found lots of kids who were automatically charged [in the justice system] as adults ... Once we figured out all the statistics, we decided to create our own campaign around the issue...”



fall noted earlier of defining the solution into the issue, explained by Bardach.<sup>12</sup> Defining the solution into the issue occurs when people who want to change policy believe that the problem is the lack of their proposed solution. Rather than leading with the solution, you and your group should develop a carefully defined issue. Then you will be ready to take the next step of searching for solutions.



## BUILD-PS

After thinking things through in our Building Peer Support workgroup, we realized that having peer support is part of the solution to a deeper issue. We went back to the drawing board and developed the following revised **issue statement**:

An important issue in the mental health system is that young people often do not feel comfortable talking with professionals – may not feel that they are

understood, or that they and the service providers communicate well. This can result in their staying away from services, leaving them isolated and afraid to reach out for help.

## Identifying a solution

After you and your group have agreed on a definition of the issue you plan to work on, the next step is to generate ideas about possible solutions, and decide which one(s) you want to pursue. If your issue is defined broadly you may find that there are several possible solutions. In this section you will find some guidance about how to generate possible solutions and choose among them.

Although members of your group might be eager to immediately begin solving the issue, it is important to generate several possible solutions, because the first solution that comes to mind might not be the best. Coming up with solutions will often be informed by your personal lived experience, and might involve

*Don't throw good ideas away until you've considered all your options.*

—Peter Drucker

thinking about what helped you or what you imagine would help you the most.

The next BUILD-PS example examines strategies for identifying a solution to the policy issue.



## BUILD-PS

*In the previous step, the Building Peer Support workgroup identified the issue we wanted to work on. In our search for solutions we identified three that might be helpful in reducing isolation and fear in the mental health system. Two of our solutions have to do with increasing or improving peer support. The other solution aims to increase providers' skills in working with youth and young adults.*

There are many ways to improve the system, but it is important to narrow your choices to 3–5 possible solutions.

The top three possibilities for the Building Peer Support group were:

1. **Training for peer delivered services.** More trained peer support specialists would increase the number of available peers who know how to work with young people who need assistance and support.
2. **Funding for peer support delivered services.** Training peer support specialists will not necessarily increase the number of paid positions.
3. **Training for professionals so they are more empathetic and effective with young people.** This approach would involve helping professionals be seen by youth and young adults as more helpful and approachable.

### *Picking the best solution*

Any of the solutions you generate might work to improve the issue, but your work will be more effective and streamlined if you focus on one solution at a time. Sometimes picking the best solution to work with can be difficult. The SMART model<sup>11</sup> may help you decide which solution you should choose. The SMART model is a popular approach used in business and project planning.

The SMART Model emphasizes solutions that are specific, measurable, realistic, and timely:

- **Specific:** The solution clearly states what needs to change. It does not use confusing language that can be interpreted differently by different people. It is simple to understand and leaves no grey areas.

- **Measurable:** You should be able to measure the effect of your solution. Quantitative change might be the number of peer support specialists in an agency or an increase in the number of young people who seek services or return after the first visit. Qualitative change might be higher morale of peer support specialists in an agency, or increased satisfaction of the young people who receive peer support services.
- **Achievable:** This criterion emphasizes the feasibility of the solution – can it be done? Is success likely?
- **Realistic:** This area also addresses achievability, and asks whether the solution and related objectives are set so that they are not too high, or would be too expensive. For example, it may be more realistic to seek local rather than national change.
- **Timely:** Timeliness refers both to the idea that the solution “fits” with other developments, and is not seen as either out-of-date or premature. Timely also refers to the need to set a timeframe for accomplishing the objectives related to the solution.

The SMART Solutions Worksheet in Figure 3 may be helpful in comparing possible solutions. Write each possible solution in a column, and then rank each as low, medium, or high according to the SMART criteria. (See Appendix A for a blank SMART worksheet; a digital SMART worksheet can also be downloaded at: <http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>).

### Writing a solution statement

After you and your group have considered each of the possible solutions using the SMART model you should have a better understanding of the one you would like to work with.



## BUILD-PS

*From our example you can see how “funding for peer support delivered services” has 3 of 5 possible high ratings. In addition, discussions with state level mental health personnel suggested that increased funding may be achievable.*

*The next step is to create a solution statement. The solution statement developed by the Building Peer Support workgroup was:*

*“The goal is increased funding for peer support services. Increased availability of peer support services will help young people with mental health conditions feel comfortable in seeking services, and will promote their willingness to work with professionals. The objectives include (1) helping young people feel that they are understood, that they and the service providers communicate well; (2) encouraging young people to enter or continue services; (3) helping young people form connections with other young people in similar circumstances and encouraging them to reach out for help.”*

You may also want to add a few sentences briefly addressing each of the SMART criteria (*Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely*) as supporting information in the solution statement.



The Building Peer Support problem statement was used to complete the SMART Solutions Worksheet below, (“An issue in the mental health system is that young people often do not feel comfortable talking with professionals – may not feel that they are understood, or that they and the service providers communicate well. This can result in their staying away from services, leaving them isolated and afraid to reach out for help”).

## Figure 3: SMART Solutions Worksheet: Building Peer Support Example

SMART Criteria	Solution 1: Training for peer support delivered services	Solution 2: Funding for peer support delivered services	Solution 3: Training for professionals
Specific	Medium	High – Easy to set specific goal	Medium
Measurable	Medium – Can count # of trainings, or satisfaction, but harder to measure outcomes.	High	Medium – Can count # of trainings, or satisfaction, but harder to measure outcomes.
Achievable	Medium	High	Medium
Realistic	Medium	Medium	Low – Incentives for service providers to get training are unclear.
Timely	Medium	Medium – Need is great, and other states have taken similar steps, but high state budget deficit is problem.	Low

A blank copy of this worksheet can be found in Appendix A-2.

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>

## Developing an action plan

The first step in developing your action plan is to gather information about your change goal (solution). One approach is to brainstorm about the kinds of information you need, and then make a plan about how you will gather this information. Sources of information for your research may include both written documents (library research, internet articles and reports), and information provided by people who have expertise and experience in the area (you may want to do personal or telephone interviews). In addition to the current situation, you may want to know about efforts that others have made in the past, as well as any plans to address your issue in the future. Many guides to brainstorming can be found online, e.g., [http://www.delcaps.org/beta/wp-content/uploads/Brainstorming\\_step.pdf](http://www.delcaps.org/beta/wp-content/uploads/Brainstorming_step.pdf)<sup>13</sup>



### BUILD-PS

*Members of the Building Peer Support workgroup threw out many ideas about what we needed to know. After 30 minutes of listing all the possible information needs we could think of, we identified four important questions as a place to begin:*

1. What does the state Medicaid plan say about peer support provided by youth or young adults? Can youth peer support currently be paid for with Medicaid funds? If not, how can the Medicaid plan be changed?

2. Are there any youth peer support programs in our state? Do they involve any paid peer support jobs?
3. Is there training for youth peer support specialists in our state? Who does the training? Does the training qualify young people for paid peer support roles?
4. What is happening in other states around the country? Are there places where youth- or young-adult peer support is well accepted and funded?

## Identify possible sources of information

Follow the same process to brainstorm about people and organizations who may have the information that you need. In addition to creating lots of ideas, brainstorming will help to identify members of your group who have contacts or skills that may be useful.



### BUILD-PS

*In our Building Peer Support workgroup we identified people in the state Office of Mental Health and people and agencies that currently provide youth peer support training, and also found some job postings online for peer support specialists.*



When you have finished gathering each round of information, summarize the information that various members have collected and decide on next steps. Does what you learned change your goals or timelines in any way? Is the issue still manageable, or do you need to choose a smaller part of it as a place to begin?



## BUILD-PS

*In our Building Peer Support workgroup, we learned that there are several existing peer support training programs, and some peer support specialist jobs advertised on the internet. We also learned that the state Medicaid Waiver that allows peer support services for adults to be paid for is in effect for the next 12 months. Any changes would need to be included in the next application to the Federal Office of Medicaid Services, and must be prepared during the next 8 months. This helped us figure out what our timeline for action needed to be.*

### **Identify potential partners**

Partners are people and organizations who support your issue and share your goals. Some of them may help in your efforts to change policy or they may already be working on a related issue. It is possible that

some of the people/organizations you contact when you are gathering information may be interested in joining your change effort. In addition, as your action plan takes shape, you may want to identify particular skills, key agencies, or individuals (champions) who care about your cause, and can help make change. Partners identified in the “Stepping Up” study included a community college, state child welfare administrators, adult board members who were attorneys who could help draft legislation, private agencies devoted to improving the lives of children and families, and coalitions of agencies interested in juvenile justice reform.

You can also use the Action Plan Worksheet to keep track of contacts with potential partners (Who will approach them? What are our target dates, etc.)? A blank copy of the Action Plan Worksheet is provided in Appendix A-3 and at this link: <https://www.pathways-rtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>.



## STEPPING UP

*“We looked at what other states had done. We had a lot of help from Casey Family Programs and their policy department. They had given us a lot of resources and information about other states. ...They showed us some of the research that backed up why [extended care] was important.”*



*It may be useful for you and your group to use the Action Plan Worksheet to organize your information. Instructions for completing this worksheet are included in Appendix A-3.*

## Figure 4: Action Plan Worksheet

Action steps	Who will do it?	By when?	Comments
<p><b>Gather information about the state Medicaid plan as possible source of funding for peer support.</b> Find out what the state Medicaid plan says about peer support, what is funded now? How can plan be changed?</p>	Nancy R. will get in touch with Michelle Assam, who handles adult services at Office of Mental Health and Addictions (OMA), including peer support services.	By next meeting, in 1 week	<p>Nancy will also ask Michelle for ideas for who in OMA might be interested in youth peer support.</p> <p>Ask for documents, links to online information</p>
<p><b>Learn about existing youth peer support programs – what is training, how are they funded?</b> Contact Mental Health America Oregon (MHAO). They have a youth and young adult peer mentor training program.</p>	John M. will talk with his friend at MHAO and ask where their funding is from, and how/where trainees find paid jobs.	By next meeting, in 1 week	MHAO might be potential ally and partner; John will explore.
<p><b>Learn about existing youth peer...</b> Follow up on advertised peer support positions on the internet, learn about how they are funded.</p>	Sherry L. will get in touch with agencies that advertise these peer support positions.	2 weeks	Start with internet pages mentioned at this meeting. John M. will email list of links.
<p><b>Learn about existing youth peer...</b> Oregon Family Support Network (www.ofsn.org).</p>	Need volunteer, please.		

*A blank copy of this worksheet can be found in Appendix A-3*

*Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>*



## STEPPING UP

“I would say that we would not have been able to do any of this without the support of [partner group] because it is such a heavy lift to even organize an advocacy day, and meet with legislators and handle the logistics of something like that.”

### *Identify people who can make the change you want*

Figuring out who has the authority to make the change that you want will vary according to your change strategy. If the policy change requires getting legislation passed, then the “deciders” are members of the state legislature. If the change can be accomplished within existing policy, but will involve changes in state or local agency rules and regulations, then state agency or local administrators will need to be convinced that your ideas have merit. In some instances, they may already agree with your goals, and become partners in the change effort. In the “Stepping Up” study, this was the case for several youth groups.

### *Develop a strategy to reach your goal*

You’ve accomplished a lot so far! You have defined the issue that you want to address and can write or talk about it in clear, concise terms. You have considered several solutions, and have chosen one to focus your change efforts on. You have pulled together and summarized information about your solution

and made adjustments where necessary. You and your group have identified potential partners and others who have skills or additional information that might be useful. And now you know which people and organizations have the power and authority to make the change that you want.

The last step in your action plan is to develop an overall strategy about how you are going to accomplish your goal. This strategy should identify where to begin, designate who in your group will take responsibility for various tasks such as communication and relationship-building with partners, and should also include actions that partners have done, or have agreed to take. The strategy for each group will differ depending on the issue, the proposed solution, the partnerships that are formed, and the access that you and your partners have to people that have the authority to make change. Your strategy should also reflect the values that your group holds about how to bring about change (e.g., confrontation vs. cooperation). Figure 5 shows an example of overall change strategy.

### *Carrying out the action plan*

This process involves thinking strategically and following the steps your group has laid out. Before discussing various activities involved in the action plan, let’s focus on sharing the story of your lived experience within the mental health system. This process is unique to young people who have mental health conditions and comes with both risks and benefits.

### *Strategic Sharing*

One of the most powerful advocacy tools you can use is personal storytelling. When you use real stories from



Our Building Peer Support Workgroup developed a strategy statement that summarizes the issue, the proposed solution, and some steps that need to be taken to accomplish our goals. The overall change strategy below is designed to fit on one page and be used as both an information tool and as a way to recruit members interested in policy change.

## Figure 5: Overall change strategy worksheet

Increasing the Availability of Peer Support	
Issue Statement:	<b>Young people with mental health conditions often do not feel comfortable talking with professionals</b> – may not feel that they are understood, or that they and the service providers communicate well. <b>This can result in their staying away from services, leaving them isolated and afraid to reach out for help.</b>
Proposed Solution:	<b>Increase funding for peer support services.</b> Peer support services are readily accepted by many youth and young adults with mental health conditions. Adequate funding is needed to increase the number of well-trained youth peer support specialists, provide for appropriate supervision and support, and pay for peer support services within the behavioral health system.
How can we reach the solution?	<b>Youth peer support services needs to be added to existing legislation</b> about “Traditional Health Workers,” which will make their services reimbursable under the state’s behavioral health services.
Who has the authority to make change?	<b>This will require legislative action</b> (next legislative session begins in January of next year).
How will this bill be written?	<b>Staff in the state Office of Mental Health have agreed to prepare the language for the bill.</b>
Is there likely to be resistance?	<b>Push back might come from three sources:</b> (1) legislators concerned about costs might resist any new services; (2) behavioral health organizations might be cautious about peer services, and worry that having youth on their staff might cause additional work; (3) Individual mental health providers might see peer support as a challenge to their expertise or have concerns about the quality or appropriateness of such services.
What will the role of our group be with the legislature?	Members of our board and state mental personnel agree that youth voice will be very important in getting this bill passed. <b>We will prepare members of our group to testify in committee hearings (how a bill gets passed, how to tell our stories effectively, how to dress). We will also organize and prepare members to testify and provide transportation and support (e.g., per diem for meals, help with child care).</b>
What other things need to be done?	(1) <b>Make sure that the public is aware of this potential new service</b> (develop a media strategy, perhaps organize informational panels, try to get on local talk shows). (2) <b>Develop a plan to deal with concerns of behavioral health professionals and organizations.</b> To be figured out. One idea is to develop a panel including youth, peer support services, peer support specialists, family members, and mental health professionals who have had positive experiences with peer support, and invite service providers. (3) <b>Be sure that the bill includes requirements and resources for implementation of the policy.</b>
Who are our group’s contacts for this policy?	Mary Jo Johnson, legislative liaison (phone numbers, email address). Jim Latterly, youth voice organizer (phone, email). Larry Larson, logistics (phone, email)
When does the policy committee meet?	Monday evenings 6–8:30 pm at the Northville Community Center, 11473 W. Chesapeake St., Marysworth, MZ. EVERYONE IS WELCOME! Pizza and salad 6:00–6:45. Work groups meet 7–8:30. See our Facebook page (FB link) for weekly updates.

A blank copy of this worksheet can be found in Appendix A-4

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>

### **Strategic Sharing –**

*A method of telling your story safely and effectively in order to achieve a goal. Basically, it's a process for sharing your lived experience with others in a manner that keeps you safe from negative experiences, and that teaches you how to share in a way that will help you reach the end result that you are aiming for (p. 5, Strategic Sharing Workbook, 2012).*

your lived experiences, you share practical insight into the way the mental health system works and how the experience feels to consumers. The skills involved in strategic sharing need to be mastered before you start to advocate so that you can protect yourself from stigmatization, exploitation, and re-traumatization. Preparation will also help you make sure that your story has maximum impact, and will not be taken out of context, or misunderstood.

One resource to help you and your group prepare to tell your experiences in public is *The Strategic Sharing Workbook*.<sup>14</sup> (<https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbStrategicSharingGuide.pdf>). This workbook will lead you and your group through exercises to clarify your reasons for talking publicly about your lived experience. It will also help you identify the risks and learn about practical ideas about how to package aspects of your story so that you will avoid potential risks. You may be asked some difficult questions when you speak in public and this workbook helps you anticipate these questions and develop strategies for deflecting them.

Three important activities will help you carry out your Action Plan. These are 1) informing the community about the issue and your solution, 2) influencing decision makers to support your solution, and 3) working with partner organizations and groups. You and your group may also need to learn or improve skills in each of these three areas. It takes time and experience to get good at policy change, so don't expect to be able to do everything well immediately.

### **Inform the community about your policy issue**

This set of activities involves giving information to community members about the policy issue and the proposed solution that you are working on. Ways to inform the community include preparing an "elevator speech," engaging the media, and speaking to community groups. One youth-led group in the Stepping Up study sent regular email updates to interested community members and partners.

**Write an elevator speech.** A tool that will help you be ready for any opportunity to inform the community is



## **STEPPING UP**

**"We use the Strategic Sharing model ... so I am trained to facilitate that, and we have some seasoned members who have been through it a lot of times and can train as well."**

**Elevator Speech – A short explanation of your ideas in the time frame it takes to ride in the elevator with someone (30 seconds to 2 minutes).**

the elevator speech. The purpose of the elevator speech is to gain interest from the people around you, without taking a lot of their time. It will also come in handy when you have the opportunity to speak at a community meeting

A good elevator speech allows you to quickly describe the problem, how it affects young people like yourself, and your group's idea for a solution. It should be five or six sentences long and written in clear declarative sentences. Be sure to prepare a written electronic copy of your elevator speech so that you can paste it into an email quickly. Ask the members of your group to use similar elevator speeches so that you present a unified public message.



## BUILD-PS

### *Sample elevator speech:*

- Hello, my name is Joe and I am a member of Youth M.O.V.E. Even though serious mental health conditions touch all parts of our community, they often appear when people are in their late teens.

- Some young people say that when they have a mental health appointment they don't feel understood and often don't go back again.
- Peer Support is one promising approach to help these young people. In the Peer Support model young adults who have faced the same things give person-to-person support and help young people connect to services. We need more of them!
- My group is working on Senate Bill 222 to increase the number of Peer Support Specialists and be sure they are properly trained.
- This brochure has more information about peer support, Senate Bill 222 and contact information for my group, Youth M.O.V.E.
- Thanks for listening!

**Engage with the media.** The best way to reach a lot of people at once is through the media. When we think of media we usually think of local newspapers and local radio or television stations. It can be hard to get the attention of these forms of media unless you are working on a policy problem that involves an immediate community crisis. You will have the best chance of getting your story covered if you present a clear interesting story with strong human interest. It will also pay off to build good relationships with reporters and



# STEPPING UP

“[If] no one knows your story, no one can fight your story. I think ... people getting the knowledge of what it is like to be in the system is the most valuable part.”

“We have people in the media who talk to us about how to ... talk to the media. After we finish testifying, there could be a reporter wanting to talk to you. ...So we get ... a lot of great feedback and advice from people that ... want to share their knowledge and expertise with us.”

“She hears our stories, and sometimes she says, ‘Look, I’m going to write you guys a bill.’ She is this kind of no-nonsense kind of legislator. She hears stories and she [says], ‘I want to fix that.’”

be available when they ask questions or need a comment. Don’t overlook other forms of media such as your group’s website, Facebook page, blogs or other electronic media. For more information about working with the media, see *Teens on Target Advocacy Guide*, [http://www.youthalive.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/TNT\\_advocacy\\_manual-2001.pdf](http://www.youthalive.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/TNT_advocacy_manual-2001.pdf) (p. 14-17)<sup>15</sup>

**Speak to community groups.** The purpose of speaking to community groups is to provide information and encourage a healthy discussion of your proposal. You will be able to sharpen your message once you understand what may be unclear or confusing to community members. People need to be feel free to challenge your ideas and offer different solutions. This will help your group identify any resistance that you may face and develop counter arguments when needed. You may want to inform the general community where you live, (neighbors, school leaders, business owners, religious groups, and police) or to educate a targeted group of people (young people and their families, mental health providers, or university faculty). Your Action Plan will guide you to know which community groups are most important to your proposed change. These are the kinds of people that should be easy to get in touch with, although they may not agree with your message. Getting close to the community means actively reaching out to individuals and groups and having conversations with them about your policy concerns. Identify and plan to attend meetings of any relevant community group. Some community meetings have an open agenda and will allow you to speak briefly at the end of the meeting. For other groups, you will need to approach the chair ahead of time and ask for time on the agenda. It’s important to be brief and clear about what you want the group to do.





### **Influence decision makers**

Identifying the people who will make the decision about your proposed policy change will depend on the level of policy you are working on (local, state, federal). Your Action Plan should have a clear statement about which decision makers are key to getting the change you want. Usually, decisions makers are elected officials at federal, state or local levels; state or county employees who manage mental health and social services, or the leadership of an agency or school.

**Meet with decision makers.** You may be eager to set up a meeting with one or more influential leaders. Before you set up that appointment, make sure that you have a clearly written document to give to the people you are meeting and that you have developed support in the community and with other advocacy groups. It sometimes helps to send a short statement along with your request for an appointment so that the decision maker will know what organization you represent and what you want to talk about.

Although some youth and young adult groups have great relationships and direct access to administrators and legislators, don't be surprised if a decision maker refuses to make an appointment to meet you or sets a meeting time months away. Often you will be given an appointment with an aide or staff person, rather than the decision maker. Take that opportunity to educate one more person about the change that is needed and ask them to pass the information along.

For more information about how to prepare for and conduct a meeting with a decision maker, see Friday Night Live, *Guide to Engaging Youth in Policy Change*<sup>16</sup> (<http://www.fridaynightlive.org/wp-content/uploads/FNL-policy-toolkit-v3.pdf>)

**Provide testimony.** If you are trying to change a law, or get a new one passed, one of the most influential things you can do to persuade lawmakers is to provide testimony during a legislative hearing. Your purpose is



## **STEPPING UP**

“During [legislative] sessions we send an email out every week ... to keep people up to date with ... what they can do to help the campaign. During the summer we sent out an alert every month to keep people up to date with what's happened. In December into January, we use it as a way to educate people on the new piece of legislation...”



to illustrate the problem and solution at a human level in order to influence their thinking.

A “hearing” usually occurs at a legislative committee meeting after a proposed bill has been assigned to that committee. For more details about the legislative process, see *Youth Voice in Policy: A Guide to Shaping History*<sup>17</sup> (<https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbYouthVoiceInPolicy.pdf>)

Providing testimony is a formal procedure and rules will vary from state to state. If you are allowed to give oral testimony, you will probably be given a set time, often a few minutes, to speak. Be respectful of your speaking time, and thank the lawmakers for allowing



## STEPPING UP

“In addition to legislative hearings, we did information hearings everywhere, to talk about the broader issues, which included education and homelessness and housing.”

you to speak. Often you will be asked to submit a written copy of your oral comments.

Sometimes the legislative committee that is conducting the hearing will only accept written testimony. In this case your group will want to take time to carefully prepare the written document and ask others to give you feedback before submitting it. Again, written testimony is often restricted to a few pages and



## STEPPING UP

“...The connection with the Secretary of DCF — it has been a tradition. We have breakfast and dinner or lunch with the secretary. Some of us have his personal number and are friends on Facebook.”

should give a clear but brief description of your group, what the problem is, how it affects young adults like yourself, what you want to be done, and how your proposal will improve things.

For more tips about providing oral or written testimony, see *Advocacy Toolkit, Testifying before Policy Makers*<sup>18</sup> ([https://www.acteonline.org/advocacy\\_testifying/#.V5pszPkrLcs](https://www.acteonline.org/advocacy_testifying/#.V5pszPkrLcs)).

### **Work with partners**

As a part of your Action Plan, you identified other advocacy groups or organizations that are working on the same policy problem or who have interests similar to those of your group. As you carry out your Action Plan, it is important to maintain good working relationships with these groups. Once you have developed a clear statement of your proposed solution, share it with these partners and get feedback from them. Determine whether they can support your proposed policy change as you have stated it or whether they have different ideas. Be sure to continue to communi-

cate with them about your progress and any changes that you might make in the proposed new policy.

If you and your partners agree on the problem and the policy solution, there are several things that you might do together. You might issue a jointly written policy brief that clearly states the issues and shows that all the participating groups and organizations are on board. It can also be very powerful to give joint testimony at a hearing. You and your partners can write the testimony together and sign it, with one person making the oral presentation if allowed. Another activity is to convene a joint public meeting or panel discussion. You and your partners sponsor this event together showing that you all support the same proposal, while at the same time providing an opportunity to give information and encourage public debate. Working effectively with other advocacy groups will extend your group's reach and give it more influence. For more examples about how partnerships work as well as other resources, check out *Community Tool Box, 1. Creating and Maintaining Partnerships*<sup>19</sup> (<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships>).

## Decision point

This step in the policy cycle occurs when the people who have the authority and responsibility to make policy decisions *act* on the policy agenda that you have worked so hard to promote. Although you and your partners in the policy change effort may work up to the last minute to convince legislators or other “deciders” that the policy change is a good one, at the point of decision all you can do is wait and see what is decided.



# STEPPING UP

“We had youth testify. That is when I think we started to see the change, where people saw the impact of youth coming in, talking about experiencing homelessness and some of the more long-term impact and then for us to come in and back it up with research.”

“Representative X spoke to us ... at the advocacy convening and he said ... ‘you guys have to come talk to us because we have no idea what you have been through. You have to talk to legislators so we actually know what is going on. All we see is numbers on paper.’”

“...We were huge partners with a community college. Their staff had experience with foster care. ...They had just been working with a Commissioner around housing for foster youth at the college. That kind of converged at the same time as [our policy change]. So they were coming down and testifying in support of [our] bill and sharing their experience.”



The decision point could be a vote (in the state legislature, or by county or city officials), a judicial decision, or final rules adopted by the executive staff of an agency). If the decision is a “thumbs down,” then the effort to change this policy in this particular way has not succeeded, and you and your partners will probably want to review what happened, and decide how to move forward. For example, you may see that while most people understood the problem or issue, and agreed that change was needed, the solution that was proposed was seen as unrealistic (e.g., too expensive or too difficult to implement), or was opposed by influential people who had access to the decision-makers. If this is the case, a new action plan for re-addressing the issue in next year’s session should start right away.



## BUILD-PS

*Unfortunately, the proposal developed and presented by the Building Peer Support workgroup and our partners was not adopted by the legislature. However, it was favorably received by many lawmakers, and we were told that the tight fiscal climate was the main reason that it was not approved. We plan to work with our partners to prepare a revised proposal for the next legislative session, and also to work with advisors in the state mental health department to prepare a budget estimate that will be seen as more realistic by lawmakers. We are disappointed, but not discouraged. We think we did very well on our first policy change attempt.*

If the decision is “thumbs up” (YES!), you can celebrate your success so far, but you and other advocates are entering the crucial and sometimes slippery implementation phase.



## Implementation

**T**he implementation phase is when the new law, rule, or procedure is “rolled out,” and new services or practices begin, or undesirable practices are stopped. The implementation process is very important and demanding. To be successful the implementation process must have sufficient resources (money, time, and training) to support the change effort, and these resources should be built into the change proposal. It is essential to pay close attention to both the *process* of implementation and the *outcomes* of policy change. A focus on process addresses questions such as “Did the training that was called for in the legislation happen as planned?”, or “Was there an organized way to communicate to everyone involved what the change was supposed to be and what their role was?”

A focus on the *outcome* of the policy change addresses the question, “Did the policy change produce the results that we expected?” If the policy did not achieve what your group wanted, the policy cycle may need to begin all over again. If it was well implemented, but the results you expected didn’t happen perhaps the solution you chose was not on target. Your group may need to rethink the definition of the issue, and perhaps look for new possible solutions. If the new policy was poorly or partially implemented, no one will know whether the new policy was a good idea or not.

Some of the participants in “Stepping Up” reported that they were very involved in implementation either through serving on committees that worked out the details of implementation, or through directly being a part of the implementation process. Other groups reported that they had little or no direct involvement in implementation.



## STEPPING UP

“...When the state was getting ready to actually roll [the policy change] out ... they ... ran that policy by us first. We got to be part of that process ... making sure that it is the language we agreed with, we agreed with the process of how it worked or what would happen. We were involved from the very beginning to the very end.”

### Monitoring

Monitoring the process of implementation will clarify whether the policy was implemented the way it was supposed to be. Approaches to monitoring can be either formal (e.g., checklists, review of statistics from databases, regular meetings with agency and administrative personnel), or use informal means such as conversations with individuals and groups affected by the policy to gather information about how the implementation process is going, and to follow-up with decision-makers and administrators to be sure they are aware of any implementation issues.



## STEPPING UP

“...Right now we are working on the implementation process and finding out whether it is really happening. We hear sometimes, ‘Hey, it is happening,’ and sometimes not.”

### Evaluation

Sometimes evaluation of a new or changed policy involves research by an outside body (often a university or private contractor) but it can also consist of collecting observations and information that young people and their partners make, or collecting and organizing informal feedback. In the “Stepping Up” study, only one of the new policies had a formal evaluation attached to it.



## STEPPING UP

“Having youth involved in evaluation projects to guide the work that you need to do in your community and evaluating yourself and opening up that feedback loop... : I wish we had a better process for it because most of it [feedback] just comes in the form of complaints.”

## conclusion

**T**his guide to policy change provides groups and organizations of youth and young adults challenged by mental health conditions with basic information about changing policies that are important to their success and well-being. We prepared this manual leaning heavily on the wisdom of young adult participants in the “Stepping Up” study and their adult allies. They identified several “ingredients for success” as fundamental to successful policy change and also made direct recommendations to other young adult-led groups about the challenges and successes they encountered in their policy work. Because many of the ingredients for success and recommendations overlap, we have combined and summarized some of the main points here.

### Youth voice

Participants in the “Stepping Up” study were unanimous in their conviction that youth input and involvement is central to successful policy change. In addition to emphasizing the weight and authenticity contributed by youth experiences and insights about system and policy issues, nearly all of the groups in the study had developed ways to get input from a wide network of youth and young adults in their states and communities. Several groups held state-wide conferences or other gatherings where policy concerns were gathered, summarized and shaped into a policy agenda. Other groups of young people were organized geographically, by county or section of a state. These groups of youth and/or

young adults met regularly, and then sent summaries of the issues or problems they discussed to a central location such as a statewide youth organization or a less formal group of youth and young adults.

change. Here we use the term “partners” to include a number of different people and organizations:

- Important decision-makers, or *champions such as legislators*;
- Supportive administrators and service providers working in mental health or other systems;
- Organizations that support youth- and young adult-led groups by handling funds, and providing administrative structure and support;
- Other community groups who are allies.

These partners played a variety of roles, including preparing draft language for legislative bills, identifying legislators who were in agreement with the change agenda, providing information and support to the youth group, and giving testimony in support of the proposed change.



## STEPPING UP

“Trust that stories are really crucial to any piece of legislation that you are passing, whether it is higher education, health education, financial literacy ... and the stories and the hardships and adversities of the youth.”

### Partnerships

Although this policy guide is addressed to youth and young-adult groups and organizations, it is important to note that no youth-led group in the “Stepping Up” study was completely responsible for all aspects of the successful policy change effort. In some cases, young people initiated a policy effort by identifying an issue and then finding supportive partners. In other cases, a youth-led group was invited to help with an ongoing change project by providing testimony, attending legislative hearings, or speaking to community groups. Regardless of the place in the policy cycle where partnerships were formed, representatives of youth-led organizations emphasized the importance of partnerships in promoting and achieving policy



## STEPPING UP

“Youth-adult partnerships — that is what made us a success. The adults really need to embrace the value added of young people and what they can contribute, whether they have a formal education or not, but really understand their actual lived experience and how that can help you create better services and better quality programs.”



## STEPPING UP

“...We always, always, always prep them before meetings ... Sometimes that will look like us gathering a group of them ... and talking about what they can expect and maybe talking points of what things they think need to be changed.”



## STEPPING UP

“We have had legislators fall asleep on our youth, or legislators who say, I don’t want to hear your story and then start talking about other stuff. ... We were prepared for those kinds of situations.”

### Prepare for the work

This recommendation includes providing information about the legislative process and helping peers understand and practice strategic sharing as they prepare to tell their stories. Study participants also underlined the importance of anticipating and preparing for resistance to their ideas and goals.



## STEPPING UP

“...Something we have learned over the years is that there are some tough subjects. ... We didn’t say [fix everything at once]. That is why it took us several years to get that bill passed. It didn’t happen in one legislative session.”



the eventual payoffs. Study participants also provided examples of how resistance to policy change efforts can be addressed by focusing on one issue at a time.

Youth-led organizations are challenged by a changing membership as experienced members move out of the group to take on other adult roles and responsibilities. As new members come in there is a continuing need to provide information, training, and support to members engaged in policy work.

For youth and young adult-led organizations who want to begin policy change efforts as well as those with more experience, the information provided in this guide will serve as a foundation for getting started. The guide also contains many references to written material and links to information on the internet that give more detailed information than we are able to include here. Links to many resources are included in the pages of this Guide and in the Endnotes. In Appendix B the References are presented in



## STEPPING UP

“There was one ... lawmaker [who] wouldn’t let the bill out of committee. ...We couldn’t figure out why for a long time. ...Finally I got a meeting with him...we had a heart-to-heart talk and after that he passed the bill out of committee. He is on our side now, willing to support our issues.”

alphabetical order. Contact information for “Stepping Up” study participants who have agreed to share their knowledge and wisdom about policy change is located in Appendix C.

# Endnotes

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# **Appendix A**

# **worksheets**

# Appendix A-1: Checklist for Assessing and Comparing Policy Issues

Write in Issues 1, 2, and 3 in the light gray boxes. Rate criteria for each issue as "High," "Medium," or "Low."

	Issue 1:	Issue 2:	Issue 3:
Criteria: Will this issue...			
Be important to many people?			
Have broad support?			
Be supported by data?			
Be understood by youth?			
Be understood by lawmakers?			
Respond to needs of youth?			
Be achievable?			
Help build alliances?			
Have a clear timeframe?			
Build youth leaders?			
Be consistent with group values?			

Adapted from *The Policy Project Advocacy Guide*, 1999, p. 225.

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>

# Appendix A-2: SMART Solutions Worksheet

Write in solutions 1, 2, and 3 in the light gray boxes. Rate criteria for each solution as "High," "Medium," or "Low."

	Solution 1:	Solution 2:	Solution 3:
SMART Criteria			
Specific			
Measurable			
Achievable			
Realistic			
Timely			

*Adapted from the Policy Project Advocacy Guide*

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>

# Appendix A-3: Action Plan Worksheet

List actions and assignments on the Action Steps Worksheet shown below (What needs to be done? Who will do it? Include due date, date completed, and comments, such as contact information, or useful tips).

Timeline (dates from ___ / ___ / _____ to ___ / ___ / _____)				
Action steps	Who will do it?	By when?	Completed (Date)	Comments

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>

# Appendix A-4: Overall Change Strategy Worksheet

Increasing the Availability of Peer Support	
Issue Statement:	
Proposed Solution:	
How can we reach the solution?	
Who has the authority to make change?	
How will this bill be written?	
Is there likely to be resistance?	
What will the role of our group be with the legislature?	
What other things need to be done?	
Who are our group's contacts for this policy?	
When does the policy committee meet?	

Download this worksheet at <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>



# Appendix B

# References

# Appendix B: References

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# **Appendix C**

## **contact information**

# Appendix C: Stepping Up – Contact Information (Study of youth/young adult organizations involved in policy change)

## Facing Foster Care in Alaska

Amanda Metivier, Board of Directors

☎ 907-230-8237

✉ [info@ffcalaska.org](mailto:info@ffcalaska.org)

📶 <http://www.ffcalaska.org>

f <https://www.facebook.com/Facing-Foster-Care-in-Alaska-212254522179180>

## Florida Youth Shine

Geori Berman, FYS Coordinator

✉ [Geori.berman@floridaschildrenfirst.org](mailto:Geori.berman@floridaschildrenfirst.org)

📶 <http://www.floridayouthshine.org>

f <https://facebook.com/FloridaYouthShine>

## Youth M.O.V.E. Maine\*

Brie Masselli (*\*only for information about policy change in Maine that was the focus in the Stepping Up study. Brie is now with Youth M.O.V.E. National as Director of Technical Assistance and Evaluation.*)

☎ 202-808-3922

☎ 1-800-580-6199, X104

✉ [bmasselli@youthmovenational.org](mailto:bmasselli@youthmovenational.org)

📶 <http://youthmovenational.org>

f <https://facebook.com/youthmovenational>

## Youth M.O.V.E. Maine (for ongoing YM Maine activities)

Mackenzie Harris, Program Manager

☎ 207-740-5473

✉ [mharris@youthmovemaine.org](mailto:mharris@youthmovemaine.org)

📶 <http://www.youthMOVEmaine.org>

f <https://www.facebook.com/youthmovemaine>

## Just Kids, program of Community Law in Action, MD

Corryne Deliberto, Executive Director, CLIA (umbrella organization for "Just Kids")

✉ [corryne@cliayouth.org](mailto:corryne@cliayouth.org)

📶 <http://cliayouth.org>

f <https://www.facebook.com/cliayouth>

## Bravehearts MOVE New York

Jessica Grimm, Executive Director

☎ 914-510-3090

✉ [braveheartsmoveny@gmail.com](mailto:braveheartsmoveny@gmail.com)

📶 <http://www.BraveheartsMOVENY.org>

f <https://www.facebook.com/BraveheartsMOVENY>

## Oregon Foster Youth Connection

Lisa McMahon, Program Director

📞 503-236-9754

✉️ [lisa@cffo.org](mailto:lisa@cffo.org)

🌐 <https://oryouthconnection.org>

📘 <https://www.facebook.com/oryouthconnection.org>

## Youth Move Oregon

Martin Rafferty, Executive Director

📞 541-972-2614

✉️ [info@youthmoveoregon.com](mailto:info@youthmoveoregon.com)

🌐 <http://www.youthmoveoregon.org>

📘 <https://www.facebook.com/youthmoveoregon>

## Lummi Nation, Behavioral Health, IPOD

Julia Ortiz, Director, Lummi Behavioral Health Division

📞 360-312-2019

✉️ [juliao@lummi-nsn.gov](mailto:juliao@lummi-nsn.gov)

🌐 <http://www.lummi-nsn.org>

🌐 [http://www.lummi-nsn.org/website/dept\\_pages/youth/youth\\_home.shtml](http://www.lummi-nsn.org/website/dept_pages/youth/youth_home.shtml)

## Youth 'N Action

Tamara Johnson (Tamara is now at Millennials Northwest)

📞 206-853-5494

✉️ [millennialnorthwest@gmail.com](mailto:millennialnorthwest@gmail.com)

📘 <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=millennials%20northwest>

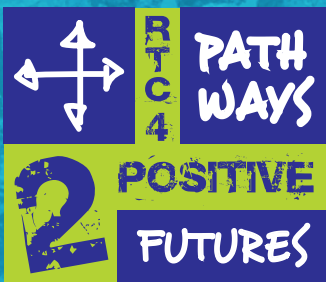
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**This document and its individual components,  
including worksheets, is available at**

**<https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/changing-the-rules>**





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