

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH WORKERS FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. A total of 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) were held between October to November 2005 to gather qualitative views from youth workers, volunteer youth workers, volunteer coordinators and management-level staff of various organisations. This guide lists out the various guiding questions used during the FGDs.
2. To facilitate the FGDs, participants from voluntary welfare organisations and youth organisations were grouped by their levels a) staff level and b) management level or roles in their organisations.

A. For Youth Worker Level

1. Identity / Role Delineation

- 1.1 Do you consider yourself a youth worker? Were there times when you were confused about your role? What do you call yourself?
- 1.2 Should there be a standard term for youth workers?
- 1.3 Do you distinguish between a youth worker and a social worker? How do you distinguish their roles?

2. HR Practices

- 2.1 How many hours a week do you work?
- 2.2 Do you work odd hours? Is there compensation for odd hours worked?
- 2.3 Are there any HR practices you want to bring up?

3. Support

- 3.1 What levels of support do you have and need?

4. Training needs

- 4.1 Any specific areas you feel training is lacking? Specific topics?
- 4.2 Does the sector recognise SSTI?
- 4.3 SSTI would be coming up with a training roadmap for youth workers. Do you feel comfortable for SSTI to take this role?
- 4.4 SSTI is thinking of having FGDs for youth worker training needs. Would you be interested to join this?

5. Career Development

- 5.1 Do you see yourself continuing in youth work 5 years down the road? 10 years? Why?
- 5.2 What do you envisage yourself to be as a youth worker in terms of career development?

6. Code of Ethics

- 6.1 Do you see a need for a code of ethics for youth workers? How would it benefit the sector?

7. Industry Support

- 7.1 How do you see the industry growing?
- 7.2 Is there a need for a professional body for youth workers to professionalize the industry? Would you join it?

8. Licensing/certification

- 8.1 Should there be minimum qualifications for a youth worker?
- 8.2 Is there a need for licensing and certification of youth workers? Who should be the one to license and certify youth workers?

B. For Management Level

1. Volunteer youth workers

- 1.1 What are your views of the core competencies identified in the survey? Apart from skills, what are some attitudes, perspectives or beliefs that you feel are important for the volunteer youth workers to adopt?
- 1.2 How do you see the volunteer youth sector in the next 10 years? And how do you see your organisation getting there?

2. Identity / Role Delineation

- 2.1 How do you define a youth worker? Would a youth worker be confused about his/her role? Should there be a standard term for youth workers?
- 2.2 Do you distinguish between a youth worker and a social worker? How do you distinguish their roles?
- 2.3 Is youth work a separate professional, with its own set of code of ethics, supervisory practices, and qualifications?

3. HR Practices

- 3.1 How many hours a week do youth workers work?
- 3.2 Do youth workers work odd hours? Is there compensation for odd hours worked?
- 3.3 Are there any HR practices you want to bring up?

4. Support

- 4.1 What levels of support do youth workers have and need?
- 4.2 How do you see the industry growing?
- 4.3 Is there a need for a professional body for youth workers to professionalize the industry? Would you join it?

5. Training needs

- 5.1 Any specific areas you feel training is lacking? Specific topics?
- 5.2 Does the sector recognise SSTI?
- 5.3 SSTI would be coming up with a training roadmap for youth workers. Do you feel comfortable for SSTI to take this role?

6. Career Development

- 6.1 Do you see yourself continuing in youth work 5 years down the road? 10 years? Why?
- 6.2 What do you envisage a youth worker to be in terms of career development?
- 6.3 What do you do to develop your youth worker? At entry-level and senior level?

7. Code of Ethics

- 7.1 Do you see a need for a code of ethics for youth workers? How would it benefit the sector?

8. Licensing/certification

- 8.1 Should there be minimum qualifications for a youth worker?
- 8.2 Is there a need for licensing and certification of youth workers? Who should be the one to license and certify youth workers?

A. For Volunteer Youth Worker and Volunteer Coordinator Level

1. Definition of Volunteer Youth Workers

“A volunteer youth worker is a person who works without pay or remuneration in an organisation, with the sole purpose of contributing to the non-formal education of young people, developing their capacities and potential, to enable them to grow up as self-fulfilled individuals and active citizens”

- 1.1 Do you agree with this definition?
- 1.2 How does your organisation define a volunteer youth worker?

2. Recruitment

- 2.1 What are your challenges faced in recruiting volunteers?
- 2.2 What are the usual experiences/qualifications/existing skills set that you look out for?
- 2.3 According to the survey findings, the most common form of recruitment is through recommendations. If this is true for your organisation, where do you get the majority of your recommendations?

3. Screening

- 3.1 Is there a structured screening procedure that your organisation conducts for volunteer youth workers? Who conducts the screening?
- 3.2 What are your views on the current screening procedure in your organisations?
- 3.3 What are your thoughts about having a structured a training course on screening guidelines?

4. Core Responsibilities

- 4.1 What are the core responsibilities of your volunteer youth workers?
- 4.2 Are these responsibilities also undertaken by your staff?
- 4.3 How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your volunteers in these responsibilities?

5. Important Core Competencies

- 5.1 According to the survey findings, “Knowledge of the organisation’s values” and “Communications Skills” are ranked the top two important core competencies. What are your views?
- 5.2 How does your organisation help its volunteers develop core competencies deemed important?

5.3 Apart from skills, what are some attitudes, perspectives or beliefs that you feel are important for the volunteer youth workers to adopt?

6. Core Competencies that are Lacking

6.1 According to the survey findings, “Facilitation Skills” and “Knowledge on Children and Youth Development” are ranked the top two lacking core competencies. What are your views?

6.2 How do you see your organisation developing competencies that are lacking in your volunteers?

7. Training

7.1 What types of training do your volunteers (or you, as a volunteer) have to undergo before they or you start engaging the youth?

7.2 How feasible do you think it is for your organisation to send volunteers for training?

7.3 How do you hope the social service sector can help to enhance volunteer training?

7.4 Is your organisation open to extending your training to other organisations? If no, why not?

8. Enlarging and Maintaining Your Pool of Volunteers

8.1 What are your challenges in volunteer coordination and management?

8.2 How do you supervise, evaluate or recognise your volunteers on their contributions?

B. For Management Level Staff

1. Youth Sector

1.1 What are your concerns, challenges and vision for the youth sector in the next 5 years?

2. Definition of Youth Work and Youth Workers

2.1 Do these key functions adequately define the key roles of a youth worker:

- a. Outreach and befriending of youths
- b. Youth Programme Development
- c. Organise youth-centric programmes/activities (service-learning and adventure-based learning programmes, camps)
- d. Youth development planning
- e. Conduct groupwork and training

- f. Home visits/ Liaison with parents
 - g. Provide generic counselling as part of befriending
- 2.2 What do you think are the distinctions between a youth worker and a social worker?
- 2.3 What do you think are the distinctions between a youth worker and a volunteer youth worker (if any)? What is your definition of a volunteer youth worker? What is the role of a volunteer youth worker in relation to a professional youth worker?

3. Development of Youth Workers

- 3.1 What are your thoughts of a minimum qualification of a youth worker?
- 3.2 Would you support a compulsory minimum professional course as an entry qualification for youth workers?
- 3.3 What resources would you need to enable you to send your staff for this professional course?

Example A: If a graduate with no relevant youth work experience or counselling qualification and who wish to do youth work would still need to have a minimum professional course in youth work, a diploma or a degree in youth work.

Example B: If a “youth worker” who have been doing with youth work, with many years of experience, but does not have the necessary qualifications, he/she would have to attend this minimum professional course in youth work.

- 3.4 Do you think there is a need for an association for Youth Workers or some licensing body for Youth Workers? Who would be a possible licensing body for Youth Workers? What are the possible implications?

4. Youth Work Development

- 4.1 Do you think there a future for specialised youth work/ youth workers in Singapore (a niche area of youth work)?
- 4.2 What are your concerns on youth workers in Singapore? What do you wish to see in the development of youth workers in Singapore?

5. Volunteer Youth Workers

- 5.1 Would a minimum qualification for volunteer youth workers deter them from joining your organisation? How about a scaled down version of the professional youth workers qualification? What would be your concerns?

- 5.2 What are your thoughts about a defined set of core competencies for your volunteer youth workers and the provision of courses to develop these core competencies?
- 5.3 Would the following echo your understanding on core competencies of volunteer youth workers?
- a. Core Competencies – Project Management Skills, Skills in Relating to Youth, Mentoring Skills, Leadership & Teambuilding Skills
 - b. Knowledge – Sharing of the organisation’s vision, mission and values, Understanding of youth development, issues and trends
 - c. Core Attributes – Passion, Belief in the potential of youth

6. Views on Recommendations

- 6.1 What are your views on the following recommendations? Do you have any recommendations/suggestions to add?

Volunteer Youth Workers

- a. Funding Scheme
 - Training and development courses for volunteers could be subsidised or paid on a co-sharing basis.
- b. Training
 - Offer courses for volunteer youth workers at SSTI or with other training providers
 - Provide courses such as Soul Care, Mentoring, Safety and Risk Management, Skills on Relating to Youth and Knowledge on Children and Youth Development.
- c. Resource Development
 - Handbooks and guides
 - Integrated IT database and volunteer management system
- d. Networking Platforms
 - Forums for volunteer youth workers to share best practices (youth workers and volunteer youth worker)
 - E-support and information system for volunteers
 - Local and overseas attachments or other experiential and exposure opportunities
- e. Screening
 - Information on more structured and systematic screening process

Youth Workers (Areas of Improvement)

The following areas were identified as areas to address to strengthen the youth worker sector and improve service quality:

- a. Define the role, responsibilities and identity of a youth worker
- b. Develop a code of ethics for youth workers and explore setting up an association
- c. Provide quality training courses and mentoring opportunities
- d. Develop a training roadmap for youth workers
- e. Attracting, retaining and developing of youth workers. Provide a career path. Need to provide career development information to the sector. Provide career guidance services?
- f. Provide professional recognition to the sector. A campaign to promote the value of the profession?
- g. Licensing could be reviewed in the future as the current needs of the sector needs to be met first.