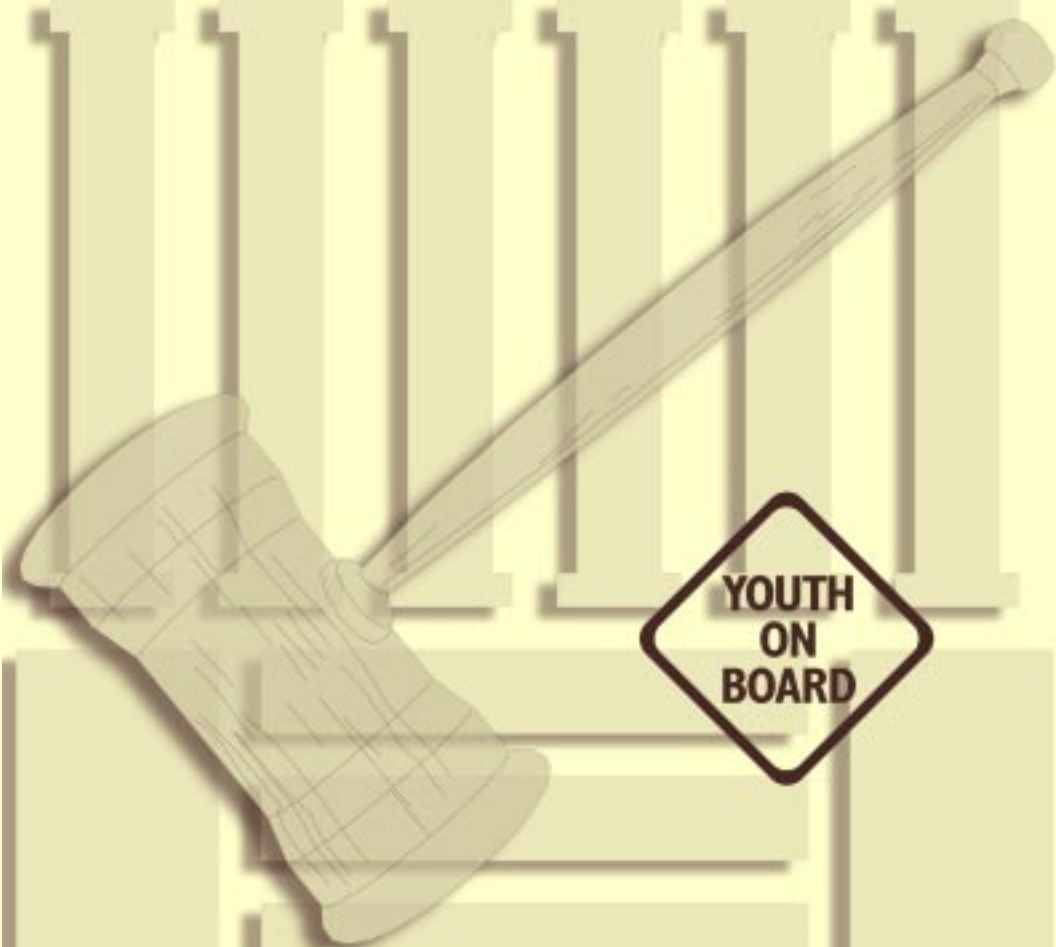


**Your Guide
To Youth Board
Involvement
and the Law**



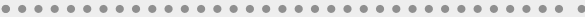
**YOUTH
ON
BOARD**

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Written by:
Kelly Bates, Esq.
and Karen S. Young

Contributing Writers:
Michael Arnold, Mark Ferguson, Jesse Graham, Meghan D. McCollum (Choate, Hall & Stewart), Michelle Quinn-Davidson, Jeanie Ringelberg, and Jenny Sazama

For more information, contact: Youth on Board,
58 Day Street, 3rd fl.,
P.O. Box 440322,
Somerville, MA 02144

617 623-9900 x1242
617 623-4359 (fax)
youthonboard@aol.com
www.youthonboard.org

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Foreword

Congratulations! By purchasing this book, you have taken a great step toward building the empowerment of youth and creating new opportunities for your organization to thrive. This publication will provide you with an analysis of the key legal issues you should be aware of when involving young people under the age of 18 on your board of directors. In addition to reviewing this publication, please consult several youth-friendly attorneys, your state's laws, and your organization's Bylaws to assist you in understanding legal issues and procedures that impact youth board involvement.

This publication is *not* a comprehensive overview of the laws governing nonprofit organizations and youth or a how-to guide on youth governance. Although it covers legal issues surrounding youth in governance, it does not cover the critical steps to supporting and maintaining youth involvement. For that information, please consult Youth on Board's publication *14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making*.

The information contained in this publication is provided as a service to young people and the nonprofit community serving and working with them and does not constitute legal advice. Youth on Board believes that it has provided quality information, but it makes no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the information contained in this publication. Legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case and must be based upon the most recent laws and regulations, which are constantly changing. Nothing provided in this publication should be used as a substitute for the advice of attorneys.

About Youth on Board

Often when we think about involving young people on boards and committees our first instinct is to think about logistical issues such as structure and skills training. Through our consulting work with hundreds of organizations, we have found that people primarily need to consider their attitudes and stereotypes about age. These stereotypes often make young people lose confidence in their abilities, believe they are not ready for involvement, and feel that they have no tangible input. Youth on Board assists young people and adults to think differently about each other so that we can work together to change our communities.

Youth on Board helps bridge this gap between adults and youth by providing practical information, training, support, and opportunities for them to build a relationship—the all-important “how-to’s” that can be key to the success of young people as community leaders. We envision a world in which younger people are fully respected and treated as valued and active members of their families, communities, and society. To this end, we offer training and consulting services to support adults who are committed to working with young people, as well as training for young people who need information and support to improve their leadership.

We hope that this publication provides you with practical and useful information to legally involve young people on your board. Please contact Youth on Board for more information about our training and consulting services and additional publications. We welcome your questions and feedback.



This publication is not a comprehensive overview of the laws governing nonprofit organizations and youth or a how-to guide on youth governance.

Introduction



It's exciting to think about involving young people under the age of 18 on your board of directors. However, you may be concerned about the legal consequences of having a young person serve. You may also feel that you need more information before proceeding with youth board involvement. This publication will help you gain the legal information that you need to pursue youth board involvement to the greatest extent possible.

This publication will also be useful to young people who are considering board membership or young board members who want to understand their legal obligations. Youth board members should consult the Appendix, which provides useful tips from active young board members on board involvement. This publication will also be valuable to lawyers who advise nonprofit organizations. It is important that lawyers approach the issue of youth board involvement creatively and encourage their nonprofit clients to invite young people to fully participate on their boards as voting members.

Organizations committed to youth involvement frequently ask us two questions. First, can young people legally serve on a board in my state? Second, if they can serve, how can I recruit and support young people to serve on my board? The answer to the first question will be explored in this publication. You will need to engage in research and minimal risk-taking in order to legally and successfully involve youth on your board. The second question will not be addressed in this publication, although it's an important one. Youth on Board has devoted an entire book to the subject, *14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making*, which is listed at the end of this publication.

A third question that organizations do not consider, and is sometimes the most significant one, is whether or not your organization is prepared and equipped to have young people on the board. Think about why you want to involve young people, what, if any, organizational and attitudinal barriers might present obstacles (such as, budget and resources issues, school schedules, stereotypes and assumptions about young people, and tokenism concerns), and how you will create a strong support network and process for orientation, training, and mentoring of young people. Addressing these barriers may be challenging, but they will help you to foster a supportive organizational culture for young people. Before embarking on a process for youth board involvement, your organization should complete the Organizational Assessment Checklist located in the Appendix.

Although laws about youth board participation vary, in most states there are not any laws prohibiting young people under the age of 18 from serving on a board of directors. In a small number of states, young people cannot serve on a board or their voting and legal privileges may be limited. This publication will provide you with a summary of state laws so you can understand what your state allows and maximize youth involvement accordingly.

Who Is This Publication for?

Many of the models and suggestions we put forth are for youth to join adult-run entities. For youth-run organizations, this information is helpful, but this publication is most useful to organizations wanting to include youth. We have developed criteria to determine



It is important that lawyers approach the issue of youth board involvement creatively and to encourage nonprofits to invite young people to participate on boards as voting members.

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Youth board members should consult the Appendix, which provides useful tips from active young board members on board involvement.

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if the legal issues raised in this publication will apply to your organization. For example, if you are a part of an unorganized group not recognized by law as a nonprofit (an advisory group, for instance), you may not have to comply with certain legal restrictions on youth board involvement. Regardless of the type of organization you have, the strategies and tips contained in this publication will provide you with helpful guidance on involving young people in your organization.

This publication will be most helpful to you if your organization meets the following criteria:

- According to the Internal Revenue Service, your organization is a legally established 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
- You are seeking to involve youth under the age of 18 on the board of directors of your nonprofit organization.
- Your organization understands the general rights and responsibilities of a board of directors, which may include¹:
 - Determining the organization's mission and purpose;
 - Fundraising to provide resources to the organization;
 - Holding regular meetings;
 - Keeping minutes of board and committee meetings;
 - Ensuring that all government filings are made on time;
 - Selecting, hiring, and removing the executive director, board of directors, and officers;
 - Following the requirements for federal and state tax exempt status;

- Fulfilling the conditions imposed by grant funding sources;
- Approving and managing an annual budget;
- Reviewing the financial audit of the organization;
- Adequately protecting the corporation with insurance;
- Following the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws; and
- Monitoring implementation of board policies and decisions.

If your organization meets these criteria, the following section will provide you with guidance for examining your state's laws concerning youth board involvement. Please keep in mind that any nonprofit should consult an attorney or youth-friendly advisor in its state to obtain legal and practical knowledge about nonprofit organizations and youth. Shop around, get several opinions, and remember that in most states legal issues will not be a barrier to youth involvement. With planning and research, adding youth to your board can be a revolutionary action.



Before embarking on a process for youth board involvement, your organization should complete the Organizational Assessment Checklist located in the Appendix.



Shop around, get several opinions, and remember that in most states legal issues will not be a barrier to youth involvement.

¹ The National Center for Nonprofit Boards offers a variety of publications describing the responsibilities and rights of the board of directors. Please consult the list of resources at the back of this publication for more information.

Why Young People Should Serve on Your Board

You may be wondering—why should my organization involve young people on our board of directors? Why would a young person want to serve on a board? How can young people benefit from board involvement?

Everyone benefits from youth board involvement. Youth board involvement leads to stronger organizations, communities, and youth leadership. Consider the following philosophical and practical reasons for involving youth on your board of directors².

Philosophical Reasons

It's a democracy issue. To make a democracy work, all people need to be heard, including the voices of young people. We need to hear their views, ideas, and passions and act on their ideas for democracy to thrive in future generations and in our organizations.

It's a civil rights issue. Nowhere in the United State's *Declaration of Independence* is there a stipulation concerning age. "All men are created equal," and all are entitled to "certain unalienable rights." In far too many situations, young people are not being heard. Their rights are disregarded or violated, and adults do not seem to hear or care about it. By supporting the leadership of young people, organizations can promote civil rights.

It's an integrity issue. It is important for any organization to involve its constituents. Just as it would not make sense for the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) to be run exclusively by Caucasians, it does not make sense for youth-serving organizations to be run exclusively by adults.

Practical Reasons

It's a youth development issue. In addition to your organization benefiting from the unique perspectives and talents that young people have to offer, leadership helps young people develop confidence in their opinions and their ideas. Participating as a leader can introduce youth to a range of skills—public speaking, budgeting, leading projects and committees, and networking, to name a few. By creating visible youth decision-making positions, you can positively impact the self-esteem of young people in your organization and bring their tremendous resources to the community.

It's a community outreach issue. Young people bring an entirely new community of contacts to your organization. By adding youth to your decision-making body, you are expanding your circle of clients, constituents, and consumers.

It's a diversity issue. Even though they may not have years of formal experience, youth offer intelligence, creative thinking, and a valuable outlook on the world that is seldom introduced into the governance of organizations. Diversity is also a philosophical issue. Programs supporting young people are based on the notion that young people matter and make a difference in the community and the world. Why shouldn't they make a difference within your organization by serving on your board?

It's a bottom-line issue. Young people are uniquely qualified to say what works for young people. By relying on young decision makers to provide personal insights, talk with friends, and organize youth focus groups, organizations can save time and money by catching decisions that might not work well with young people before they are implemented and fail.

²Some of these reasons were taken from a speech given by Amy Weisenbach of the National 4-H Council at the 1998 National Assembly Forum.

An Overview of State Laws: Supporting, Silent, or Prohibiting Youth Board Involvement

It's a long-term growth issue. Adding young people to the governance of an organization can usher in a new generation of leadership.

It's an organizational culture issue. Youth can enliven the atmosphere of your organization by bringing energy, enthusiasm, and interactive work processes. They often remind us that work and fun are not mutually exclusive.

To determine if young people can legally serve on your board, your organization should examine the laws of your state and your organization's Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation with the support and advisement of attorneys. You may also consult the listing in this publication to obtain a summary of the laws on youth board involvement in each state as of July 2001. Since laws change, it is important that you consult your state's laws on a regular basis.

A. Three States Have Laws Supporting Youth Board Involvement

In Michigan, Minnesota, and New York, state law provides that young people can serve on a board with certain restrictions.

In Michigan, the board of a nonprofit corporation may include one or more directors who are 16 or 17 years old as long as the number does not exceed more than half of the total number of directors required for a quorum. If the nonprofit corporation has more than one 16 or 17 year old who is on the board, it must state in its charter the number of directors who are 16 or 17 years old.

In Minnesota, young people may serve on the board as long as the majority of directors are at least 18 years old.

In New York, eligibility for youth board membership depends on the nature of the corporation. In most cases, board members must be 18 years old, and 16 years old if the organization relates to certain educational, recreational, youth development, or delinquency prevention purposes. New York limits the number of young people that may serve depending on the nature of the corporation.

These laws were proposed and fought by youth and their allies to promote the leadership of young people. This explicit legal support of young people enables organizations to confidently pursue the involvement of youth on their boards.

We recommend that similar to Michigan, organizations that are trying to change their laws to become more youth-friendly do not propose laws that specify the ages of youth board members (beyond the statement "below the age of 18"). More detailed information is included in the later section titled "How State Laws Have Been Changed."

B. Forty States Have Laws That Are Silent on Youth Board Involvement

In forty states and the District of Columbia, the law is silent on whether young people can legally serve on a board of directors. In these states, the laws and court decisions neither prohibit nor allow for youth board participation. Since no law exists on the subject and there are no "clear-cut" answers, we recommend that nonprofit organizations pursue youth board involvement to the greatest extent possible but do so with a



...we recommend that nonprofit organizations pursue youth board involvement to the greatest extent possible....

healthy dose of caution. Your agency should minimize any potential risks associated with youth board involvement that would subject the organization to liability. The section describing structures for youth board involvement will discuss ways that you can minimize these risks while maximizing youth participation.

C. Seven States Prohibit Youth Board Involvement

Seven states prohibit young people from serving on boards: Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Utah. These laws state that members of the board of directors must be 18 years of age or older. These laws clearly indicate that young people cannot serve in a board capacity. However, these laws do not prohibit your organization from involving youth as non-voting members on your board, or in other governance bodies where youth of any age can participate. You can also change your state's laws to allow for youth board involvement. Please see the section titled "How State Laws Have Been Changed" for further details.

Adult Incorporator Requirements

In fourteen states and the District of Columbia, young people are not allowed to *incorporate* the nonprofit organization: Alaska, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Washington. When a specific minimum age is stated for an incorporator, it means that the person who is the signatory on the agency's Articles of Incorporation cannot be under the given age. An incorporator is someone who legally applies to the state to form a nonprofit corporation.

If a young person incorporates an organization in a state where youth incorporation is illegal, the nonprofit corporation may be dissolved. Age-specific laws for incorporators do *not*, however, prevent a young person from starting or founding an organization as long as

Does Your Organization Have A Conflict of Interest Policy?

Both youth and adult members of boards of directors are legally bound to fulfill a *duty of loyalty*. They must keep the interest of the nonprofit organization paramount above personal interests when acting for or on behalf of the organization. To protect your agency from lawsuits stemming from conflicts of interest, adopt a clear written policy that prevents board members from voting on a matter about which they cannot be impartial.

When drafting or amending your own conflict of interest policy, always consult an attorney since legal guidelines vary from state to state. Consider using the following form taken from the National Center for Nonprofit Boards' publication, *How to Manage Conflict of Interest: A Guide for Nonprofit Boards*:

"In the case that a board or committee member is aware of a potential conflict of interest with respect to any matter coming before the board or committee, she or he will not be present for voting in connection with the matter. She or he may, however, participate fully in discussion of the matter prior to the vote."

Signature: _____

Date: _____

.....
...these laws do not prohibit your organization from involving youth as non-voting members on your board, or in other governance bodies where youth of any age can participate.

.....
Age-specific laws for incorporators do not prevent a young person from starting or founding an organization as long as she or he is not the legally recognized incorporator of the organization.

she or he is not the legally recognized incorporator of the organization. In this case, we recommend an adult be chosen to incorporate the organization. Even in states where the law is silent on incorporator requirements, we recommend that your organization choose an adult to incorporate the organization because of state contractual requirements.

Contractual Requirements

Separate from age requirements for board members or incorporators, states maintain a minimum age requirement for persons who can create or enter into contracts. A court may invalidate a contract and give it no effect if a young person (as defined by the state law) authorized it. However, as long as the minor is not the officer authorized to sign on behalf of the organization, or the signatory to the agreement, the minor's inability to contract *should not* become an issue. In these situations, an adult can enter into and sign contracts on behalf of the organization.

Please consult your attorneys about this area of the law. This publication does not explore this issue in depth, although it is an important one in understanding youth board involvement.

Even if your state prohibits youth from serving on a board, there are many ways to secure meaningful youth involvement without running the risk of liability. The first critical step you can take is to demonstrate to young people that your agency views them as equal partners. Young people who see that their opinions and ideas are valued will participate more fully and responsibly in an organization.

Make sure to involve more than just one young person on your board. Invite several so they can support each other. We recommend that organizations serving youth consider making at least one-quarter of their board young people. This will help your organization to avoid the traps of tokenism and isolation, which discourage young people from participation. Of course, some organizations may choose to adopt participation structures in which all of the members consist of young people. An all-youth structure can be very effective in some organizations.

Regardless of the ways that you decide to involve young people, you will need to provide them with support to effectively fulfill their roles. This support can include making sure that they have a job or position description that details their role and its limitations, scheduling activities around school and family demands, and providing them with ongoing opportunities for training and mentorship. Plan to add money to your budget to support young people. Don't expect young people to be able to afford making organizational purchases without receiving the money in advance. For more information on ways to involve and support young people, see *14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making*. An overview of this publication can be found in the Appendix.



As long as the minor is not the officer authorized to sign on behalf of the organization... the minor's inability to contract should not become an issue.

A. States That Support Youth Board Involvement

For adult-run organizations that want to involve young people, we advocate the *Youth Infusion Principle*. The Youth Infusion Principle assumes that young people should be involved in all levels of organizational decision-making and governance as equal partners with adults in adult-run organizations. This does not apply to youth-run organizations.

The areas in which young people can be involved in your organization are limited only by your imagination. Many of the structures for involvement may share similar characteristics but may have different responsibilities, focus on different issues, or operate differently, depending on the organization. These configurations may include youth and adults working together or youth only. Be creative and involve young people to the greatest extent possible. And remember, it is always more ideal to involve young people in decision-making roles as opposed to advisory or informal roles where they have no governing authority.

Boards of Directors. Provide young people with seats on your board of directors and ensure that they are granted full voting rights and privileges.

Board Committees. Invite young people to serve on all board committees with adults. These committees propose recommendations to the board of directors on how to proceed with organizational matters such as fundraising or program development.

Policy Committees. Involve youth to serve on a policy committee to provide advice on specific policy issues impacting the organization.

Advisory Boards. Encourage young people to serve on an advisory board with adults. These boards have no governing authority, but they offer regular feedback and advice to an organization on a range of institutional matters.

Task Forces. Recruit young people to serve on short-term bodies that research or address specific issues such as violence in the schools or educational testing.

Youth-Only Entities. It can also be useful to institute youth-only entities in which young people are elected by their peers to function as a separate team, or as a feeder group into an integrated board of directors. Young people can support each other to provide advice and feedback on a specific area of concern affecting the organization.

Leadership Positions. Recruit and support young people to move into leadership positions. Young people are excellent candidates for positions as board officers and chairpersons of committees and other structures.

Staff, Consultant, or Volunteer Members. Hire young people for staff, consultant, or volunteer positions that are appropriate to their skill level and schedules.

Are Youth-Only Entities Ever Appropriate?

Although youth-only entities are not consistent with the *Youth Infusion Principle* because they don't integrate young people into existing structures, they can be useful in today's climate to combat oppression against young people. In our society, young people face oppression from stereotypes and isolation, which can be broken down through the process of working closely with other youth. A youth-only entity such as a youth advisory board or task force, can provide a safe and empowering space for young people to share and contribute to an organization.



We recommend that organizations serving youth consider making at least one-quarter of their board young people.



The Youth Infusion Principle assumes that young people should be involved in all levels of organizational decision-making and governance as equal partners with adults.

B. States That Have Silent Laws on Youth Board Involvement

In states where there are no laws that specifically prohibit or allow for youth board participation, organizations can adopt the Youth Infusion Principle and involve young people in all of its structures. However, your organization will have to decide what structures will best minimize any risks to your organization. If you choose to be cautious, Youth on Board recommends that your organization consider the following suggestions:

- Disclose to your organization that you have young people on your board.
- Include provisions in your Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation that state that your organization can elect young people to your board.
- Discuss potential risks openly with the board of directors and your organization’s attorneys.
- Do not elect young people to board officer positions that have contractual authority such as the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. (Make sure to encourage young people to serve in other leadership positions.)

• Prohibit youth board members from signing legal and financial documents such as leases and checks on behalf of the nonprofit corporation or the incorporating papers for the nonprofit organization.

Previously, Youth on Board has recommended an additional conservative approach for youth involvement, which involves counting youth and adult votes separately to ensure that youth votes do not carry, defeat, or break a tie on a motion, or count toward a quorum (unless your state’s laws dictate otherwise). After further legal research and consideration, we believe that counting votes is unnecessary. Recording votes sends the message to young people that their

votes, and therefore their opinions and leadership, do not count as much as those of adults. Many organizations have chosen not to record youth and adult votes separately for this reason and have not faced problems counting the youth and adult vote in the same manner.

Do Your Organization’s Governing Documents Include Provisions for Electing Youth Board Members?

By institutionalizing youth involvement in your Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, you can send a strong message that your organization is fully behind youth governance, as well as ensure that young people will be vital members of your board long after current staff and members leave the organization. When drafting or amending your Bylaws or Articles of Incorporation, consult your attorney for guidance. The following is an example of supportive youth board Bylaws from a Girl Scout Council:

Article 1-The Council Eligibility. All voting members of the council shall be adult volunteers and girls 14 years of age and over who are members of the Girl Scout movement registered through the council.

You may want to consider adding a provision to your Bylaws that states that “if these provisions are in conflict with state law, state law will govern whether youth board members can participate.” This will alert your board to continually check the state’s laws for changes in youth board age requirements.



And remember, it is always more ideal to involve young people in decision-making roles as opposed to advisory or informal roles where they have no governing authority.



After further legal research and consideration, we believe that counting votes is unnecessary.

Board Stories

Many organizations have successfully instituted boards of directors with young people. The following organizations have brought young people and adults together to effectively work as equal partners on their boards³.

Caring Rivers United Way (Elk River, Minnesota)

The Caring Rivers United Way demonstrates how youth infusion builds organizational capacity. This small United Way is composed of a Board of Directors that has 14 members, three of whom are youth under the age of 18. Youth members work alongside adult members to raise and allocate funds, hire staff, and make organizational policy. Youth have been equal participants on the Board for more than seven years and have been key players in the United Way's efforts to be a vital organization in the Elk River area. As one adult Board member commented, "We wouldn't be able to do all that we do without the young people there helping us." For additional information, contact Caring Rivers United Way, P.O. Box 36, Elk River, MN 55330-0036; (612) 263-5886.

Mosaic Youth Center (Robbinsdale, Minnesota)

The Mosaic Youth Center, formed by young people, seeks to provide a computer lab, performing arts space, a youth-run food service business, career planning, medical and mental health services, and a ten-bed shelter for homeless youth. This ambitious project with a \$5 million price tag and powerful partners maximized the role of youth. During the past five years, the primary stakeholders have been central to designing the blueprint. The overall Board of Directors consists of 40% youth (enrolled in high school or between ages 14 and 19); for the group that focuses on programming, 60% youth; and for the group responsible for the capital

³ These stories were provided by Young America Cares!, an initiative of United Way of America.

campaign, building management and legal issues, 20% youth. Optional stipends are available to youth and adult board members ranging from \$40 to \$100 per month based on their time commitment and responsibilities. A committee of six youth and two adults hired the full-time coordinator from a pool of 40 applicants. An intergenerational nomination committee interviews applicants to fill board vacancies.

One significant organizational challenge has been transportation and food costs that can eat a hole in the \$500,000 planning grant budget. A contract with a local cab company has made it easier for youth to attend meetings since many live in the seven-city area that Mosaic aims to serve. Retreats that bring together all the board members and community partners have proven to be effective in work output and also promoting group cohesion.

Half of the current youth members were recruited as ninth graders, which boosts the continuity of the Board. In the words of one former Board member, "Mosaic works for one reason: everyone involved treats one another as equals." For more information, contact the Mosaic Youth Center Project, 7323 58th Avenue North, Crystal, MN 55428; (612) 749-9561; www.mosaicyouthcenter.com.

United Way of Salem County, Inc. (Salem, New Jersey)

The United Way of Salem County Board of Directors has three full-voting youth members. Any young person may apply to be a Board member, and membership is generally open to young people who can commit the time and energy required. Meetings are in the late afternoon, so youth members do not miss school. United Way of Salem County also sponsors a Youth United Way program in which young people raise and allocate funds for youth programs. For additional information, contact United Way of Salem County, Inc., P.O. Box 127, Salem, NJ 08079-0127; (856) 935-2538.

C. States That Prohibit Youth Board Involvement

In states that have laws prohibiting youth board involvement, your organization cannot invite young people to serve on the board as voting members. However, your organization can involve youth as non-voting members on your board, in board committees, policy committees, advisory boards, task forces, in non-board leadership positions, or as staff, consultants, or volunteer members in other structures you devise. Your organization should be legally protected as long as your board and the executive director retain the ultimate responsibility for the organization and final approval authority.

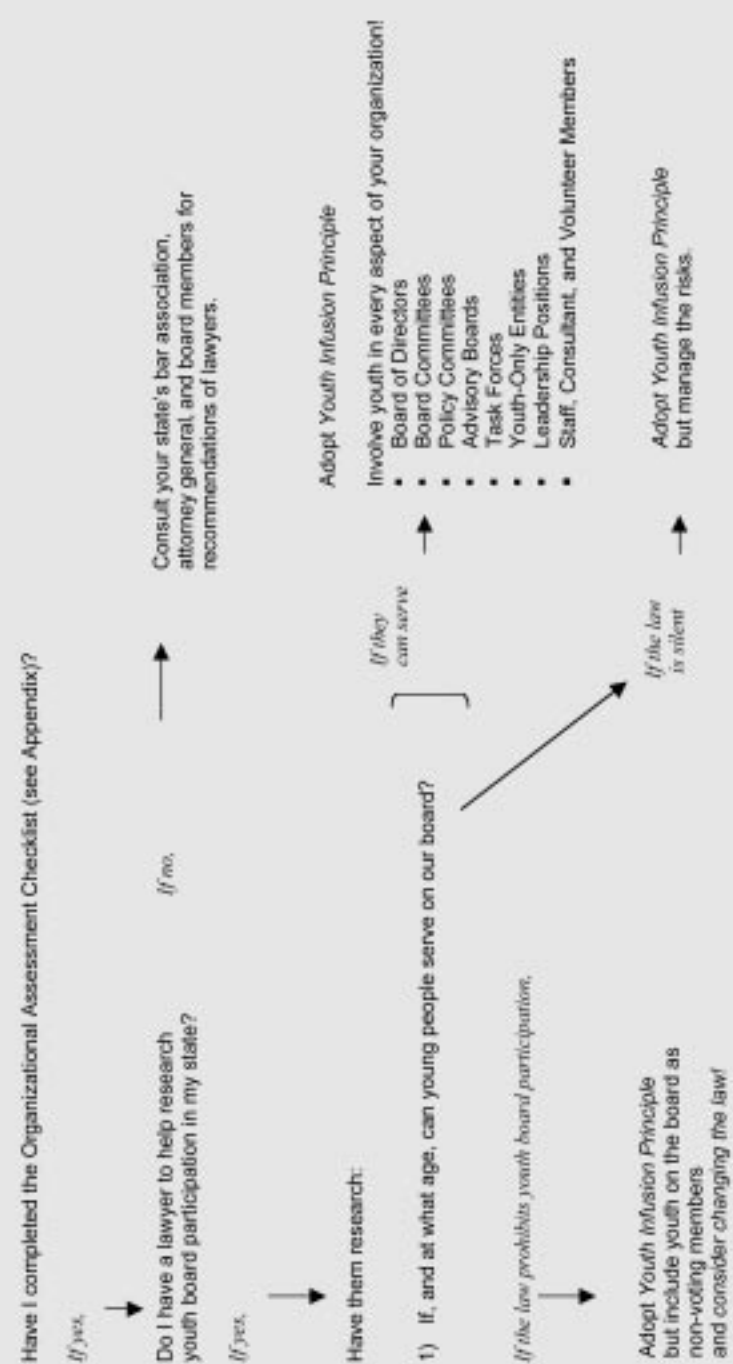


Even if the law prohibits youth voting members on your board, youth can serve in board committees, policy committees, advisory boards, task forces...

Are Young People Covered by Your Organization's Insurance?

Nonprofits should carry Directors and Organizers (D & O) Insurance to protect the board and founding organizers from legal liability. In the unfortunate event that a lawsuit is brought against your organization, the insurer may pay the damages and legal fees awarded against the board members. For example, if a staff member sues your organization over a personnel matter and prevails, if your youth board member isn't covered by insurance, the member's parents or guardians will have to pay for the litigation costs. To prevent this from happening, check your policy to make sure that young board members are protected. Most policies don't specify a minimum age for board members.

Figure Youth Board Involvement Flow Chart



State Statutes Regarding Minimum Age Requirements

A. Web Research

The list provided specifies the age requirements for youth board members and incorporators of non-profits for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. To help you locate the legal documents containing these laws, we have included their statutory source(s). If you would like to examine the laws in your own state, these statutes can be obtained through the web law search in *FindLaw*, the *Find LawCrawler*. The Internet is a convenient way to view these laws, but keep in mind that the Internet is always changing. We cannot guarantee that you will find the laws, that they are accurate or up-to-date, or that this web service will be available indefinitely.

Directions for accessing laws on the Internet:

1. Look on the web at <http://lawcrawler.findlaw.com/more.html>;
2. Look under “US State Governments search;”
3. Type in the statute number only (without the “S”);
4. Choose the state;
5. Click search; and
6. The link will bring you directly to the law or other helpful links.

Example, Oregon:



If you cannot access the Internet or find the law on this web site, you can also obtain laws from your state’s official web site, an attorney, or by visiting your local courthouse, state house library, law library, or your state’s Attorney General or Secretary of State.

B. Chart of Brief Summaries of Relevant Statutes

Where there is no information provided, the state does not have laws governing the subject (indicated below as “silent”).

State	Minimum Age Requirement Directors	Minimum Age Requirement Incorporators
Alabama	silent	silent
Alaska	silent	Three incorporators needed; each of whom must be at least 19 years old. ALASKA STAT. § 10.20.146 (Michie 2000)
Arizona	silent	silent
Arkansas	silent	None stated for nonprofit corporations, but incorporators of for-profit corporations must be 21 years old. ARK. CODE ANN. § 4-33-201; § 4-26-201 (Michie 1999)
California	silent	silent
Colorado	18 years old. COLO. REV. STAT. § 7-128-102; § 7-108-102 (2000)	18 years old. COLO. REV. STAT. § 7-102-101 (2000)
Connecticut	silent	silent
Delaware	silent	silent
District of Columbia	silent	Three incorporators needed; each of whom must be 18 years old. D.C. CODE ANN. § 29-529 (2000)
Florida	18 years old. FLA. STAT. ANN. § 617.0802 (West 2000)	None explicitly stated in the statute; however, it is likely implied that incorporators must also be at least 18 years old.
Georgia	18 years old. GA. CODE ANN. § 14-3-802 (2000)	None explicitly stated in the statute; however, it is likely implied that incorporators must also be at least 18 years old.
Hawaii	silent	silent
Idaho	silent	silent
Illinois	silent	18 years old. § 805 ILL. COMP. STAT. 105/102.05 (2000)
Indiana	silent	silent
Iowa	silent	silent
Kansas	silent	silent
Kentucky	silent	silent
Louisiana	silent	silent
Maine	silent	silent
Maryland	silent	silent
Massachusetts	silent	silent
Michigan	16 years old; however, the total number of 16-year-old directors must not exceed half of the directors required for a quorum. MICH. COMP. LAWS ANN. § 450.2501; § 450.2501a (2001)	silent

State	Min. Age Requirement Directors	Min. Age Requirement Incorporators
Minnesota	Minors may serve on the board as long as the majority of directors are at least 18 years old. MINN. STAT. § 317A.205 (2000)	18 years old. MINN. STAT. § 317A.105 (2000)
Mississippi	silent	silent
Missouri	silent	18 years old. MO. REV. STAT. § 355.040 (West 2000)
Montana	silent	silent
Nebraska	silent	silent
Nevada	18 years old. NEV. REV. STAT. § 82.196 (1999)	None explicitly stated in the statute; however, it is likely implied that incorporators must also be at least 18 years old.
New Hampshire	silent	silent
New Jersey	Trustees of nonprofits must be at least 18 years old. N.J. REV. STAT. § 15A:6-1 (West 2000)	18 years old. N.J. REV. STAT. § 15A:2-7 (2000)
New Mexico	silent	silent
New York	Various, depending on nature of corporation. At least 18 years old in most cases; 16 if relating to certain educational, youth development, or delinquency prevention purposes, or other specified organizations. N.Y. CORPS. LAW § 701; § 401 (Consol. 2000)	None explicitly stated in the statute; however, it is likely implied that incorporators must also be at least 18 years old.
North Carolina	silent	silent
North Dakota	silent	silent
Ohio	silent	silent
Oklahoma	silent	silent
Oregon	silent	18 years old. OR. REV. STAT. § 65.044 (1999)
Pennsylvania	18 years old. 15 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 5722; § 5103 (West 2000)	18 years old. 15 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 5302 (West 2000)
Rhode Island	silent	silent
South Carolina	silent	silent
South Dakota	silent	Three incorporators; each of whom must be 18 years old. S.D. CODIFIED LAWS § 47-22-5 (Michie 2000)
Tennessee	silent	silent
Texas	silent	18 years old. TEX. REV. CIV. STAT. ANN. § 1396-3.01 (Vernon 1999)
Utah	18 years old. UTAH CODE ANN. § 16-6a-802 (2000)	18 years old. UTAH CODE ANN. § 16-6a-202 (2000)
Vermont	silent	18 years old. VT. STAT. ANN. tit. 11 ch. 2 § 201 (1999)
Virginia	silent	silent
Washington	silent	18 years old. WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 24.03.020 (West 2000)
West Virginia	silent	silent
Wisconsin	silent	silent
Wyoming	silent	silent

C. Comprehensive Summaries of Relevant Statutes

Alabama. Under Alabama statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The requirements set forth in the statute require directors to be natural persons who need not be residents of Alabama unless specified in the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. The provision further states that the Articles of Incorporation may prescribe other qualifications for directors. ALA. CODE § 10-3A-34 (2000). In contrast, directors of business corporations in Alabama are required to be at least 19 years of age. ALA. CODE § 10-2B-8.02 (2000).

Alaska. Under Alaska statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Alaska or members of the corporation unless specified in the articles or incorporation or Bylaws, and that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. ALASKA STAT. § 10.20.081 (Michie 2000). To incorporate a nonprofit corporation in Alaska, the state requires that three incorporators, who are persons at least 19 years old, must file incorporation documents. ALASKA STAT. § 10.20.146 (Michie 2000).

Arizona. Under Arizona statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Arizona nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. The Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws may contain other qualifications for directors. ARIZ. REV. STAT. ANN. § 10-3802 (West 2000). There are no minimum age requirements for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. ARIZ. REV. STAT. ANN. § 10-3201 (West 2000).

Arkansas. Under Arkansas statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant statute specifies that directors

must be individuals and that any other qualifications for directors may be prescribed by the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. ARK. CODE ANN. § 4-33-802 (Michie 1999). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations, but incorporators of business corporations must be at least 21 years of age. ARK. CODE ANN. § 4-33-201 (Michie 1999); ARK. CODE ANN. § 4-26-201 (Michie 1999).

California. Under California statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of a nonprofit corporation. The relevant statute states only that the Bylaws of the corporation may contain any provision regarding the qualification of directors. CAL. CORP. CODE § 5151(c)(3) (West 2000).

Colorado. Under Colorado statutory law, directors of nonprofit corporations and directors of business corporations must be at least 18 years of age. COLO. REV. STAT. § 7-128-102 (2000); COLO. REV. STAT. ANN. § 7-108-102 (2000). The statute states that directors must be natural persons, but need not be residents of Colorado nor members of the nonprofit corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws. Incorporators of nonprofit and business corporations must be natural persons who are at least 18 years of age. COLO. REV. STAT. § 7-122-101; COLO. REV. STAT. § 7-102-101 (2000).

Connecticut. Under Connecticut statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Connecticut nor members of the corporation unless required by the certificate of incorporation or the Bylaws, which may prescribe other qualifications for directors. CONN. GEN. STAT. § 33-1081 (2001).

Delaware. Under Delaware statutory law, the statutory provision pertaining to the qualifications of

directors of nonprofit corporations is the same as that for directors of business corporations. The statute does not impose a minimum age requirement for directors, but it provides that the certificate of incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe qualifications for directors. DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 8 § 141 (2000).

District of Columbia. Under District of Columbia statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of the District of Columbia nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws, which may prescribe other qualifications. D.C. CODE ANN. § 29-518 (2000). To incorporate a nonprofit corporation in the District of Columbia, three or more persons, each of whom is at least 18 years old, must file incorporation papers. D.C. CODE ANN. § 29-529 (2000).

Florida. Under Florida statutory law, directors of nonprofit corporations must be natural persons who are at least 18 years of age or older. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Florida nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. The statute further provides that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe additional qualifications for directors. FLA. STAT ANN. § 617.0802 (West 2000).

Georgia. Under Georgia statutory law, directors of nonprofit corporations must be natural persons who are at least 18 years of age, but need not be residents of Georgia nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation. The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. GA. CODE ANN. § 14-3-802 (2000). Directors of business corporations must also be at least 18 years old. GA. CODE ANN. § 14-2-802 (2000).

Hawaii. Under Hawaii statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that at least one director must be a resident of Hawaii and that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. HAW. REV. STAT. § 415B-61 (2000).

Idaho. Under Idaho statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute only requires that all directors be individuals (including a person who has the right to vote on behalf of an entity, such as a cooperative). The provision further states that that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. IDAHO CODE § 30-3-64 (Michie 2000).

Illinois. Under Illinois statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant statute states that a director need not be a resident of Illinois unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws, and that other qualifications may be prescribed in the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws. 805 ILL. COMP. STAT. 105/108.05 (2000). An incorporator of a nonprofit corporation must be at least 18 years old. 805 ILL. COMP. STAT. 105/102.05 (2000).

Indiana. Under Indiana statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of a nonprofit corporation. The statute states that a director need only be an individual, and that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe qualifications for directors. IND. CODE ANN. § 23-17-12-2 (West 2000).

Iowa. Under Iowa statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of a nonprofit corporation. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Iowa nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation. The

provision further states that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. IOWA CODE ANN. § 504A.17 (West 2000). Similarly, there is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. IOWA CODE ANN. § 504A.28 (West 2000).

Kansas. Under Kansas statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit or business corporations. Directors need not be stockholders unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws. The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. KAN. STAT. ANN. § 17-6301 (2000); § 17-6805 (2000).

Kentucky. Under Kentucky statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Kentucky nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation. The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 273.207 (Banks-Baldwin 2000).

Louisiana. Under Louisiana statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant statutory provision states only that directors need not be residents of Louisiana nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. LA. REV. STAT. ANN. § 12:224 (West 2000).

Maine. Under Maine statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant statutory provision states that directors need not be residents of Maine nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws. The Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws may prescribe other

qualifications for the directors. ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 13-B, § 701 (West 1999). There are no age requirements for incorporators of nonprofit corporations or directors of business corporations. ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 13-B, § 401 (West 1999). The Attorney General of Maine has interpreted § 401, which authorizes any “natural person” to be an incorporator, to explicitly include both minors and those who have attained the age of majority. Op.Atty.Gen., April 23, 1980.

Maryland. Under Maryland statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations in Maryland. The statutory provision pertaining to the qualifications of members of the board of directors of business corporations is applied to nonprofit corporations. MD. CODE ANN., CORPS. & ASS’NS § 2-403 (2000).

Massachusetts. Under Massachusetts statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. MASS. GEN. LAWS ch. 180, § 6C (2000). There is a statutory requirement that an incorporator of a nonprofit corporation must be at least 18 years old. MASS. GEN. LAWS ch. 180, § 3 (2000).

Michigan. Under Michigan statutory law, the board of a nonprofit corporation may include one or more directors who are 16 or 17 years old as long as the number does not exceed more than half of the total number of directors required for a quorum. If the nonprofit corporation has more than one 16 or 17-year-old board member, it must state the total number of 16 and 17-year-old board members in its Charter. MICH. COMP. LAWS ANN. § 450.2501, 450.2501a (West 2001). There is no statutorily imposed minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. MICH. COMP. LAWS ANN. § 450.2201 (2001).

Minnesota. Under Minnesota statutory law, there is a minimum age requirement of 18 for directors of nonprofit corporations in Minnesota. Despite this provision, minors are not prohibited from serving as directors of nonprofit corporations as long as the majority of directors are adults. The section also provides that further qualifications for directors may be imposed by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws of the corporation. MINN. STAT. § 317A.205 (2000). Although minors may serve on the board of directors of nonprofit corporations if the majority of directors are adults, the incorporators of nonprofit corporations must be adults. MINN. STAT. § 317A.105 (2000).

Mississippi. Under Mississippi statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant provision states that all directors must be individuals and that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. MISS. CODE ANN. § 79-11-101 (2000), 135 (2000), 233 (2000).

Missouri. Under Missouri statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant provision states that directors need not be residents of Missouri nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. MO. ANN. STAT. § 355.130 (West 2000). There is a statutory requirement that three or more citizens of the United States 18 years or older are necessary to incorporate a nonprofit corporation. MO. ANN. STAT. § 355.040 (West 2000).

Montana. Under Montana statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states only that all directors must be individuals and that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. MONT. CODE ANN. § 35-2-415 (2000).

Nebraska. Under Nebraska statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant provision states that directors need not be residents of Nebraska nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. NEB. REV. STAT. § 21-1969 (2000). There are no statutorily imposed age requirements for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. NEB. REV. STAT. § 21-1920 (2000).

Nevada. Under Nevada statutory law, there is a statutorily imposed minimum age requirement of 18 for directors or trustees of nonprofit corporations in Nevada. NEV. REV. STAT. § 82.196 (1999).

New Hampshire. Under New Hampshire statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors. Similarly, there are no statutorily imposed minimum age requirements for incorporators of either nonprofit or business corporations. N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 292:1 (2000), 293-A:-8.02 (2000), 293-A:2.01 (2000).

New Jersey. Under New Jersey statutory law, trustees of nonprofit corporations must be at least 18 years of age. The provision also states that the certificate of incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe additional qualifications for trustees. N.J. REV. STAT. § 15A:6-1 (2000). Incorporators of nonprofit corporations in New Jersey must be at least 18. N.J. REV. STAT. § 15A:2-7 (2000).

New Mexico. Under New Mexico statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The provision states that directors need not be residents of New Mexico nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other quali-

cations for directors. N.M. STAT. ANN. § 53-8-17 (Michie 2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. N.M. STAT. ANN. § 53-8-30 (Michie 2000).

New York. Under New York statutory law, there are minimum age requirements for directors of nonprofit corporations in New York. The provision is unique in that the minimum age for directors varies depending upon the nature of the corporation. The relevant statutory section provides that, with exceptions, each director of a nonprofit corporation must be at least 18 years of age. However, a member of the board of directors of any Girl Scout Council Chartered by Girl Scouts or any Camp Fire Girls or member of Aspira of America or Aspira of New York must only be 16 years of age or older. Similarly, a corporation organized for educational purposes primarily for the benefit of individuals under 18 years of age may include one director who is 16 years of age or older. The board of directors of a corporation organized for recreational or youth development and delinquency prevention purposes primarily for the benefit of individuals under 18 may have up to one-half of the total number of directors needed for a quorum composed of directors 16 years of age or older. The certificate of incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. N.Y. CORP. LAW § 701 (Consol. 2000). Other directors or trustees of nonprofit corporations must be at least 18 years of age. N.Y. CORP. LAW § 401 (Consol. 2000).

North Carolina. Under North Carolina statutory law, there is no minimum age for members of the board of directors of nonprofit corporations in North Carolina. The statute states only that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe qualifications for directors and that a director need not be a resident

of North Carolina nor a member of the corporation unless required by the articles or Bylaws. N.C. GEN. STAT. § 55A-8-02 (2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. N.C. GEN. STAT. § 55A-2-01 (2000).

North Dakota. Under North Dakota statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of North Dakota nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. It also notes that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. N.D. CENT. CODE § 10-33-29 (2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. N.D. CENT. CODE § 10-33-08 (2000).

Ohio. Under Ohio statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant provision states only that the trustees must have such qualifications, if any, as are required by the Articles of Incorporation or regulations. OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 1702.27(3) (West 2000).

Oklahoma. Under Oklahoma statutory law, there are no qualifications listed for members of the board of directors of nonprofit corporations. The parallel provision in the General Corporation Act does not include a minimum age requirement for directors. OKLA. STAT. ANN. tit. 18, § 1027 (West 2000).

Oregon. Under Oregon statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states only that directors must be individuals and that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. OR. REV. STAT. § 65.304 (1999). Incorporators of nonprofit corporations in Oregon, however, must be 18 years of age or older. OR. REV. STAT. § 65.044 (1999).

Pennsylvania. Under Pennsylvania statutory law, there is a minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant statute states that each director must be a natural person of “full age” who need not be a resident of Pennsylvania nor a member of the corporation unless required by the Bylaws, which may prescribe additional qualifications. 15 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 5722 (West 2000). Incorporators of nonprofit corporations must also be of “full age.” 15 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 5302. “Full age” is defined in the statute as “18 years or over.” 15 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 5103 (West 2000).

Rhode Island. Under Rhode Island statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations in Rhode Island. The relevant provision of the statute states only that the directors need not be residents of Rhode Island or members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. It also provides that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. R.I. GEN. LAWS § 7-6-22(a) (2000).

South Carolina. Under South Carolina statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute requires directors be natural persons and states that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. S.C. CODE ANN. § 33-31-802 (Law. Co-op 2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. S.C. CODE ANN. § 33-31-201 (Law. Co-op 2000).

South Dakota. Under South Dakota statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute specifying qualifications for members of the board of directors states that directors need not be members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation

or Bylaws, which may prescribe other qualifications. S.D. CODIFIED LAWS § 47-23-13 (Michie 2000). There is a statutorily imposed minimum age requirement of 18 for the three incorporators needed to incorporate a nonprofit corporations. S.D. CODIFIED LAWS § 47-22-5 (Michie 2000).

Tennessee. Under Tennessee statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute requires all directors to be natural persons and specifies that the Charter or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. It also states that a director need not be a resident of Tennessee nor a member of the corporation unless required by the Charter or Bylaws. TENN. CODE ANN. § 48-58-102 (2000). There is no minimum age requirement for an incorporator of a nonprofit corporation. TENN. CODE ANN. § 48-52-101 (2000).

Texas. Under Texas statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states only that directors need not be residents of Texas nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. It also states that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. TEX. REV. CIV. STAT. ANN. § 1392-2.14 (Vernon 1999). Incorporators of nonprofit corporations in Texas are required to be 18 years old. TEX. REV. CIV. STAT. ANN. § 1396-3.01 (Vernon 1999).

Utah. Under Utah statutory law, directors of nonprofit corporations in Utah must be at least 18 years of age. UTAH CODE ANN. § 16-6a-802 (2000). Incorporators of nonprofit corporations in Utah must also be at least 18 years old. UTAH CODE ANN. § 16-6a-202 (2000).

Vermont. Under Vermont statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations in Vermont. The statute states only that directors need not be residents of Vermont nor members of the corporation unless required by the articles of association or Bylaws. It also states that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. VT. STAT. ANN. tit. 11 § 2364 (1999). A natural person of the age of 18 is required to incorporate a nonprofit corporation in Vermont. VT. STAT. ANN. tit. 11 ch. 2 § 201 (1999).

Virginia. Under Virginia statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states only that a director need not be a resident of Virginia nor a member of the corporation unless the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws so prescribe. VA. CODE ANN. § 13.1-854 (Michie 2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. VA. CODE ANN. § 13.1-818 (Michie 2000).

Washington. Under Washington statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The relevant statute states that directors need not be residents of Washington nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws and that the articles or Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors. WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 24.03.095 (West 2000). There is, however, a minimum age requirement of 18 for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 24.03.020 (West 2000).

West Virginia. Under West Virginia statutory law, there is no statutorily imposed minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The

statute states that directors need not be residents of West Virginia nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws, which may also prescribe other qualifications for directors. W. VA. CODE § 31-1-139 (2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. W. VA. CODE § 31-1-26 (2000).

Wisconsin. Under Wisconsin statutory law, there is no minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute states that directors need not be residents of Wisconsin nor members of the corporation unless required by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws, which may also prescribe other qualifications for directors. WIS. STAT. ANN. § 181.0802 (West 2001). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. WIS. STAT. ANN. § 181.0201 (West 2001).

Wyoming. Under Wisconsin statutory law, there is no statutorily imposed minimum age requirement for directors of nonprofit corporations. The statute requires that all directors be individuals and states that the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may prescribe additional qualifications. WYO. STAT. ANN. § 17-19-802 (Michie 2000). There is no minimum age requirement for incorporators of nonprofit corporations. WYO. STAT. ANN. § 17-19-201 (Michie 2000).

If the law in your state prohibits young people from serving on boards, you can do something about it—you can change the law in your state.

**A. States that Have Changed Their Laws
(Michigan, Minnesota, New York)**

In Michigan, the board of a nonprofit corporation may include one or more directors who are 16 or 17 years old as long as the number does not exceed more than half of the total number of directors required for a quorum. If the nonprofit corporation has more than one 16 or 17-year-old who is on the board, it must state in its Charter the number of directors who are 16 or 17 years old:

Sec. 501a.

(1) A corporation organized for purposes described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 may include one or more directors on its board who are 16 or 17 years of age as long as that number does not exceed one-half the total number of directors required for a quorum for the transaction of business.

(2) If a corporation described in subsection (1) may have more than one director who is 16 or 17 years of age, the corporation shall state in its Articles of Incorporation the number of directors who may be 16 or 17 years of age.

In Michigan, Minnesota and New York, young people and adult allies worked to pass laws to ensure that nonprofits committed to youth participation could involve youth as board members.

In Minnesota, young people may serve on the board as long as the majority of directors are at least 18 years old. The law reads in part:

317A.205

The qualifications and method of election or appointment of directors may be imposed by or in the manner provided in the Articles or Bylaws, provided that directors must be natural persons and a majority of the directors must be adults. The Articles or Bylaws may provide for ex-officio directors who are directors because they hold another office or position.

In New York, eligibility for youth board membership depends on the nature of the corporation. In most cases, board members must be at least 18 years old, and they must be 16 years old if the organization

relates to certain educational, recreational, youth development, or delinquency prevention purposes. New York limits the number of young people that may serve depending on the nature of the corporation:

Sec. 701. (a)

Each director shall be at least 18 years of age; provided, however, that a member of the board of directors of any Girl Scout Council Chartered by Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Inc., or any Camp Fire Girls club member serving as a member of the board of directors on the National Board and National Council of Camp Fire Girls, Inc. or on the local board

Camp Fire Boys and Girls

In 1967, Camp Fire Boys and Girls elected two youth to its national board even though New York State law (Camp Fire was then incorporated in New York) set the minimum age for board members of nonprofit organizations at 21. Meanwhile, Camp Fire lobbied for the passage of a bill to change the age for nonprofit board members to 16. In 1975, New York adopted such a change.

Camp Fire has formulated a process for effective youth involvement in governance. The key to Camp Fire's success has been to institutionalize the lessons it has learned for making client/consumer inclusion in governance work. By developing specific procedures, supporting inclusion in its Bylaws and nominating procedures and Camp Fire has maintained its commitment to youth infusion.

Camp Fire policies require that at least two young people serve on local council boards and require that one-third of the national board come from within the Camp Fire system, including at least four young people, one of whom, is vice-president of youth leadership. This is ensured by clear, strong nominating procedures with the Camp Fire Bylaws mandating that committees have representation from youth, volunteer, and professional constituencies "inside" Camp Fire and two "at-large" members from outside Camp Fire.

Codifying institutional changes has made it easier for Camp Fire to evaluate how well it is doing in achieving its objectives of client/consumer engagement. Camp Fire has clear written expectations of board member responsibilities and an orientation procedure to establish a level playing field, bringing everyone up to the same information levels to reduce inherent cultural barriers between "insiders" and "outsiders."

In addition to its carefully written procedures and requirements, Camp Fire has learned to address more intangible attitudinal barriers and insider/outsider dynamics by setting an institutional norm that values everybody's input and puts everyone on equal footing on preparation, orientation, and conducting board business. Building a good environment for mutual respect is further enhanced by having a skilled, committed facilitator as Board chair who can attend simultaneously to keeping the group on task and the interpersonal workings running smoothly. There are also standing youth, volunteer, and professional advisory cabinets. The organization further encourages adult board members to attend national youth conferences. Their presence not only allows adults to see the competence and leadership of youth in action, it also helps those adults experience what it feels like to be in the cultural minority.

⁴ This story was provided by the National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations.

of the Camp Fire Girls, Inc. or any member of Aspira of America Inc. or Aspira of New York Inc. serving on the board of directors, shall be at least 16 years of age.

Notwithstanding the above, a corporation organized for educational purposes primarily for the benefit of individuals below 18 years of age may include one director below 18 years of age who is at least 16 years of age. Further, a corporation organized for recreational or youth development and delinquency prevention purposes primarily for the benefit of individuals below 18 years of age may include one or more directors, the number of which shall not exceed one-half of the total number of directors for a quorum for the transaction of business, who are at least 16 years of age but not over 18 years of age. The Certificate of Incorporation or the Bylaws may prescribe other qualifications for directors, provided, however, any corporation organized for recreation or youth development and delinquency prevention purposes, when increasing the number of directors between the ages of 16 and 18 years old to more than one, shall prescribe in its Certificate of Incorporation the number of such directors not to exceed the limitations of this paragraph.

B. Tips for How to Change Your Law

Like the efforts in these states, you can organize a legislative campaign to change the law in your state.

Lawmakers may not understand why it is so important to involve youth in decision-making positions. Young people and their supporters can influence lawmakers through education, grassroots lobbying, and the media to understand that the law should support youth participation.

But make sure you have enough support for your law before you mount a major campaign. By opening

up a debate on youth board involvement, you risk the possibility that a lawmaker or opposing organization will try to make the law worse by adding more restrictions against young people. It is important to have a strategy to prepare for potential opposition and the risks that are involved.

Also make sure you have a strong intergenerational group of people lobbying for the change of law. All all-adult group may not have the credibility that a mixed group will. Likewise an all-youth group may not have the connections needed to change the policy.

You don't need to be an expert, lawyer, or a voter to change laws. All you need is the right information and passion for the empowerment of young people.

Some information to get you started⁵:

Find a mentor—someone familiar with the legal and legislative process who can help you develop a campaign to change the law. This person can be an advocate, an organizer, a lawyer in your organization, a lobbyist, or your own state legislator or a member of her or his staff. Get their ideas for how to proceed.

Get supporters—find out which individuals and agencies in your state wrote the existing law or could support your efforts to change it. Contact organizations that have had success passing similar laws and find out how they were able to improve their laws. Ask your supporters to help you organize people and organizations to contact elected officials and the media.

Organize a youth/adult coalition—of concerned individuals and organizations to develop strategies for getting the law changed. Meet regularly to brainstorm ways to influence lawmakers to understand why a change is necessary. A joint effort by young people and adults is critical. Each group will bring different

5 Some of these suggestions are outlined in the book *The 26% Youth Solution*, listed in the back of this publication in the Resources Appendix.

perspectives and experiences to the discussion and influence the political process in different ways.

Contact elected officials—meet, write, call, or email elected officials or their aides to gain support for your law. Your state legislator, a lawyer, or an advocate can write the law for you.*

Attract media attention—gather success stories of youth board participation and alert newspapers, radio, and television about what you're doing.

Obtain funds—keep in mind that changing laws takes time and sometimes money. Consider delegating to several people the responsibility of researching grants and obtaining individual donations to obtain funds for your initiative.

How Michigan Changed Their Law

In 1990, high school aged youth in Michigan who were involved as members of community foundation youth advisory committees raised the questions—why are we only advisors? Why can't we have an equal vote as the adults do?

Faced with a legal opinion from the State Attorney General that youth under age 18 could not serve on a board and vote, these youth led the charge to change Michigan law. Using the New York law as the model, and after consulting with the attorney for the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF), they drafted legislation that would allow 16 and 17-year-olds to serve on the Boards of nonprofit organizations with full voting privileges.

Representative Mark Schauer from Battle Creek, Michigan, who was familiar with and supportive of the work of the Battle Creek Community Foundation Youth Advisory Committee, agreed to sponsor the legislation and to hold the first hearing at the annual Youth Leadership Conference in June 1998 sponsored by the Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project of CMF. Ten youth grantmakers wrote their own testimony that was presented to Representative Schauer before an enthusiastic audience of 200 youth grantmakers.

* As noted previously, we recommend that similar to Michigan, organizations that are trying to change their laws to become more youth-friendly do not propose laws that specify the ages of youth board members (beyond the statement "below the age of 18"). Who's to say a 17-year-old is more qualified to serve than a 13-year-old? By not specifying an age, your board can determine membership based on the qualifications that you need, not the age of the person.

Additionally, we do not recommend advocating for laws that specify the names of nonprofit organizations that can have youth board members or the number of youth that can serve. We have provided examples of changes in state laws so that you can determine which language will be most helpful to youth in your state.

During the testimonies, the young people spoke on different topics, such as how their life was changed due to being apart of a Youth Advisory Council, how young people were making changes throughout Michigan, and how young people's opinions really do matter. Representative Schauer was so impressed with the comments that he invited a group of the youth to testify before a larger committee of his colleagues in September. Needless to say, they too, were impressed, and the Bill quickly moved through the House and Senate without dissent. In December 1998 Governor John Engler signed into law Public Act 444. Youth ages 16 and 17 are now serving on the Boards of community foundations and other youth-serving nonprofit organizations in Michigan.

According to Robert Collier, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Council of Michigan Foundations, the law was passed so quickly because young people led the charge—they did their homework in developing clear statements on the benefits to youth, the nonprofits, and the community at large; obtained support from both Democrats and Republicans; and enlisted adults as allies to speak in support of the legislation⁶.

⁶ More than 1,500 high school age youth are annually involved as grantmakers with 86 community foundation youth advisory committees in Michigan. For more information on the Michigan effort, visit www.mcfyp.org, or call the Council of Michigan Foundations at (616) 842-7080. The web site includes a database of more than 250 other youth philanthropy projects in 30 states.

Appendix

Now that you have learned how to legally involve young people on your board, it is important that you have the tools and resources to successfully support youth in their board roles. This Appendix includes an Organizational Assessment Checklist, an overview of our core publication 14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making and some tips for youth board members from youth board members. Contact Youth on Board for additional publications.

A. Organizational Assessment Checklist found in our publication 14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making

1) Know Why You Want to Involve Young People

- Has your group thought about why you are involving young people in decision-making?
- Have you articulated these thoughts to others verbally or in writing (such as in a mission statement)?

2) Assess Your Readiness

Have you talked to and assessed the commitment of:

- the board?
- staff members?
- young people?
- other parties for youth involvement?

3) Determine Your Structure for Youth Involvement

- Have you considered involving young people directly in an existing adult governing body, such as a board of directors or community task force?
- Have you considered creating an all-youth body such as a youth advisory board, youth planning committee, or peer mediation group?
- Have you considered putting young people on your staff as consultants and volunteers (e.g., as peer leaders or program staff)?

4) Identify Organizational Barriers

- Have you created policies or amended Bylaws stating that young people will be a permanent part of governing your organization, advising on curriculum, or developing programs?
- Has your organization taken the time to address the budget and staff considerations of involving young people?
- Are young people's terms of office and voting rights similar or equal to those of adults?
- Is there a replacement system if young people's terms end early (e.g., due to relocation or other life changes)?
- Do young people have access to the resources needed to participate in your group's work, and are expenses paid for in advance as opposed to reimbursed?
- Is there some leeway for young people's participation in school activities? (Work meetings are often acceptable reasons for adults to miss meetings. Is a big basketball game given the same consideration?)
- Have you developed a conflict of interest policy if young people are advising in a program they are involved in?

5A) Overcome Attitudinal Barriers—Adults

- Are young people involved in all issues, not just those affecting youth?
- Does the group understand that youth members do not represent the voice of all young people?
- Do you continually ask young people how you can assist them better, and do you take their recommendations seriously?

- Have you considered your own negative assumptions and stereotypes about young people in order to learn about sharing real authority with young people?
- Have you considered adjusting your professional “adult” language to ideas that young people can best understand?

5B) Overcome Attitudinal Barriers—Young People

- Have you recognized your own value in having your voice heard?
- Do you take leadership roles whenever possible (e.g., asking to be on committees)?
- Do you share your thoughts even when you are not comfortable?
- Do you push for policies that promote young people’s power (e.g., youth on committees, etc.)?

6) Address Legal Issues

- Are board members aware of their obligations, including the duty of care—and duty of loyalty?
- Have you researched the specific laws concerning youth governance in your state and contract laws relating to your governing body?

7) Recruit Young People

- When recruiting members, do you recruit in ways that will attract a diverse group of young people?
- Do you use your recruitment process to educate your constituency about the project they are involved in as well as the importance of involving young people in communities?
- Have you thought out your recruitment criteria?
- If an all-adult group, do you select at least two young people to participate so they do not feel alone or isolated?

8) Create A Strong Orientation Process

- Is an adult of authority available to explain commitments to concerned parents?
- Is an orientation system in place?
- Do you have a letter of agreement or contract that describes the responsibilities of the program and the role you are asking the young person to take in the organization?

9) Train Young People for Their Roles

- Is there a system for youth members to train new youth members?
- Is there training for young people on presenting to groups (noting that all-adult groups can be specifically difficult)?
- Is there skill training for young people on topics such as team building, presentation skills, facilitating meetings, and reading budgets?

10) Conduct Intergenerational Training

- Is there training for adults on understanding young people and being strong allies?
- Are you innovative in your trainings? Are they experimental and fun?
- Is there room for everyone to listen to each other and laugh at meetings?

11) Make Meetings Work

- Do you start meetings with warm-up exercises or frequently split into small groups?
- Is there time for all members to speak at meetings?
- Do you use appreciations during meetings?

12) Develop a Mentoring Plan

- Is a mentor or “buddy” system in place?
- Is there staff to support youth members (e.g., preparation, transportation for meetings, etc.)?
- Is there regular contact between youth members and adult leaders (e.g., Executive Directors, Board Chairs, principals, CEOs, etc.)?
- Do mentors make certain that new members attend meetings, have the support they need, and become well oriented to the organization they have joined?

13) Build Youth/Adult Relationships

- Does everyone understand that strong relationships are key to successful programs and social change movements?
- Is there informal time for young people and adults to build relationships with each other?
- Do you keep your commitment to young people consistent, not letting them be overshadowed by “more important” meetings and commitments?
- Do you make sure young people are given the opportunity to speak on every issue not just program issues?
- If young people seem not to have an opinion, do you respond and give them the information they need?
- Is equal weight given to young people’s opinions?
- Does the organization involve parents from the start?
- Does the organization let the young person know it will be speaking with their parents but not breaking confidentiality?

14) Create Support Networks

- Do young people keep in touch with their peers about their leadership roles and their program?
- Is there specific time for young people to network with other youth leaders doing similar work?
- Is there time set aside for adults to network with other adults doing similar work?

B. A General Overview from our publication

14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making

Point 1: Know Why You Want to Involve Young People

- It’s a civil rights issue: A shift is needed in our communities to allow young people’s concerns to be heard and taken seriously. They have the same right as adults to voice their hopes, ideas, and fears.
- It’s a long-term growth issue: Adding young people to the governance of an aging organization can usher in a new generation of leadership.
- Develop clear goals and objectives: It is important for everyone in your organization to determine the exact reasons why you want to involve young people in decision-making roles and the steps needed to get there.

Point 2: Assess Your Readiness

- Conduct an organizational assessment: Determine what is needed in order for youth to be successfully integrated into your governance structure.
- Investing your board and staff: Assembling a board committee to research and help prepare for youth involvement can be an excellent way to invest your board in this idea. Staff members can support new young members by helping them prepare for meetings or by providing transportation.

- Investing young people: Recruiting for new youth members is a great chance to educate the youth in your program about the role of your governing body.

Point 3: Determine Structure for Youth Involvement

- All of the approaches to youth involvement fall into two general categories: 1) Involve young people directly in an existing adult governing body; for example, adding several youth positions to an existing board, church council, community task force, city commission, or advisory board; or 2) Create an all-youth or youth-run adjunct body.

Point 4: Identify Organizational Barriers

- Institutionalize youth in governance: If you are creating a youth advisory group, ensure that it is a permanent structure not one that will disappear with a change in administration.
- Conflict of interest: Your group should establish clear conflict of interest guidelines and apply these to any potential new youth or adult members.
- Budget and staff considerations: The idea of involving youth may appeal to your organization, but there are budget concerns to address. Do you have the staff time, transportation funds, and the petty cash for such things as reimbursements and refreshments at evening meetings?

Point 5: Overcome Attitudinal Barriers

- Adults must overcome their own stereotypes: We all have stereotypes about young people. To work well with young people, we must recognize these negative assumptions and learn to share real authority.
- Youth need to know that they deserve to have a say: Young people deserve to have their voices heard. Recognizing this issue isn't always easy because we are so often told that young people have nothing to say. Youth need to recognize their own value.

- Speak a common language: Most professional settings speak a very "adult" language. When young people are involved, ideas must be presented in a way that allows everyone to understand.

Point 6: Address Legal Issues

- The obligations of board members: The directors of a nonprofit corporation have legal rights and responsibilities, which include the duty to perform their responsibilities in good faith and in a manner that they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the corporation as well as a duty of loyalty to keep the interest of the corporation paramount above personal interests when acting for or on behalf of the corporation. Specific responsibilities may include supporting the mission of the organization, ensuring fiscal stability, selecting and removing the executive director and board officers, and compliance with relevant laws, policies, and procedures.
- Legality of young people serving on boards: Because each state makes their own laws, you should check to see what the laws are concerning youth board involvement in your state. For the most part, you will find three different kinds of state laws: 1) Laws that state it is legal for youth to serve as board members with certain restrictions; 2) Laws prohibiting youth board involvement; and 3) No law on the issue.
- Incorporator Requirements: Some state laws prohibit young people from signing the legal paperwork required to start a nonprofit organization.
- Contract considerations: Separate from age requirements for board members or incorporators, states maintain a minimum age requirement for persons that can create or enter into contracts. Your board should research the contract laws in your state since the board has the authority to approve contracts.

Point 7: Recruit Young People

- Be clear about what you want: Before selecting new members, consider creating a governing body profile—

a simple list of characteristics already found in the group, as well as those skills you hope new members will possess.

- Choose motivated and committed youth: Never select a young person just because you think it would be a good experience for her or him.

- Add two or more young people: Adding more than one young person to an adult governing body offers more support to youth in governance positions. It is important that young people not feel alone or isolated in your group.

Point 8: Create a Strong Orientation Process

- New member orientation: Your orientation program for new members should outline your organization's mission, programs, structure, and history. It should cover the relationships between staff, board, and funders, as well as the roles and responsibilities of your governing body.

- Letter of agreement: All members should receive a detailed letter of agreement that describes their term and responsibilities. This agreement clarifies expectations for all parties and solidifies commitment.

- Parental orientation: In addition to conducting an in-depth orientation with young people, it is important to help their parents or guardians feel comfortable with your organization, as well. Parents or guardians should know at least one individual from your group.

Point 9: Train Young People for Their Roles

- Training for young people: Young people will need skills training that covers reading budgets, working on committees, and other governance issues. Many groups go as far as setting up a buddy system and pairing a seasoned member with each new member for questions, advice, and general support.

- Training for adults: Most adults have never carefully considered the assumptions they hold about young people. Provide opportunities for adults to

explore their stereotypes about youth and how they can learn to be good allies for young people.

- Be innovative: Unfortunately, when most of us think about training, we get stuck in the classroom mentality—endless lectures and textbooks. There are scores of people, places, activities, books, and films that we can learn from. Which ones are right for your group?

Point 10: Conduct Intergenerational Training

- Intergenerational training: Once young people are in decision-making positions, you will need to continue training the whole group. The focus of intergenerational training is to bridge the gap between adults and young people so they can work more effectively together.

- Keep it fun: Don't underestimate how important it can be for people to laugh together. Adults can be a bit tight-lipped when discussing some of the topics that should be included in intergenerational training (such as how youth really view adults and vice versa). Laughing allows everyone the freedom to let go of his or her inhibitions for a little while.

- Listening is key: The most important thing that can happen during this training is for people to really listen to each other. Don't worry as much about getting through an agenda as creating space for participants to open up and hear what each other is saying.

Point 11: Make Meetings Work

- Meeting times: Your meeting times may conflict with young people's schedules. While young people may not have teleconferences to keep them from meetings, they do have basketball games, school play rehearsals, and family engagements. They, in fact, have less control over their time than most adults do.

- Interactive agendas: Everyone appreciates an engaging meeting. A few small changes to your meet-

ing structure can help everyone be involved, especially young people. Include small group time in which everyone has a chance to speak. Go around the group and ask each person to give feedback. When reviewing a budget, do it in pairs, and always make sure there is plenty of opportunity to ask questions.

- Use appreciations: How often does it happen that you are plugging away at work, not getting much done, and maybe even feeling a little hopeless about how much more you have to do? Then someone walks by and says, “Hey. You’re doing a really good job. Thanks.” You return to your work, but the load feels a little lighter. This is the power of appreciation. We suggest that you create a regular structured time for appreciations during meetings because many work settings are just not in the habit of doing this kind of thing.

Point 12: Develop a Mentoring Plan

- Recommended for new members: Mentors, whether they are experienced adult or young group members, provide critical support to young people by helping them learn new terms, understand organizational culture, and build confidence to act as full partners in the group.

- Know your responsibilities: In order for mentoring to work, mentors should know what’s expected of them. Mentors should make sure that new members attend meetings, have the support they need, and are well oriented to the organization they have joined.

- Tips for new young members: Young people should remember that their mentors are there to help them. In order for this relationship to run smoothly, young people should, among other things, trust their mentor, ask lots of questions, and speak up when they have an opinion.

Point 13: Build Youth/Adult Relationships

- Relationships are of primary importance: Strong relationships are the key to all successful programs and social change movements. It is a solid network of committed people that create social change.

- Adults, go easy on yourselves: Adults tend to have a bad habit of being hard on themselves. They often feel like they don’t do enough or that they should have it all figured out by now. Blaming yourself or other adults is never an effective path to change. We need to recognize that anything we understand about working with young people is wonderful.

- Remember the importance of involving parents: It is vital to include parents of youth right from the start. Get to know them. Share information with them. Answer their questions. Invite them to events. Appreciate them and the work that their child is doing for your group. In addition, let young people know that you are going to be talking to their parents. Let them know that you are not checking up on them or breaking any confidentiality but that talking with their parents will insure that they know how important young people are to your organization.

Point 14: Create Support Networks

- Network young leaders: By being networked with other youth leaders, young people see that they are not alone in their work and that other youth care about the same issues.

- Adults, support each other: Just as youth need the support of other youth, allies to young people need opportunities to talk with one another about their experiences.

C. Tips for Youth Board Members from Youth Board Members

- 1) **You belong on the board.** Your opinions are key to the work the board is doing. You are a part of the community and organizations need to hear from you.
- 2) **Find allies.** Find people who take young people seriously and spend time with them outside of formal meeting time.
- 3) **Ask questions.** If you don't understand something, make sure to ask someone. You need to understand what's going on because if you don't understand you can't contribute.
- 4) **Build a support base for yourself.** Talk to friends openly about what frustrates, excites, or bores you about your work.
- 5) **Get the word out.** It's not just about serving on your board. It's about giving other young people information they can use to take charge.
- 6) **Know that you're not alone.** There are many young people on boards working to make a difference in how things are done. There is a youth voice movement going on, and you're part of it.
- 7) **If you're feeling bored, it's up to you to make board work interesting.** Learn the language of the board or of the organization. Ask the questions you need to ask. Say at least two things at every board meeting. This will help you stay involved.
- 8) **If you don't like how something is going, change it.** If you don't think the agenda is interactive enough or you don't like your committee assignment, speak up and work with people to make changes.
- 9) **Don't get discouraged.** If it feels like people aren't listening or adults are disrespectful, keep trying. If it continues, bring it up. The group needs to deal with the issue.
- 10) **Go to all meetings.** Find out the meeting dates, be prepared, and learn about how things work.
- 11) **Join a committee and take on leadership.** Get involved in the work outside of meetings, and make your presence known.
- 12) **Relax and be yourself.** You are a member of the governing body, and you should show who you really are. Think of other people in the group as your peers.

D. Resources

Board Development

Clients on Board: Profiles of Effective Governance, published by the National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations (202 347-2080, www.nassembly.org)

Youth Involvement

14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making, published by Youth on Board (617 623-9900 x1242, www.youthonboard.org)

Youth on Board: Why and How to Involve Young People in Organizational Decision-Making, published by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards and Youth on Board (617 623-9900 x1242, www.youthonboard.org)

Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults & Organizations, published by the National 4-H Council (301 961-2837, www.fourhcouncil.edu/cyd), The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, At the Table (301 961-2972, www.AtTheTable.org, aweißenbach@theinnovationcenter.org). Consult this web site for a database providing examples and tips for successful youth board involvement.

Risk Management/Preventing Liability

Kidding Around? Be Serious! A Commitment to Safe Service Opportunities for Young People, published by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center (202 785-3891, www.nonprofitrisk.org)

Volunteerism

Points of Light Foundation, 1400 I Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005 (202 729-8000, www.pointsoflight.org)

Youth Organizing & Activism

The Co/Motion Guide to Youth-Led Social Change, published by the Alliance for Justice, (202 822-6070, www.afj.org)

The 26% Youth Solution, published by the Activism 2000 Project (800 KID-POWER, www.youthactivism.org)

Center for Youth as Resources, 1700 K Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20006 (202 261-4185, www.yar.org)

Community Partnerships with Youth, Inc., 6319 Constitution Drive, Fort Wayne, IN 46804 (212 436-4402, www.cpyinc.org)

YOUTH ON BOARD RESOURCE MATERIAL

Book • **14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth
in Decision Making**

- Booklets**
- **Youth on Board: Why and How to Involve Young
People in Organizational Decision-Making**
 - **Your Guide to Youth Board Involvement and the Law**
 - **Tips from Young People on Good Youth/Adult
Relationships**
 - **Get the Word Out!**
 - **Leading a Youth Worker Resource Group**
 - **Listening to Young People**
 - **Understanding and Supporting Young People**
 - **Special Time**
- Video** • **At the Table: Youth Voices in Decision Making**

Youth on Board also offers individualized training
and consulting services.



**Youth on Board • 58 Day Street • 3rd Floor • P.O. Box 440322
Somerville, MA 02144 • 617 623-9900 x1242
<http://www.youthonboard.org> • youthonboard@aol.com**