



Youth Development Executives of King County

Working together to advance the youth development field

ADVOCACY AND POLICY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Updated 11.2016

Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC) is a coalition of youth-serving organizations and a cross-sector convener working to improve outcomes for young people. Representing the executive leadership of King County youth-serving nonprofit organizations, YDEKC is uniquely positioned to advocate for and with our members and the youth they serve; to convene critical cross-sector partnerships; and to develop field- and organizational-level knowledge about best practices in youth development. In the last five years, YDEKC has established itself as a key voice for youth-serving providers in the region.

Mission

Our mission is to build and unify the youth development sector.

Vision

Our vision is that every young person has the opportunity and support they need to learn, lead, connect, contribute, and thrive.

We Believe In:

- **Strengths:** We believe that every young person has strengths and potential to be realized.
- **Building Bridges:** We build bridges between our organizations and across systems to create an ecosystem of supports for young people. We stay engaged to find solutions and support their implementation.
- **Racial Equity:** We are committed to building a society where race is not a predictor of one's success. We must address racism and racial inequities in our own organizations and institutions while also working for the policies, programs and systems in other sectors that will lead to optimum outcomes for all.
- **Opportunity for All:** We seek to close opportunity gaps and ensure access to high quality opportunities are available to all – especially those who need them most.
- **Innovation:** We innovate, challenge norms, and disrupt long-standing practices to create better pathways for our organizations and the youth they serve.

Why we work together:

- **Issues of young people we serve are connected:** we can be more powerful if we are speaking about the overlapping needs of the young people (and families) that we serve – particularly when we prioritize our messages.
- **A coordinated voice can better advance our field:** There has not been a coordinated or “loud” voice for youth in our cities, county or state to advance the field. (Early childhood, health, and education voices are more coordinated than the youth development field).
- **Greater public awareness can translate to greater political will:** The general public does not have a strong understanding of the programs and services provided by the Youth Development Field. Raising public awareness about the importance of youth development opportunities for young people can help increase political will for funding and improving systems and supports for young people.



Youth Development Executives of King County

Working together to advance the youth development field

Advocacy and Policy Principles:

In addition to operationalizing our belief statements, we infuse the following principles into our decision making:

- We will strive to make decisions that promote equity, anti-racism and anti-discrimination;
- Our positions will benefit youth and the youth development field;
- We recognize and value diversity of opinion;
- We think critically before making decisions;
- We will make decisions quickly and reserve the right to revisit/revise as new information becomes available;
- Members are responsible for governing their own potential conflicts of interest;
- We reserve the right to not take action.

HOW WE ACT:

YDEKC may choose to lead on some issues, but more often will engage with and support others in their efforts to advocate for specific issues that are aligned with the YDEKC platform. YDEKC will participate in year round activities to broaden the dialogue about issues facing the youth development field and young people.

Actions may include:

- Convening stakeholders around important advocacy topics through “lunching with leaders” or other gatherings
- Providing education and awareness through live mechanisms or electronic communications about how to take action as a citizen and a provider
- Connection to our own and partner coalition Action Alerts
- Meeting directly with elected officials or other decision makers
- Signing-on to position statements or letters
- Writing letters, op-eds or other communications and encouraging others to act
- Testifying and coordinating joint testimony at the legislature, King County Council, municipal councils, school boards or other decision making entities

WHEN WE ACT:

Positions taken on issues must relate to our mission. YDEKC may take a leadership role or a support role in favor or opposition to a particular issue; and retains the right to remain neutral on an issue.

When **YDEKC leads** on an issue, it must have field or sector level implications which most often will fall under three categories:

- **Systems change advocacy:** working for change in the community or systems that will benefit the field or a significant portion of young people in King County.
- **Legislative advocacy:** working to change statutes and budgets to better meet the needs of youth and youth services at the city, county, state and/or federal level.
- **Public will building:** raising awareness among elected officials, and the general public about the essential nature of the interconnected ecosystem of youth services.



Youth Development Executives of King County

Working together to advance the youth development field

WHAT WE STAND FOR (ANNUAL YDEKC POLICY AGENDA):

The YDEKC Advocacy Committee will generate an advocacy agenda on an annual basis to be vetted and prioritized with the full YDEKC membership at our annual summit. Issue areas may be broad and allow for advocacy in multiple jurisdictions, or may be a more targeted issue (such as a legislative bill) that YDEKC, and mobilized YDEKC members, will advocate for.

PROTOCOL FOR TAKING A POSITION (ACTING):

- **Issues that HAVE been vetted and included in the YDEKC Annual Policy Agenda** may be acted upon by the Advocacy Committee, Executive Committee, full YDEKC Advisory Board or staff on behalf of YDEKC Membership.
- **Issues that HAVE NOT been vetted and included in the YDEKC Annual Policy Agenda** must follow this protocol:
 1. A minimum of 3 YDEKC Member Organizations raise an issue related to our mission that needs to be addressed through action.
 2. Member organizations bring issue to Advocacy Committee, Advisory Board or Staff, who vet topic for relevancy against overall YDEKC platform & goals.
 3. YDEKC's Strategy Screen is used to determine issue fit for YDEKC.
 4. Staff and Advocacy Committee leads determine if it should move forward and acts accordingly.
 5. If there is a response or next steps for action resulting from the advocacy position, the full membership will be notified.

Adopted 3/1/2013 at YDEKC's Annual Member Summit, updated 8/2014 and 10/2016 by Advocacy Committee and Advisory Board. This protocol will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis by the Advocacy Committee and amended as necessary.