

SAMPLE YOUTHBUILD ORIENTATION

Many Youthbuild programs conduct an orientation or “mental toughness” program at the beginning of their work with a new group of participants. Some use the orientation as the last step (or test), before selecting who will be enrolled as a program participant; others use the orientation as the first step in team building for a new group of selected participants.

Attached is a sample annotated orientation schedule that can be used for both the final selection of participants and/or for team building.

Following in-person interviews with all applicants, Youthbuild staff invite to the orientation those applicants they believe would most benefit from the program and who seem most likely complete the program. The number of invitees will depend on the number of program slots available. It is best to over-enroll in the beginning of a program cycle because participants will drop out – some during orientation and some later on.

The purpose of the orientation is to check each applicant’s “mental toughness” – his or her desire to be in the program and willingness and ability to work hard, follow instructions, and get along with others. The orientation can also serve to set the tone of a new program cycle or as a final assessment of each applicant by staff before selection of participants is completed.

The orientation is designed to expose potential participants to the kinds of activities and demands they will encounter once enrolled full time in Youthbuild. It is also the first step in program team building among participants.

The following is a day-by-day overview the orientation as outlined in the weekly diagrams.

WEEK ONE

Monday morning

- **Welcome and congratulations** – The young people who received invitations to the orientation are warmly welcomed. Following roll call, attendance check, or sign-in, staffs enthusiastically congratulate participants. The point is made that out of more than 300 applicants (or whatever number of applications received) they are in (or in the first step in the program.) They are encouraged to feel proud of themselves.
- **Introductions** – Staff introduces themselves and their role in the program. They role model an introduction by telling a little about themselves (hobbies, interests, family, etc.) Each staff member also congratulates applicants and points to something they can look forward to in the orientation.

Following staff introductions, applicants introduce themselves. Staff can present a question for them to answer during their introduction – What are you most looking forward to? How did you feel when you got your invitation to orientation? Why do you want to be in Youthbuild? The question should be simple and previously asked during the selection process.

- **Program Overview** – Staff gives a brief overview of the goals and activities of the Youthbuild program. This serves as a reminder of what the applicants are aiming for.

- **Orientation Overview** – Staff gives a more thorough overview of the orientation and explains any rules or guidelines. Programs should set high attendance expectations. Many programs require 100 percent attendance for orientation and allow only one or two hardiness's. Many programs have also discovered that it is best not to pay participants for their time in orientation because many who decide not to enroll in the program will wait to they get their pay for orientation and then drop out. Participants who are willing to go through orientation without being paid show a positive level of motivation. Programs often compensate those who complete orientation with a special “bonus” or stipend during the first week of actual programming following the orientation.

Whatever rules, policies and procedures a program adopts for orientation must be strictly enforced. If they aren't, participants will realize that they can easily “get over” on staff and will often lose their respect for the program.

- **Expectations** – Participants are broken into groups of four or five and asked to come up with two lists: 1) What they expect of staff for the coming two weeks and 2) What they expect of each other. Each group comes up with list of expectations. Staff works on a list of what they expect from participants and what participants can expect from them. Lists are presented, compared, contrasted. A final list of expectations of staff and participants is drawn up and posted so all can consult it during the upcoming two weeks.

- **Lunch** – On the first day of orientation, the program provides lunch (usually pizza), and staff mingle with participants, talk with them, and encourage conversation.

Monday Afternoon

- **Roll call** – Attendance is taken four times a day during orientation—in the morning, after morning break, after lunch, and following afternoon break. A participant is absent or late (tardy) if he does not respond when his name is called.

- **Overview of Construction Project** – The construction component of Youthbuild is often the part of the program that is most unfamiliar but also most intriguing to participants. It catches their attention, so it is a good idea to get into the construction component early in the orientation. The construction manager gives an overview of the on-site project. If blue prints are available this becomes an opportunity to do some basic instruction on blue print reading. Applicants can be broken into groups to view blue prints. The construction manager can talk about what the participants will be doing on the site.

- **Construction site visit** – Following the overview, participants tour the construction site.

Tuesday Morning

- **Welcome, Roll Call Group Warm-up** – It is helpful to have activities that will help participants get to know each other. You can use a “Question of the day” that each person has to answer, e.g., What is your favorite movie of all time? What is your favorite song? Who is your hero?
- **Roadblocks Exercise** – This activity gives participants an idea of what they will be doing in individual and group counseling. Participants are divided into groups of four or five. Each group sits by a very large piece of newsprint paper (6 ft x 3 ft) on which is drawn a road that begins in the lower left corner and winds around the sheet of paper, ending at the upper right corner. The road is meant to symbolize the path from entrance into the program to graduation. Participants are given rectangular pieces of colored paper on which they write out a “roadblock” or potential problem that will prevent them from completing the program and graduating (one roadblock per piece of paper). Participants take turns putting their roadblocks up on the large road illustration and explaining the roadblock to the group. When all the roadblocks are up, participants brainstorm about solutions that will help them break through the roadblocks.
- **Math class** – A good first topic for the orientation math class is using a measuring tape and adding fractions. Academic teachers give a talk on “Your Friend the Inch” and teach how to read inches, half inches, quarter inches, etc. on the measuring tape. They also present a basic lesson on adding fractions. Participants are then divided into teams of two and complete a worksheet that involves determining the measurement of all kinds of things in and around the classroom – blackboards, desks, room sizes, etc. If possible, hallways and other offices outside the classroom can be included. The worksheet also includes problems that require adding the measurements. (Example: the length of the blackboard plus the width of the closet door.). When the teams are done the worksheet is reviewed.

Tuesday Afternoon

- **Construction safety** – Construction staff show movie or give talk on safety on the construction site and cover basic safety procedures.
- **Vocation Ed** – Basic Power Tools – Construction staff give participants hands on experience with two or three power tools. Demonstrate safe use of each tool.
- **Drug Free Workplace** – All staff join discussion of the need to maintain a drug free workplace and explain the drug testing policy of the program. Becoming drug free is tied to the issue of safety. The big question is: Would you want to work on the construction site with or next to someone who is high? The idea is to get a strong group commitment to safety and being drug free.

Wednesday

- **Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the Day, Overview of the day**
- **On-site work/Academic work** – Participants are divided into two teams. One team goes to the construction site to work, the other goes to the classroom for academic instruction. After lunch the teams switch places. The goal is to introduce participants to longer continuous segments of both school and work.

Thursday

- **Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the Day**
- **Labels exercise** – This is another exposure to a group counseling type of activity. Staff leads a brief discussion about how people often label others. These labels can range from hurtful stereotypes to complements for a good quality. Participants are encouraged to think about how negative labels can hurt or hold back someone, especially if the labeled person believes the label. Participants are divided into groups of four or five and are asked to think of and then share experiences where they have received negative labels. Staff and group members can explore together how destructive such labeling can be (especially labels related to race, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance). Following the discussion each participant is asked to come up with positive labels to describe themselves. Staff and participants form a large circle and in turn each person states his new label. Examples “I am a strong, capable woman who is proud to be here.” “I am a proud, intelligent, drug-free African-American who cares about his community.” “I belong to a strong Latino family with a proud heritage and I am an asset to my family.” The idea is to have participants begin to think in positive terms about their identity and to challenge negative labels they may have unconsciously accepted about themselves.
- **Film** – Show a film that portrays a character (preferably real life) who overcomes odds to succeed at some goal. The film “Rudy,” based on a true story, is about a young man from a working class family who was told he was not smart enough to get into Notre Dame University nor big or strong enough to make the football team. He does both by working hard and overcoming significant obstacles. Staff can stop the film at certain points to engage participants in discussion as the story unfolds.

Thursday afternoon

- **Welcome, Roll call, Question of the Day**
- **Fun activity** – Let participants know that Youthbuild is not all work. Go for a hike, or go bowling -- whatever.

Friday morning

- **Community Service Project** – Participants carry out a community service project, preferably one that puts them into contact with others in need, e.g., seniors, handicapped, little children.
- **Scavenger hunt assignments**– Participants are asked to get themselves into teams of four or five. The term “scavenger hunt” is defined and then each team is given a list of the items that the teams will scavenge for over the weekend. Besides silly objects, include such things as a library card or proof of voter registration for each team member. Let teams know that prizes will be given for certain categories – the prettiest “pink thing,” the ugliest stuffed animal, etc. The idea of the scavenger hunt is for participants to keep in touch with each other over the weekend and thus not lose touch with the program.

WEEK TWO

Monday Morning

- **Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the day**
- **Overview of the week** – staff explain schedule of events
- **Scavenger hunt results** – teams present their findings; prizes awarded for teams that found all items and to teams winning special awards (e.g., the prettiest pink thing)
- **Group Counseling** – Counselor conducts a class/discussion on a topic that will apply to everyone in the program such as conflict resolution, anger management, family dynamics, etc.
- **First aid training** – Red Cross basic first aid training, preferably resulting in participants receiving certificates from Red Cross

Monday Afternoon

- **First Aid training** – continued from morning
- **Ropes Course preview** – staff brief participants on the Tuesday’s all day ropes course activity.

Tuesday – all day

- **Ropes course** – the ropes course accomplishes in one day what would take weeks for staff to accomplish in regard to teamwork.

Wednesday – all day

- ***On-site Construction*** – participants get to experience a full day of work on the construction site.

Thursday – all day

- ***Academic work*** –participants spend the entire day in school.

NOTE: Participants can be divided into two groups for the Wednesday and Thursday activities, with groups alternating spending all day at the job site and all day at school. This may depend on staffing issues.

Friday morning

- ***Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the day***
- ***Small Group discussion*** – participants are divided into groups of four or five and discuss what they have learned about themselves during the orientation.
- ***Appreciations*** – participant and staff give appreciations
- ***Presentation of Certificates of Completion for Orientation*** – participants are given certificates of completion and congratulated
- ***Next steps*** – Staff explain what the next steps are. If the orientation was used as a final step in selection, participants are told they will be notified if they have been accepted into the program. If the orientation was the first part of the program, staff explains the beginning of regular programming.

SAMPLE YOUTHBUILD ORIENTATION – WEEK ONE

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Congratulations • Introductions • Program Overview • Orientation Overview • Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, roll call, warm-up, • Roadblocks exercise • Math class – measuring exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, roll call, warm-up • Team 1 – on-site • Team 2 -- school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll call, Warm-up • Labels exercise • Film: Rudy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Service project • Scavenger hunt assignment

L U N C H

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Construction Project • Site Visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction safety • Power tool Voc. Ed • Drug Free workplace discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team 1 – school • Team 2 – on-site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun Activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No participant programming • Staff meeting
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SAMPLE YOUTHBUILD ORIENTATION – WEEK TWO

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, Roll Call • Overview of the week • Scavenger hunt results • Group counseling: conflict resolution • First aid training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ropes Course – all day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site Construction all day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School – all day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion • Presentation of orientation certificates • Next steps
L	U	N	C	H
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid training (continued) • Ropes Course preview 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No participant programming • Staff meeting