

Preventing destructive behavior in Dexter youth.  
Action. Prevention. Seriously!

## Youth Empowerment Solutions

*A community-level prevention program that empowers youth  
to work with adults in making positive changes in their communities*

Developed By: © Prevention Research Center of Michigan, U of M School of Public Health

Dear Parents and Students,

The SRSly Coalition to prevent destructive behavior in Dexter youth is implementing an exciting program for students in grades 5-8. The Youth Empowerment Solutions Program (or “YES”) is designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to plan and lead community change projects here in Dexter. SRSly believes that the best way to make positive changes in our community, and reduce destructive behaviors like underage drinking and drug use, is to let youth take the lead. The YES Program prepares them to do just that.

This training will consist of five in-service trainings, (every other Thursday beginning in early March), and additional team meetings as needed through the end of the school year. The in-service trainings will be held after school, from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Mill Creek Middle School in Room 101 on **March 2nd, March 16th, March 30th, April 13th, and April 27th**. These trainings will cover teamwork, leadership and project planning. The program will include team-building activities, a discussion with community leaders, and activities where youth will learn how to identify community assets and liabilities.

We hope that you will accept this invitation, and join us at the first in-service. **Please read the information included here, and return your permission slip to Stephanie Mayweather by email, leave it in the Mill Creek office, or bring it to the workshop.** Parents who are able to help out with all or part of the program should indicate their availability on the permission slip. If you have any questions about YES, or SRSly in general, please feel free to call or email us at any time.

Sincerely,

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**SRSly**

A community coalition established to prevent destructive behavior in Dexter youth, with support from St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea, the Chelsea-area Wellness Foundation, and Drug Free Communities Support Program.

## **YES Program Background**

The YES Program was developed by the Prevention Research Center of Michigan, at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. The SRSly Coalition is implementing the YES Program in Dexter in order to empower young people and create positive community change. With permission from the original authors, SRSly has adjusted the original curriculum to specifically target destructive behavior in Dexter youth.

### **Introduction**

*What is empowerment?* Empowerment is a process that involves individuals, organizations and communities exerting control. In order for a program to be empowering, it has to include opportunities for participants to:

- Increase abilities and confidence
- Learn and practice new skills
- Exert control
- Influence decisions

YES is a program that includes empowering processes for youth. It helps youth develop the skills they need to assess their community, and it gives them decision-making power in developing and implementing community change projects. Participating in empowering activities can help youth avoid destructive behaviors and develop into productive, healthy adults.

YES is different than other kinds of programs for youth. Unlike other programs, YES is not just focused on the youth in the program. Instead, youth in the YES program work to change the entire community and prevent youth substance use. They have power to make decisions about how to make their community healthier, and stop youth drinking and drug use. Youth and adults work together to accomplish the program goals.

### **YES Program Goals**

In the short term, our goals are to:

- Empower (give power to) youth to change their community
- Create a positive setting for youth to develop
- Help form positive relationships between youth and adults

In the long term, our goals are to:

- Change the influences in the community that make it more likely that youth will use drugs and alcohol
- Promote attitudes that support community participation and a substance-free lifestyle
- Reduce the number of youth who use drugs and alcohol

## Overview

First, youth spend one day participating in empowerment activities, including:

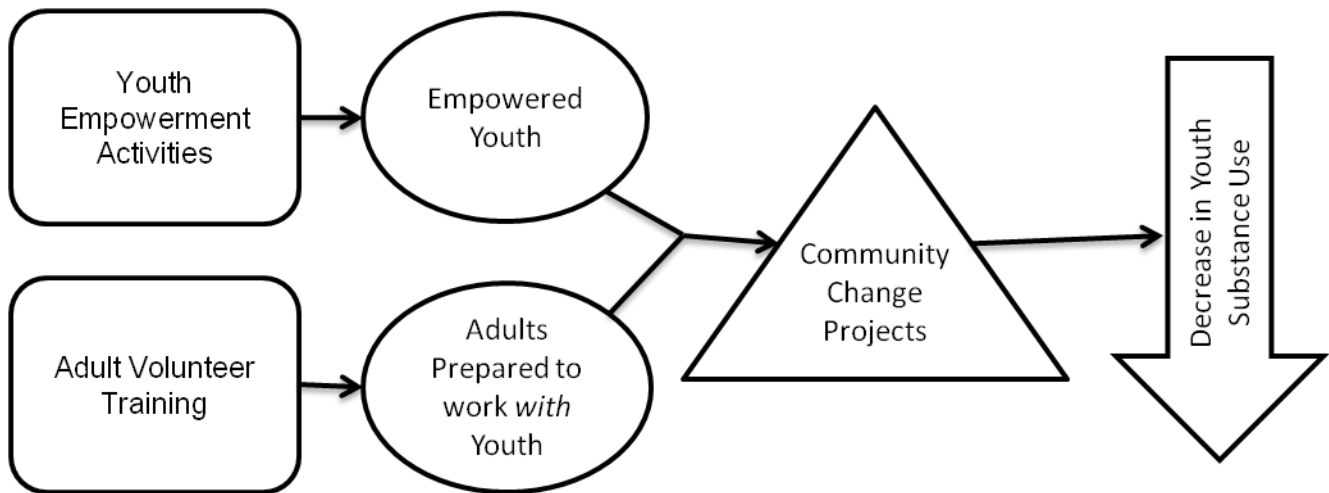
- Developing leadership and teamwork skills
- Assessing their community
- Selecting and planning projects to create positive changes in the community

Second, adults from the coalition volunteer to help youth with their projects. The youth interview prospective volunteers and select the adults they would like to have on their project teams. The adults participate in training sessions to prepare them to work with youth.

Third, the youth and adults work to finish planning the community change projects that the youth selected. Together, they implement the projects. Because this is a youth empowerment program, the youth take the lead in planning and implementing the projects with adult support.

Finally, at the end of the program, we hope that changes within the youth, the adults, and the community will lead to decreases in youth substance use. The process is shown in the diagram below.

### YES Program Process Diagram



### Program Curriculum

The YES Program will cover the following topics:

- ❑ Teamwork and Leadership
- ❑ Community assessment
- ❑ Creating positive community change
- ❑ Building intergenerational partnerships

## Detailed In-Service Training Agenda

### Thursday, March 2nd

3:30 – 3:50	Welcome and Introductions
3:50 – 4:10	The Importance of Teamwork in Community Change
4:10 – 4:50	Team-Building and Group Activity
4:50 – 5:00	Journaling

### Thursday, March 16th

3:30 – 3:40	Opening & Icebreaker Game
3:40 – 4:30	Leaders and Leadership Discussion
4:30 – 4:50	Prepare for Panel Discussion with Community Leaders
4:50 – 5:00	Journaling

### Thursday, March 30th

3:30 – 3:45	Learning About our Community
3:45 – 4:00	Community Assets and Liabilities
4:00 – 4:45	Panel Discussion with Community Leaders
4:45 – 5:00	Reflecting on Panel Discussion & Journaling

### Thursday, April 13th

3:30 – 3:40	Opening & Review
3:40 – 4:10	Brainstorm Project Ideas, Form Teams
4:10 – 5:00	Introduction to Project Planning

### Thursday, April 27th

3:30 – 4:45	Project Planning in Teams
4:45 – 5:00	Wrap-up and Next Steps

The In-Service Trainings will begin and end at Mill Creek Middle School.

*Important Note to Parents:* Parents are welcome to participate in any of the in-service activities. Please plan to join us for one or more of these activities if you are able.

After the in-service training, there will be optional skill-building sessions on speech writing, public speaking, and interviewing. Dates and times will be announced to all YES Program participants. Youth project teams will have the opportunity to interview and select adult volunteers to help them with their community change projects. These volunteers are members of the SRSly coalition who have indicated an interest in supporting youth with project implementation.

After youth have selected adult volunteers for their project teams, the teams will need to do the following:

- Create a budget for their project
- Use their notes from the in-service to write and finalize a project proposal



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## **SRSLY Media Release Form**

### **ADULT**

I understand that SRSLY activities are often captured on film in video or still pictures, and may involve local and statewide media. I give my permission to SRSLY to use my name, my photograph or electronic image, and my words in its promotional materials. I understand that these materials may be presented in any format including paper, electronic, and all other media. I will receive no money in exchange for this permission, the SRSLY Coalition will own the copyright to these materials, and I waive the right to sue for any use of my name, image or words that is done in good faith by SRSLY.

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**Name (printed)**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

### **CHILD**

I give permission to the SRSLY Coalition to use the image of my child(ren), whose name(s) is/are \_\_\_\_\_ in its promotional materials. I understand that these materials may be presented in any format, including paper, electronic, and all other media. Neither my child(ren) nor I will receive any money in exchange for this permission, the SRSLY Coalition will own the copyright to these materials, and I waive on behalf of my child(ren) the right to sue for any use of my child(ren)'s image that is done in good faith by SRSLY.

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**Parent or Guardian Name (printed)**

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**Signature of Parent or Guardian**

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**Date**