



Montezuma Inspire Coalition

Recommendations for Employers Working with Youth Employees, Interns and Volunteers

Introduction

One of the goals of Montezuma Inspire Coalition is to provide safe, beneficial, supported 'Pathway' experiences for young people (ages 14-25) which may include paid positions, internships, and volunteer experiences in the outdoors with MIC partners and other collaborators. To this end, the MIC Pathways Work Group has created this document to help guide partners and collaborators who choose to host youth in these positions. Please view these as suggested guidelines and tailor them to your own organization and programs.

Hiring and Onboarding

1. Job recruitment

- a. If you are trying to recruit youth, think beyond your 'regular' recruitment channels. Visiting schools, community organizations (especially those that work with youth) and even the judicial system can provide some inroads to reaching young people you might not otherwise reach. Attend local career fairs. Arranging for announcements and posting flyers in schools can also help. Also consider working with youth that you already have relationships with, potentially taking them to the next level.
- b. Even if you have a previous relationship with a young person, taking them through all the required steps, including interviewing them, gives them important experience. Remember that this may be their first experience doing a job interview. Use the interview for setting the expectations for the job as well as a learning experience for them. Providing feedback on the interview as well as their application materials can help them with their future goals.

2. Onboarding

- a. Good onboarding practices are essential to help ensure success with your young employees. A handbook with your policies and guidelines is important, however going through it with them and ensuring full comprehension may be even more important. Dedicate an appropriate amount of time to doing this depending on how extensive your handbook and onboarding process is. This could take place over a couple of hours, to several days.
- b. Employers should provide background information to all employees, including young people, to provide them with an understanding of the organization and program they are working/volunteering for. This may include a short history of the organization and the evolution of their position as well as the internal structure of the organization. Providing context is important to understand why they are there and why what they're doing is important.



Laws and Best Practices

1. If you are hiring anyone ages 14-17, be sure to be aware of federal and state child labor laws. These ensure the safety of minors as employees.
2. Fair Labor Standards Act - [Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)
3. Youth Law – [Colorado Youth Employment Opportunity Act \(CYEOA\)](#) and this [Fact Sheet](#) provides additional guidance around hiring youth in Colorado
4. Summary of guidelines around hiring minors - [Hiring Minors: Child Labor Laws & Best Practices \(fitsmallbusiness.com\)](#)
5. Background checks – Best practice when you have youth under 18 years old in your employ is that every adult should have a background check to reduce the likelihood of issues occurring. For further reference, see this [Background screening reference guide](#) from the US Dept of Justice.
6. Have clear rules around a youth being alone with an adult in the workplace. Best practice is to avoid 1 on 1 when possible. Avoid driving alone with a youth and avoid situations that could be construed as problematic.
7. Americans with Disabilities Act compliance – check out this resource to help you determine your need to comply with the ADA:
[https://adata.org/sites/adata.org/files/files/Reasonable_Accom_Workplace_final2018\(2\).pdf](https://adata.org/sites/adata.org/files/files/Reasonable_Accom_Workplace_final2018(2).pdf)

Personnel Policies

While each organization will have their own personnel policies that have been approved by their board, MIC suggests the inclusion of the following policies in a handbook given to youth.

1. Non/Anti-discrimination
2. Sexual harassment and abuse prevention, protection and reporting
3. Reporting procedures for work-related grievances, unlawful discrimination and harassment
4. Whistleblower policy
5. Drug, alcohol and tobacco use
6. Weapons
7. At-will status
8. Classification of employees
9. Compensation and benefits
10. Deductions and garnishments
11. Workers compensation insurance
12. Leave – vacation, sick, family
13. Others as appropriate for your workplace



Employee Expectations

Provide clear expectations for your young employees. Providing clear expectations from the beginning helps set them up for success. Some suggestions on expectations to include are:

1. Professionalism

- a. Treat each other with kindness and courtesy, assuming good intentions for all. Demonstrate good manners with other employees, supervisors, partners and visitors. Have clear expectations around the usage of 'bad/foul' language and where it may/may not be appropriate. Be clear on what is unacceptable behavior. What is acceptable may vary depending on the position – e.g. working in a front-facing (public) position vs. someone who is working more in the background.

2. Dress code/Appearance

- a. Clothing appropriate for the work – office dress expectations, field dress expectations
- b. Provide clear guidance around wearing uniforms as appropriate and necessary
- c. Provide general cleanliness/hygiene requirements

3. Cell phone use

- a. Appropriate use of the cell phone during work hours should be made clear. Appropriate use might include: research, taking photos, communicating with staff, and responding to emergency calls or texts.

4. Technology

- a. Taking care of computers, printers and other technology in the workplace.
- b. Appropriate use of the internet, generally not for personal use

5. Workplace care

- a. Expectations around taking care of the workplace are important. Include information such as: cleaning shared workspaces, caring for equipment used in the position (from tools to computers), providing guidance about 'chores' such as taking out trash, cleaning, buying and replacing supplies, caring for the workplace refrigerator, etc.

6. Attendance/being on time/reporting to work

- a. Expectation to be on time
- b. Provide guidance around any check-in, check-out procedure, and how to let someone know that you're going to be late or are sick
- c. They should know their schedule, and employers should provide information on how and when the schedule is made
- d. How to give notice for vacation
- e. Be clear about what breaks are allowed and when. Here are some helpful links around the laws pertaining to [breaks](#) and [mealtimes](#).



7. Communication

- a. Be clear about your expectations around communication. Will you be using email or texts as a main form of communication, or apps such as Slack? If you or others send your young employee a message, what is the expectation around how quickly they should respond to you?
- b. If part of their job is to speak or present to others, provide them with training, tools and resources to support them in this.

8. Safety

- a. Provide safety guidelines appropriate for your site. Some suggestions for inclusion:
 - i. Weather - lightning (e.g. [30 for 30](#)), rain, snow, sun exposure, etc.
 - ii. Tool use
 - iii. Clothing, shoes
 - iv. Personal protective equipment
 - v. Vehicle
 - vi. Medical and safety protocols in emergencies
 - vii. Risk management protocols
- b. Also consider the needs around their personal safety.
 - i. Collect medical histories, emergency contacts and medical insurance information as appropriate (including allergies and possibly medications), and follow HIPAA, state and federal guidelines for storing medical information
 - ii. Provide clear incident report guidelines and policies
 - iii. Be clear that your business does not tolerate harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination or retaliation. Provide clear steps on what they should do if they encounter any of these in the workplace. See this document by the CDC - [Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth Serving Organizations: Getting Starts on Policies and Procedures](#) - for helpful guidance.

Discipline

Your employee handbook should provide policies and disciplinary process if employees, including your younger employees, don't follow your rules and regulations. Provide a clear process for discipline and when it will be enacted. Here are two different schools of thought on discipline to consider:

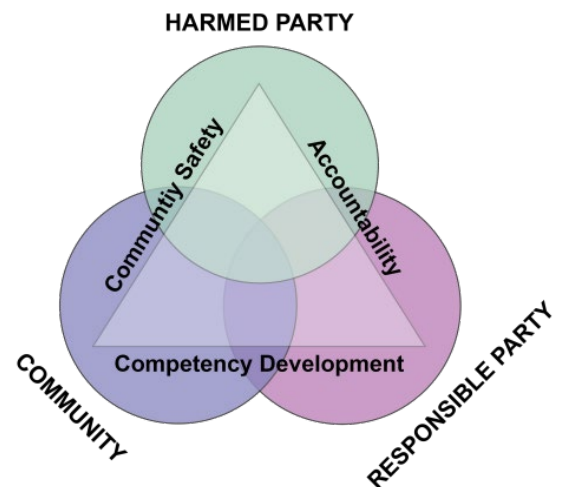
1. Disciplinary Action

- a. Disciplinary Action Steps:
 - i. Clarification/resetting expectations with employee
 - ii. Formal verbal warning
 - iii. Written warning (Performance Improvement Plan)-consider if parents need to be notified of behavior
 - iv. Disciplinary action form
 - v. Termination
 - vi. For more ideas, also see: <https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/employee-disciplinary-actions>



2. **Restorative Justice** (citation: [University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School](#))

- a. "Restorative justice seeks to examine the harmful impact of a crime and then determines what can be done to repair that harm while holding the person who caused it accountable for his or her actions. Accountability for the offender means accepting responsibility and acting to repair the harm done"
- b. Key Components to Restorative Justice:
 - i. Works to repair harm and heal responsible party *and* harmed party
 - ii. Operates from power-with approach between authority, community, and responsible party
 - iii. Focuses on needs, responsibilities, accountability of all involved, rather than punishing offender
 - iv. Avoids simplistic moral binaries: "good vs. bad"; "victim vs. perpetrator" and takes a holistic, trauma-informed approach
- c. Leads to increased community cohesion and adoption of healthier behaviors and self-esteem in the individual
- d. 4 Pillars of Restorative Justice:
 - i. Survivor/Harmed-party centered
 - ii. Safety
 - iii. Accountability
 - iv. Racial equity
- e. Accountability
 - i. Acknowledge harm caused
 - ii. Acknowledge impact harm had on harmed party
 - iii. Show genuine remorse
 - iv. Take active steps, indicated by those harmed, to make amends
 - v. Be a person who never causes similar harm again



Personal Growth and Performance Evaluation

While employing youth should be beneficial to your business or organization, it should also provide benefits to the young person. Be sure to include information about what personal growth development they will obtain from the position.

- Provide tasks that are scaffolded so they can build on each other and help ensure personal and professional success
- Provide a list of skills they have the opportunity to gain and hone
- Provide guidance for the youth around professionalism. Items to address may include having more professional personal email addresses, appropriate clothing, how to compose an email, how to answer a phone call, etc.



- Towards the end of their employment discuss how they would provide information on their resume about their current job

Performance evaluations are also necessary to help ensure success for the young employee and the job they are doing for your business/organization. Some suggestions on best practices for an evaluation process:

- Periodic check-ins (weekly) for providing and receiving feedback
- Formal midterm and end of season evaluations
 - If possible, have the young person set personal goals at the beginning of their term/employment and check in periodically about them. These can be as easy as learning a simple skill or can be more complicated depending on the position.
 - Discuss the importance of references, including one goal being obtaining a good reference for this job to help with getting their next job.

Mentorship

Creating a strong mentor-mentee relationship can help ensure success with your young employees. Some best practices to consider include:

- Mentor should be available and approachable. Take time to build relationships with your employee.
- Provide professional development as possible.
- Have clear goals and expectations.
- Provide valuable training for your employee.
- Allow your employee to try things, make mistakes, and ask questions. Don't always just tell them the answer – figure things out together as possible.
- Provide the correct amount of guidance with opportunity for growth.
- Have continual conversations about how things are going and what they want to get out of the job.

Additional suggestions from the [Youth.Gov website on Mentoring](#):

- include a level of flexibility that accommodates the diverse personalities and needs of mentors and mentees;
- incorporate activities that facilitate relationship building;
- support and involve parents and families;
- coordinate with other services and supports as needed;
- provide training for mentors both before and after they are matched with youth;
- have rigorous and reliable screening practices for mentors in order to protect children;
- provide consistent oversight, training, and support including early problem detection to ensure that needs of mentees are being met and concerns are being addressed effectively; and
- continuously evaluate and monitor program implementation and youth and mentor outcomes, and are flexible enough to change as necessary (Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller, & Rhodes, 2009; Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002).



Social-Emotional Learning and being a Trauma-Informed Organization

- While Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is often stressed in education, SEL is also invaluable in the working world.
- According to [Committee for Children](#), Social Emotional Learning is “the process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success.”
- SEL encompasses: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
- Organizations that incorporate SEL generally have happier, more successful employees who are able to more readily create and meet performance goals, resulting in better outcomes for the organization/business as a whole.
- SEL in the workplace ranges from simple to complex and may include:
 - Establishing group norms for the workplace and expectations on how employees should treat each other and others they interact with on the job
 - Celebrating individual and group achievements
 - Providing periodic team building activities that foster empathy and understanding
 - Evaluation of SEL skills of employees and subsequent training to address areas of growth
 - Periodic individual check-ins with employees that go beyond just their job performance and include personal connections
 - Providing training on conflict resolution and effective communication
 - Incorporating intentional recognition and celebrations at staff meetings to highlight exceptional work
 - Any opportunity to create a supportive and inclusive work environment
- Being a Trauma-informed organization
 - What is trauma? *Trauma is an experience that overwhelms our ability to cope and is perceived and experienced as a threat to our safety or stability of our world.* -Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D.
 - *A trauma-informed approach is not designed to treat trauma, but to encourage an environment that promotes resiliency. It is a lens through which we choose to view all people that helps build healthier relationships, prevent conflicts and create a sense of safety for all. The guiding principles of a trauma-informed approach include safety, consent, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment.* – Karen Finch, LPC
 - The CDC provides guidelines for a Trauma-informed approach to reference [here](#) around public health emergencies, but these can be extended to most organizations as well
 - This article from the [Harvard Business Review](#) on why we need trauma-informed workplaces also has some helpful information
 - One example of a policy around being a trauma-informed organization can be found here: <https://www.kalcounty.com/hrd/Personnel%20Policies.pdf>



Rights and Responsibilities as Employees

All employees, including youth employees, have five basic rights, which apply to applicants, employees and former employees. These include the right to:

- Work free of discrimination. Employers cannot make job decisions because of an employee's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation and gender identity), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older) or genetic information.
- Work free of harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older), or genetic information.
- Complain about job discrimination without punishment.
- Request workplace changes for your religion, disability or pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions. Although employers are not required to grant every request, they should carefully consider them and whether they would be possible.
- Keep your medical information private. Employers may require some medical information but they must keep this private from others.

There may also be other workplace rights under federal, state, or local laws or under your company's own policies.

Along with rights, related responsibilities include:

- Not treating co-workers unfairly or harass them.
- Telling the business about any unfair treatment or harassment.
- Telling the business if a workplace change is needed because of religious beliefs or disability.

Share this reference guide with your young employees and go over it with them:

<https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/your-rights>

Suggested Trainings for Employers Working with Youth

There are many trainings that may be useful for employers of young people to learn about to help support the youth they employ. It may not be possible to provide training in all of these areas for your employees, however some training can benefit everyone, especially in creating an SEL and trauma-informed organization. Links to information and training are provided below where possible. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but a helpful place to start:

- [Mandatory reporter](#) – prioritize this training for employees working with youth; it is only 2 hours and can be taken online for free from the Colorado Office of Children, Youth and Families at [this link](#)
- [Trauma-informed Care](#)
- [Positive Youth Development](#)
- [Social Development Strategy](#)
- Risk management



- First Aid/CPR
- Implicit bias/cultural sensitivity/DEI trainings
- Suicide prevention, such as [QPR \(Question, Persuade, Refer\)](#), [COMET \(Changing our Mental and Emotional Trajectory\)](#)
- [Safe space training for working with LGBTQ+ youth](#)

Also see the [Mental Health Trainings Guide](#) compiled by Team UP of La Plata County for additional resources.

Thank you!

We hope you find this document helpful in hiring and onboarding young people to your organization. Providing opportunities for young people can benefit organizations as well as communities as a whole.

Disclaimer: These suggestions were compiled by the Pathways Work Group of the Montezuma Inspire Coalition and should be seen as a reference tool. This is not an exhaustive list. If you have other suggestions or ideas about hiring and onboarding youth that aren't covered in this document, please contact [Gabi](#) with the Montezuma Inspire Coalition.

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The mission of the Montezuma Inspire Coalition is to create meaningful social and outdoor experiences for youth in our community to foster connection, curiosity and discovery.

For more information, visit montezumainspire.org.

