**Youth-Adult Partnerships in Setting Limits: A Group Contract**

*A simple activity that you can do with youth at the beginning of a program or cycle is a Group Contract. It is a way to establish certain guidelines as a whole group, laying out what you as the adult feel is important and giving youth a genuine voice in stating what they think is important. Youth are not used to being genuinely asked what they expect of each other, so you may need to encourage them to speak up.*

**This activity takes about 15-20 minutes.**

1. Decide on what space within the program you are creating the contract for. It usually works best for a debate or dialogue space or a program where there will be a lot of difficult discussions.
2. Choose two or three guidelines that are important to you. Frame them positively and write them on a large piece of butcher or flipchart paper.
3. Have everyone sit in a circle or U-shape if possible.
4. Explain: “We are going to create a Group Contract that sets guidelines for what we all need in order for this space to feel safe and productive. I have a couple to start with, then I would like the group to discuss other points that you would like to add. Once everyone agrees on the wording for each guideline, we’ll add it to the contract, and then everyone will sign it. (It may be necessary to take a majority vote should the group get stuck on the wording of certain guidelines that you feel are important to the group).
5. Present your predetermined guidelines and explain why you think they are important.
6. Ask the group to offer other suggestions. As they give suggestions, support them in framing the statements positively (e.g. “Don’t be disrespectful could be “Be respectful”). It is also helpful if guidelines are clear and specific (“Respect the opinions of others, even if you don’t agree,” or “Talk about the idea, not the person.”)
7. Take notes on a separate piece of paper or whiteboard. Once the group has had some time to offer different ideas, facilitate a discussion where they decide which ones to add to yours on the contract. Write them all down in neat, large letters.
8. Have everyone sign the contract at the bottom. You should sign too!
9. Explain: “OK, this is our Group Contract for this space. Everyone, including me, is expected to follow it. Let’s help each other out. If you notice that someone is not following one of these guidelines, give them a reminder. Also, if later we all feel that something needs to be added, we can do that. Remember that these are in place so that this space feels safer and is more productive. Any questions?”
10. Post the Group Contract in a place where it will be visible. If you are in a shared space, save it and put it back up each time your group is in session.

**The following question should help you get started:**

* Which part of your program could benefit from a Group Contract?
* What would be the two or three guidelines that you would start the discussion off with?
* What might be some challenges you would encounter in doing this activity with your youth?