Developmental Competence

Strategies for Youth believes that adults who are developmentally competent have more effective interactions with youth. Here's how we define that concept:

Developmental Competence refers to the understanding that children and adolescents' perceptions and behaviors are influenced by biological and psychological factors related to their development stage.

DEVELOPMENTAL COMPETENCE is based on the premise that specific, sequential stages of neurological and psychological development are univsersal. Children and adolescents' responses differ from adults because of fundamental neurobiological factors and related developmental stages of maturation.

A PERSON WHO IS DEVELOPMENTALLY COMPETENT recognizes that how children and youth perceive, process and respond to situations is a function of their developmental stage, and secondarily their culture and life experience. Developmentally competent adults align their expectations, responses, and interactions — as well as those of institutions and organizations — to the developmental stage of the children and youth they serve.

IN ORDER TO BECOME DEVELOPMENTALLY COMPETENT, AN INDIVIDUAL MUST:

1. **UNDERSTAND** that children, adolescents, and adults interpret and respond differently to situations, social cues, interpersonal interactions, and the inherent power of adults, making the more vulnerable to external pressures and more compliant with authority;
2. **APPLY** this knowledge to enhance and improve interactions with children and youth and;
3. **ADJUST** institutional responses to the developmental stage of the children and youth served.

Strategies for Youth
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