

Safe and Supportive Spaces Rubric

as defined by Hopeful Empowered
Youth's (HEY!) Youth Fellows

Performance Objective	Accomplished (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Struggling (1)	Failing (0)
Access	Space is free or low-cost, near public transportation, ADA-accessible, and open during times youth need it (after school, evenings, weekends, and in times of stress). Immediate access possible.	Space is mostly free or affordable, with some ADA-accessible entrances and limited hours. Access is easy but, there is an application process.	Cost or transportation is a barrier; hours are not youth-friendly; entrances are not ADA compliant. Application process is not complete same day.	Space is expensive, difficult to access, has a wait list, and only available during restrictive hours.
Welcoming & Inclusive Atmosphere	Youth feel accepted, safe, and free to be themselves without pressure to conform. The environment is diverse and inclusive (gender- neutral bathrooms, varied seating, and accessible entry points).	Space is generally inclusive but may lack intentionality in making all feel welcome (e.g., limited diversity, some rigid social norms).	Some elements of inclusivity, but there are significant barriers (strict rules, judgmental atmosphere, or lack of representation).	The space actively excludes or alienates certain groups, with rigid expectations and policing.
Emotional & Social Safety	Staff and peers are kind, non-judgmental, and provide empathetic support. No excessive supervision, and there's freedom to engage without being watched or policed.	Space is mostly safe but may have some supervisory presence or minor judgmental behaviors.	Atmosphere can feel uncomfortable at times due to supervision, judgment, or lack of support.	Presence of authority figures, policing, and gatekeeping creates discomfort and exclusion.
Physical Comfort & Design	Space is intentional and comfortable (cozy seating, soft lighting, natural elements, access to outlets, snacks, art/music). Various areas allow for quiet, socialization, and relaxation.	Space is relatively comfortable, but lacks diversity in seating or atmosphere. Some intentional design features but not fully optimized.	Space is functional but not inviting; lacks warmth, comfort, or variety in seating and activities.	Space is uncomfortable, sterile, or rigid (bright harsh lights, strict seating, no inviting design features).
Freedom & Low Expectations	Youth can engage without pressure, requirements, or expectations. There is flexibility in participation, and no rigid rules on dress, behavior, or engagement.	Space allows some freedom, but there are some restrictions or expectations that may limit full comfort.	There are clear rules or expectations that can make the space feel restrictive.	Space requires adherence to strict guidelines, making youth feel policed or unwelcome.
Community & Connection	Space fosters genuine relationships through shared interests, youth-led activities, and mutual support. There's diversity in people and perspectives.	Space offers social opportunities but may lack structured ways to build connections.	Some ability to connect, but limited opportunities to meet new people or explore interests.	Space is isolating, judgmental, or cliquish, making it hard to feel a sense of belonging.
Engaging Activities & Resources	Offers a wide range of youth-driven activities, creative spaces, games, study areas, and mentorship opportunities. No cost barriers.	Some activities available, but may not be youth-led or fully accessible.	Limited activities, often restricted to structured programs. Cost or availability may be a barrier.	No engaging activities or only school-like programming that lacks freedom and creativity.
Perception vs. Reality of Safety	Youth feel genuinely safe and comfortable, and the space is trusted by the community.	Space is perceived as safe but may have underlying discomfort for some youth.	Adults see the space as safe, but youth feel judged, unwelcomed, or unsafe due to authority presence or lack of inclusivity.	Space is considered safe by adults but is hostile, overly monitored, or inaccessible to youth.

This document is a living document. This means that it is continually edited and updated to reflect changes, developments, or new information. Most recently revised 9/22/25.

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