MEDIA CONSENT FORMS:

Towards a Rights-Based Approach

By Ellie Kunkel

It's one of those things that there's no policy around, but in practice…

…just because it seems like the right thing to do…

But there's not necessarily a written process. It's based on individuals' integrity and knowledge.

…it's kind of like this unsaid rule…

INTRODUCTION

Youth workers like those quoted above are familiar with the challenging intersections of policy and practice. Policies may be designed by staff who don't interact directly with youth and their families, and might not have the rights of the child as their driving principle. Practitioners who have relationships with the young people involved may be more likely to consider their rights when implementing the policy. A media consent policy, for instance, is designed with the well-being, image, and legal risk of the organization at its core. Youth workers, though, feel the weight of the trust involved when asking a young person and his or her family to use their image. There's complexity in the process, and over and over in conversations about media consents, youth workers expressed how they balance this tension.

The primary goal of this paper is to explore how the practice of obtaining and respecting consent plays out in reality, and to propose a set of best practices that could inform how organizations craft their media release forms to ensure that young people's rights are respected. I explored how the consent-getting process is framed. I reviewed media consents and gathered both staff and student perspectives. All of this has led me to the conclusion that organizations and youth workers should be doing more to protect the rights of youth to control their images and identities, and it has become clear what it should look like. Youth and families are making the choice, whether they realize it or not, to waive their right to control their image. What more should organizations be doing to make sure that everyone understands the implications of that permission?

But there's a much bigger conversation I wanted to crack open, too. Are there instances where we simply shouldn't be using pictures of youth? "Photos," in the words of one youth worker, "are cherry-picked moments where something specific is happening that you want to show." The entirety of the experience is flattened and so is the wonderful, terrible complexity of that young person's whole identity. Inherent in that one moment that we choose to show are the millions of moments that we choose to omit. We turn the young person into a commodity in the true sense of the word, a raw product—a success story, or evidence of our good works—that can be traded interchangeably. This raw product already exists, in the form of stock photos; models and actors are paid for their time and image.

I didn't call that a "much bigger" conversation for nothing. I can't solve it, but posing that question puts the practice, the media consent process, into the bigger context of youth rights. It's important, and I'll come back to it. For now let's assume that using pictures of youth for advertising and fundraising is a necessary

evil. If an organization is going to use images of young people, how do they make decisions about obtaining consent and ultimately using the pictures? We need a set of best practices around media consent that puts the rights of the young person as its first priority. That's what I set out to find.

METHODOLOGY

I conducted a series of focus groups and individual interviews with 30 youth workers and 12 youth from Saint Paul. For my adult focus groups, I utilized Sprockets (a network of out-of-school-time youth-serving organizations) neighborhood meetings. The participants already knew each other to a certain extent, and most were direct-service staff. I was overwhelmed with their desire to help move this project forward. Their respect for the youth they serve was clear, and I'm in their debt for their candor and thoughtfulness. I also collected and reviewed media consent forms from about twenty youth-serving organizations in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. All of this was done under conditions of anonymity, and where I've used language or formatting from an existing organizational form (see Appendix), the specific organization isn't identified.

My youth focus group took advantage of a group of 12 seventh- to ninth-graders who meet weekly for service-learning and teamwork programming at my own organization. I tried to locate articles or publications about this topic and didn't have much success. So I focused my energy on hearing from youth workers who have experience with the complexity of this issue firsthand. Conversations focused on the process of obtaining consent for, and use of, youth participants' pictures.

I recorded and transcribed all of these conversations. As you'll see, this is a complex and multi-faceted issue. It was difficult to narrow in, but there were recurring themes that came up in every conversation I had, whether in a group or with individuals. I used the overarching themes to inform my position, and to create a set of best practices for organizations in crafting and using photo-release forms with youth participants and their families. A well-done media consent process can go further to empower youth and families, while respecting the rights of the young person to control his or her likeness, and also balancing the desires of the organization to show the work happening. I organize my findings and recommendations around two broad categories. I offer practical discussions of "form mechanics" or how a media consent form should be laid out. Further, I share "practice to policy" reflections to highlight how the mechanics of the media consent form can codify the practice of youth workers into policy.

FORM MECHANICS: SPECIFIC RELEASES VS. GENERAL

The question of how to obtain consent for using an image of a youth is a good place to start the conversation, but a complex one. According to the staff I interviewed, a majority of organizations include some sort of media release in the overall registration materials. Some organizations use separate forms for media release which are collected only for specific purposes from specific students. When we look more closely at drawbacks and benefits of each, there's a clear advantage to using one over the other when the rights of the young person are the primary concern.

Including media release forms among the general registration materials that all participants receive risks adding to the stack of paper that parents shuffle through, fill out and sign automatically. One staff noted that the consent signature line was "in the mass stack of things you're signing and the precedent is, 'I'm going to sign this'" (Youth Worker, 2015). Some even discussed that parents filling out the forms at home might assume that they have to sign the media release in order for their students to be involved in programming. "Unintentionally or intentionally… by putting it on the same form or in the same packet, you're [unconsciously] saying: you have to sign this or you're not part of the program" (Youth Worker, 2015). Do

parents going through "a stack of papers" realize that they have the option to not give permission? If they choose to waive their students' rights (or if students choose to waive their own rights), is the form on its own clear enough to lay out the implications and potential consequences? "You can legally cover yourself in a passive form," one youth worker said, "but there's that icky feeling…do you think you really are thinking about the rights of the child and also of the family?" (Youth Worker, 2015).

This is one potential benefit that an event- or purpose-specific form could have over a general form. One organization's form listed which event was going to be photographed, and how the image would be used, although it was reported that in practice the photos were re-used for other purposes, and the form was often signed and collected after the photos had been taken. In one example of how this process could work well, though, a staff reported that she thought, while it was a "little more awkward" for staff to try to contact students ahead of a specific event, she thought it worked better for families. "For example, I contact all the parents and let them know what it's for, and then the parents send me the form. And I actually had a couple who said, 'no I don't want them photographed,' so then we were separating those kids out" (Youth Worker, 2015). Students who didn't have media consent forms for the specific event weren't photographed.

The major downfall of an event-specific consent form is that it might give parents an impression that isn't accurately carried out in practice. None of the event-specific forms that I had access to actually had language referring to specific events or uses! And as will be discussed in a later section, only a few of them had explicit limits on their use or expiration dates. So even though the practice of staff may have been to explain to parents what the event being photographed would be, and specifically how those photographs would be used, the policy was to store the photos on shared drives to be reused for different purposes, if needed. One staff said that in practice, "it's kind of like this unsaid rule that we won't use it for anything new, unless we get the new permission for it." But, she said, if there were massive turnover in staff, the pictures would all still be there and accessible. A general release, on the other hand, will cover all potential photographs of the student in language that staff has had a chance to discuss with youth and parents up front, and, as will be discussed in a later section, should include an expiration date for all pictures taken of the student.

Another advantage of a general release is that knowing the wishes of parents and youth regarding photographs at the onset of program participation— or at the start of each program year or session, etc.— will allow staff to capture more authentic snapshots of students and programming, rather than only special events. Direct-service staff who have relationships with students can take and share photos with marketing or resource development staff as appropriate, rather than having to get multiple releases signed from individual students for each potential use.

A general release form could make it easier for staff to track which students have permission to be photographed and how those photographs can be used. If parental and youth wishes regarding photo use were collected at the same time as emergency contacts, for instance, these data could be tracked in the same way. One youth worker explained that a simple spreadsheet contained what type of media consent each student had given. The spreadsheet gave the youth worker quick access to the consent information so that at times, for example, when a partner organization wanted to take pictures of programming, or an organization photographer was visiting their site, she could reliably tell the photographer which youth could be included in photos. She also reported that on days when they knew there was the possibility of photography, they had students without media consent wear their organization logo t-shirts so that the photographer would clearly know which students not to photograph. Other staff also mentioned the particular difficulty posed when working with partners or communication staff who didn't know students individually. "You may know the name and you may know the face," one staff said, "but not everybody does" (Youth Worker, 2015). A good tracking system for media consents can capture and preserve the nuanced wishes of parents and youth

regarding whether and how images will be used. Ultimately, pictures shouldn't be taken of students without consent releases in the first place.

PRACTICE INTO POLICY: INTAKE CONFERENCES

Several staff reported that their organization uses intake conferences, or the initial registration process, to explain the options and meaning of media consent language to parents. This keeps the media consent form from being lost in the shuffle of registration papers, gives parents an authentic chance to ask questions and make their wishes clear, and ensures that all students in programming have either opted into or out of having their picture taken—before the photographer shows up. One staff said, "I have a legal thing that says that [taking a picture] is OK, but on a personal level I'm still not necessarily OK with that because I don't think [parents]...fully understand the ramifications of where that image could go....I think I could convince them to [agree to using a picture of their student], just because of my position, and I don't necessarily want to" (Youth Worker, 2015). Having a conversation with parents to explain the language and options in a consent form ensures that parents understand it, and also ensures that staff members understand what parents' wishes are. When someone—direct service staff, communications staff, partners, etc.—wants to take pictures, staff don't have to scramble after the fact to collect media consent forms from parents who may have already been asked about their wishes several times. "We've explained it in the first place....We know that OK if they signed this, this is what they mean and we don't want to have to deal with that in the future."

Interpreters are made available when necessary during these intake or registration conversations. This means that parents can ask questions and get clear information regarding the media consent release, not to mention the other registration materials. If, from an organizational standpoint, the purpose of registration is to gather accurate information from a youth and his or her family, and to ensure that appropriate permission is given—even if there were only a legal protection purpose for program registration—wouldn't due diligence require that the parent or guardian be able to read materials, ask questions, and get answers in his or her own language of choice? How could the organization expect to meet these goals otherwise?

I recommend that organizations include release forms for all students in their initial registration materials, and that organizations take concrete, formal steps to ensure that youth and their guardians clearly understand the media release portions and that staff clearly understand their wishes. In addition, organizations should share materials with youth and families before they're used, to gain input regarding content and to make sure that youth and families have a chance to opt out, if they wish. Many staff reported practicing this, but it should be codified into policy. Some may argue that this will take too much time, or make it too difficult for organizations to use youth images. It will take time, but if we shift our view of the purpose of media consent forms away from protecting the organization and towards empowering youth and honoring their rights, it's appropriate and necessary. This youth input, and the issue of how youth are portrayed, will be discussed further in a later section.

I found that the language used in media release consent forms varied widely. In order to empower youth and adults to make authentic choices about how their image can be used, a general consent form must use clear and specific language regarding photo use. The next section focuses on what options and clarifications should be included.

PRACTICE INTO POLICY: SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Media consent forms must include language that clearly outlines the safety and privacy considerations that will be taken by default, but also must include choices that clarify options of how photographs will be used if consent is given.

Safety considerations are being practiced (nearly universally, from what I could tell), but forms should state those practices as policy. The issue of whether or not a student's name will be used, for instance, seemed to be a simply-solved one in practice, but wasn't represented in the policy. Almost all youth workers agreed that student's real first names shouldn't be used, but most forms don't clarify this. One youth worker stated that staff at her organization would never put names or any other identifying information with images or descriptive text in published materials, but because the consent form doesn't include that policy, it's just their practice. This was a common theme. "It's one of those things," another youth worker said, "where I want to make sure the kids' privacy is respected as much as possible, but [the consent release] doesn't talk about [using students' names] specifically" (Youth Worker, 2015). Whether a form has an additional set of checkboxes to allow or deny the use of a student's first name, or simply a line stating that names and identifying information will be used, something must be included. This issue of safety, and particularly considering safety when sharing student images over social media, is much too big to cover here comprehensively. Based on my conversations with youth workers, these conversations are only starting to happen within organizations. Ultimately, organizations' media consent forms and policies should include considerations regarding how student images will be used (or not) on social media.

FORM MECHANICS: USE SPECIFICATIONS

These safety considerations should be outlined simply (e.g., no student names or identifying information will be used) in the form, along with declaring or providing options for how photographs of the youth will be used, and by whom. Many forms, for the sake of simplicity, have two options: "yes" (photographs can be taken and used) or "no" (photographs can't be taken). This is simple, but it doesn't go far enough to explain how the image might be used. Youth and parents might never consider that an organization would share a photograph with a partner or with corporate volunteers, for instance. Even if they think that the organization might post something on Facebook, would they expect that the corporate partner would put it in their public newsletter? Or that their photograph might be used on the front page of the website? Or a billboard? Even if, because of the number of youth involved or the complexity of tracking, the options are still just "yes" and "no," the ways in which an image might be used and shared must be outlined on the form.

Ideally, though, the form would offer examples that highlight different ways a photograph might be used and shared and give youth and parents options to be involved at differing levels. The best example I found of this was a form that had three options for parents and youth to select from. The first option, known by staff as "none," meant that no photographs would be taken of the youth. Note that this doesn't say that photographs won't be used or shared, but that they won't even be taken, which removes the potential for accidental use. The second option, known as "some," meant that photographs could be taken and used only for official organizational publications like newsletters, brochures and the web site. The third option, known as "any," outlined that photographs could be used in organizational materials and also shared with partner organizations, funders, and professional networks. Rather than just being listed generically, partners and funders were listed by name so that it was clear what appropriate uses would be. Staff stated that this let parents who wanted to support the direct organization do so while still restricting their child's exposure to a more general public. In practice, staff noted that though Facebook and other social media weren't mentioned on the form, they tried to post pictures there only of students who had given consent for "any"

use, because, "I know things can be shared on Facebook....If parents give permission for only us to take pictures, I still try not to [put the picture on Facebook] because it can be shared 20,000 times" (Youth Worker, 2015). Social media use should be included in the least restrictive option given to youth and parents because once posted on social media, the organization has no control over how it may be shared or used. As noted before, these options should be explained to parents and youth.

PRACTICE INTO POLICY: SHARING IMAGES WITH PARTNERS

If organizations used common language in their consent release forms, it might go some way towards solving an issue that came up often in interviews and conversations: how should partner organizations handle images of each other's youth? At a city-wide event, for instance, having general consent release forms that include taking pictures and sharing them between Sprockets partners would let organizations share images of the great things happening, but would also ensure that parents knew that their child being photographed was a possibility and that they were comfortable with that for their students. Several youth workers mentioned that, if they don't know a student or what type of release another organization has, they err on the side of protecting a youth's privacy by taking "back of heads" pictures, or shots from far enough away that the subjects can't be identified, or shots facing the facilitator.

Still, more clarity is needed. One youth worker raised an important point: "What is the expectation when somebody who doesn't know the young people comes in, whether they're from outside the organization or within?" Another youth worker said, "There's not necessarily a written process, it's based on the individual's integrity or knowledge base. Like, I'll look at [other] organizations' Facebook pages and see pictures and wonder, 'oh, what's their policy, or do they even have one?'" How youth are portrayed will be touched on briefly in a later section, but at the very least, parental and youth wishes regarding how photos are taken, shared, and used should be clear from the beginning.

FORM MECHANICS: EXPIRATION DATE

Consent release forms must include a clear expiration date. This would seem like common sense, but the policies are complicated. General releases I found that were part of registration materials, for instance, never included language about the "longevity" of the photographs. In one case the permission was dated through the program year, but it was unclear as to whether or not consent meant that photographs taken during that year could be used only that year, or if they might continue to be used in future years. Multiple staff said that their organization recycled images over and over, and that once broad, non-specific consent with no expiration date is obtained, images are warehoused and reused as needed. Is that what parents and youth expected or intended to give permission for?

One staff expressed concern because the organization used a separate media consent form only when there was a need for photographs, but the form didn't include any language about timeframe or specific use. "The conversation is around that one use, and you use this form, but this form doesn't say anything about that one use, and it doesn't have an expiration date" (Youth Worker, 2015). As mentioned earlier, this sets parents and youth up for false expectations. In reality, those pictures are stored somewhere, marked as being consented to, and there are no restrictions on how long those pictures get used.

Just as permission to participate in programming expires after a year, or at the onset of a new program, permission to take, use, and share photographs should also expire. This expiration period should be stated on the release form. Once consent expires, photographs shouldn't be used for new publications, postings, materials, etc. It might not be reasonable to expect that an organization would take down Facebook posts or

automatically print new brochures when consent on an image expires. New materials, though, should always be created with images that have current consent. As we'll see, this should include consent from the youth themselves.

PRACTICE INTO POLICY: YOUTH CONSENT AND PORTRAYAL IN THE SELFIE GENERATION

Perhaps the most powerful way to respect the rights of a young person to control his or her own identity is to ask. This came up the most often in interviews and focus groups as something that youth workers do beyond the policy and the language on the consent form. They go out of their way to ask for youth opinions and permission. Why shouldn't this be written into policy? Giving youth control over their own identity, even after a well-designed consent release form has been signed, ensures that young people have the ultimate and abiding power.

This starts by empowering youth workers to take authentic in-the-moment pictures that youth are comfortable with. One youth worker said that when she's taking pictures, "often the youth will be like, 'Wait what are you taking the pictures for again?' And they've already signed a media consent form, but I'm going to remind them, 'yes this might be used on our website, yes sometimes it will be used for funders or things, mainly it'll probably just sit on my computer...at that point some of them will be like I don't want to be in this picture,' and then they're out of the picture" (Youth Worker, 2015). She went on to say that when the communications staff asks her for good photos representing her program, she's able to go through and find the good ones, and that's what they get. The pictures taken are taken by the staff who knows the youth and in a setting where the youth is comfortable. "It's on our registration forms, but each time I check with [the youth], so they still select themselves to be a part of it. You can share that power with them, even if they did sign the release, because hey things change you know?" (Youth Worker, 2015). Another staff mentioned that they might ask for permission to take a picture if it were going to be on Facebook, even if they knew the youth had a signed consent form, "just because it seems like the right thing to do" (Youth Worker, 2015).

This approach of having direct-service staff coordinate both the consent and photography process might help ease some of the tension felt where marketing, communications, or resource-development staff intersect programming. When staff who don't know the students come in to photograph them, one youth worker said, "often times it's for very good reasons, but...it seems exploitive." Another worker said, "From their point of view, the more compelling the story, the better, because then people are drawn in. But at whose expense?"

Another step in this process should be giving youth control over how their image is used. In an age-appropriate way, youth themselves should be asked for consent for the specific instances their image will be used. Many youth workers reported practicing this, even though it wasn't codified into the policy. One staff mentioned that a marketing brochure featured students she knew on its cover, and she decided to go talk to them. "They had no idea. They were surprised, they were a little skeptical about being the stars of the brochure, but they ended up being OK with it" (Youth Worker, 2015). She added that she didn't show the students the brochure because she was worried about her organization getting sued; she checked with the students because she respected their right to control their own image. Whether they articulated it this way or not, youth worker after youth worker expressed this same practice, or expressed their wish to be able to handle this differently. One youth worker reported that she always got verbal consent from the youth, but that she wished there were space on the consent form for the young person to sign. "For me personally, I get [consent to use an image] verbally from the kid...but we don't have anything in writing, and it's not common practice for anyone else to ask the kid if they want this information put up" (Youth Worker, 2015).

Something as simple as an additional line on the consent release form would recognize the youth as having power over his or her own identity.

Another youth worker shared an example of when a parent had given consent but youth hadn't been consulted.

> *We used a family's story, and it was a very compelling story, and of course we got permission from the mom. But, there were lots of pictures of her kids...and she told a story about her family's domestic abuse situation, and I thought, 'you know, I could run into one of those kids at school, and I'd know all of this stuff about them.' (Youth Worker, 2015)*

If the youth had been consulted, or at least asked for their permission, it would have gone a step towards respecting their rights. Small, simple stories like this highlight *why* this conversation is important. In its 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations General Assembly stated that, "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (United Nations General Assembly, 1989, Article 3). Even when parents are consenting, there must be an acknowledgement that their wishes might not be the same as those of the youth; it should be the policy of organizations to consider youth as full participants in the consent process.

This issue of how youth should be portrayed is too big and complicated for me to hope to cover comprehensively here. The topic should be explored in depth; how do the messages that an organization shares with funders, the outside community, stakeholders, etc. either perpetuate stereotypes or reaffirm an organization's strength-based perspective? It's crucial to consider how giving youth choices about how he or she might be portrayed shares power. "I'm really transparent about, 'is this ok with you? Do you have any changes you want to make?' I literally give the power over to the kid." (Youth Worker, 2015) She went on to say that most of the time the kids approve, and are excited to be featured, but every once in a while a young person might ask if something can be changed or mentioned or tweaked in some small way. Another youth worker emphasized that we should always be respectful of the youth and mindful of how they want to be seen and how they might view themselves. Beyond a comprehensive consent form and process, and beyond getting consent from youth themselves, who should get to make decisions about how the youth are portrayed?

Organizations should give as much of this power as possible to the youth themselves. If staff can give youth the power to create media projects to represent themselves, it allows young people to portray themselves how they see themselves. They can share what they're proud of and how they authentically feel. One youth worker shared an example of a video project that the youth at her program wanted to create to share what activities they had at their center, why other youth should join them, and what good things they were doing in the surrounding community. "They were all involved in everything" (Youth Worker, 2015).

I wasn't able to talk to nearly as many youth as I would have liked through this process, but they overwhelmingly expressed a desire to show themselves and their program with pride. I knew the seventh-through ninth-graders I spoke with through my own work as a program coordinator. When I asked them how they would want other people to see them, their answers ranged from poignant to silly, but all were honest. "They should make the picture not look poor, take the picture in a cool place, make it look beautiful" (Youth, 2015). Another said, "People in the pictures should look happy. When they put someone's picture out there, there should be a story with it to tell more" (Youth, 2015). Thinking about the program space, one young woman said, "Get fake money dollar signs, bling bling the whole room," but then she got more

serious, "Show not some boring picture, let them see we have computers, we have resources, we have two trophies" (Youth, 2015).

Some of the seventh- through ninth-graders I talked to were quick with reasons about why they would want to be in pictures representing an organization. "It's a good memory to look back on," (Youth, 2015). Another youth said that she would want to be in the picture if it was a good thing, helping the community, talking about what kids like. Said another, "This [referring to self] is attractive. I feel confident. YOLO [you only live once]" (Youth, 2015). Staff should consider the opinions and wishes of youth, but also have to balance the age-appropriateness of letting young people make decisions that might have lasting consequences.

There are clear generational differences in attitudes about image and identity that should be considered, too; this issue came up at several focus groups among adults who work with young people every day. "The concepts that we have at this table about photographs and owning and identity and being concerned about how images are sent...is that the same feeling that a six-year-old or a twelve-year-old who takes photos of themselves fifty times a day and at the age of fifteen has been on Facebook for ten years is going to have?" (Youth Worker, 2015). Young people today are photographed more than any generation before them. They and their friends are taking and sharing pictures of themselves and their lives constantly. They're the Selfie Generation. How far should adults go to "warn" young people away from over-sharing themselves? One staff suggested that most organizations don't go far enough in giving youth skills to use quickly-changing technology safely and wisely. Perhaps conversations about image and identity could be included in the much larger internet safety conversations. "At thirteen," he said, "these kids should get an idea of how to use Facebook. This is a powerful tool you have, and there are some best ways to do it. Wrap that in with an image picture concept as part of that young person's learning" (Youth Worker, 2015). I don't have answers for how to do this successfully, but a good place to start would be to involve the young people in question. What are their attitudes and assumptions? How are they using media, and what do they believe about their image and identity?

Media consent forms should require youth signatures, and youth should be recognized as full participants in the consent and portrayal process. Legally, an organization can use a picture of a sixteen-year-old if they have consent from a parent. But if we want that same sixteen-year-old to act like a young adult, why wouldn't we respect the youth's right to control his or her own identity? Again, we must shift away from viewing the purpose of a media consent release form as protecting the organization to protecting the rights of the young person.

CONCLUSION: OTHER QUESTIONS I CAN'T ANSWER YET

The bigger question in the back of my mind since beginning this project was: Is there something inherently wrong with using pictures of program participants for marketing or fundraising? I intended to find ethical reasons for why organizations should use stock photos, or composite stories, rather than risk tokenizing the youth in their programs or treating them like commodities. Inevitably, the pushback would be: what's an organization to do? And I would propose, and still do, that the onus should be on the organization. It may be convenient to use pictures and stories of real (potentially vulnerable) youth, and it might make a potential donor feel good, but that doesn't make it an acceptable practice. I started exploring these conversations, but hope that they will continue much further.

Using a young person's image and story to raise money that pays for operating expenses or salaries seems fundamentally wrong. Several staff mentioned that their organizations use stock photos or composite stories instead of real individuals. One said that the higher-level marketing pieces, like the large program catalog, used only purchased stock photos. Another explained that her organization, particularly because they often

were using stories from children in the foster care system, would piece together information to share the essence of their work without highlighting anyone individually. "I think you can make up composite stories," she said, "that are true about different people and patch them together into one story, and it's still true in a global sense" (Youth Worker, 2015). Other staff confirmed that this was an acceptable practice. Even though it wasn't specifically disclosed as a made up story, none of it was fabricated, and it still told the story of their work. "It feels weird to do it, but it's still true" (Youth Worker, 2015). Organizations should consider the implications of having youth they serve trade their signatures for their image and identity, when a stock photo of a child model who gets paid would serve equally well.

If organizations are going to use the images of program participants, they should be doing more to protect the rights of youth to control their images and identities, and there are clear steps that they should take to do so. Organizations should have a media release form from each youth and his or her family rather than obtaining consent for specific instances or uses. Forms should be explained to youth and families as part of the intake or registration process, and there should be translators available if necessary. The choices that families and youth can make on the consent form should reflect the nuance of their wishes, for instance, whether or not the youth's name can be used, or if the image can be shared with organization partners. Just as organizations refresh their youths' contact information and permission each year, there should be an explicit expiration date for the media consent. Youth and direct-service staff should be involved in decisions about the creation and use of the media materials. Youth should be able to influence how they are portrayed in a meaningful way, and should be engaged in conversations about responsible use of technology in a way that equips them to make critical choices while respecting their different attitudes about image and identity.

What if the people crafting the messages that compelled others to pay attention had the same goal, protecting and upholding young peoples' rights, as direct service staff? In the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations General Assembly stated that, "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (United Nations General Assembly, 1989, Article 3). Are the people in an organization and the policies of the organization as a whole keeping those best interests as the true primary consideration? In a larger organization especially, the people whose job it is to communicate those "compelling" messages might have a different lens than the direct-service staff. "At least in my experience, those two realms in organizations don't talk, because the youth worker is in the program side and that communications person is an administrator. They don't talk" (Youth Worker, 2015). The hope is that the above recommendations for media consent forms could serve as an opening for discussions and problem-solving between communications or resource-development staff and direct-service staff. A starting point that might lead both sides to appreciate and respect the other's perspective more, but ultimately to come to a shared understanding of how young people's rights and voices should be at the core of the process.

REFERENCES

United Nations General Assembly. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved July 2015, from United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

APPENDIX

EXAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE FORM

[organization logo]	Organization Name]
	Media Release Consent Form [year]

In an effort to share the work [organization] does in the community, we develop our own publications and promotions (including websites, social media sites, and print materials) and sometimes work with local media like newspapers or television stations. We also get requests from community partners and funders to share images and stories of program participants.

Your answers on this form will not affect your student's ability to participate in programming. Please speak with staff if you have any questions or concerns.

Student Name _____

□ I give permission for **[organization] and their partners ([partners, funders])** to use images and videos of me / my child taken while participating in programming for organization and partner publications including social media, websites, materials such as printed or electronic newsletters or brochures, fundraising efforts, television, newspaper, radio, etc..
　　□ I give permission for my / my child's real first name to be used in connection with images or videos used in these public materials.

□ I give permission for **[organization] only** to use images and videos of me / my child taken while participating in programming for organization publications including websites, materials such as printed or electronic newsletters or brochures, television, newspaper, radio, etc., but **not** including social media.
　　□ I give permission for my / my child's real first name to be used in connection with images or videos used in these public materials.

　□ I **do not** give permission for images or videos of me / my child to be used for any purpose.

Staff will communicate with you before an image or video of you / your child is used. You may change these permissions at any time, but materials that have been created and / or shared may not be revocable. Your answers on this form will expire one year after you fill it out, and you may be asked to fill out a new form when registering for a new program.

Student Signature _____Student Age _____

Parent or Guardian Name (if student is under 18) _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Phone number_____ Address _____

Email address_____ (Email belongs to: Parent □ or Student □)

Staff Use: [could be used to record staff responsible for intake conference, note when and where image is used, etc.]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELLIE KUNKEL is the teen program coordinator for CommonBond Communities at Skyline Tower. Her role at CommonBond balances managing an out-of-school-time program and direct service with larger-picture issues of program design and efficacy. She holds a Bachelor's degree in anthropology from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, including a minor in philosophy, and is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Education degree and teaching license at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. She is passionate about the intersection of social-emotional development, community building, and education as a tool for justice. Ellie has been employed with CommonBond Communities since the fall of 2011, and previously served as an AmeriCorps member.