

YOUTH POWER!

2019 PRIORITY AGENDA

ABOUT THIS AGENDA

YP! regularly collects the input of young people through regional youth forums, focus groups, surveys and other input gathering events to gain insight into the issues of importance to young people with disabilities and/or involvement in systems such as: foster care, addiction recovery, mental health, juvenile justice, and special education. This agenda represents the major issues YP! supports and regularly works to address. Not all of the items on the agenda are legislative. A majority of the work YP! does to bring youth voice to government is through committees and regular meetings with government employees.

AMPLIFYING YOUTH VOICE ON:

- The Peer Workforce
- Rights and Protections
- Child/Youth-Serving Systems
- Education
- Independent Living
- Employment
- Transportation
- Healthcare

ABOUT YOUTH POWER!

YOUTH POWER! Is the New York State network of young people who have been labeled and are seeking change. Together, we have decided to speak up about our experiences because no one knows what it is like for us better than we do. Through peer-to-peer mentoring, we empower young people to be active citizens who are aware of government operations, their rights, and the ability to influence policies, practices, regulations, and laws.

We are young people helping other people, ensuring the availability of self-help and peer support while changing systems to that young people get the support they need with the respect and dignity they deserve.

EXPAND THE FAMILY AND YOUTH PEER SUPPORT WORKFORCE:

Develop a cross-systems peer workforce available to young people and their families in their communities that is timely, affordable, and available regardless of system or insurance status.

- Expand and integrate Youth Peer Support and Family Peer Support into all children’s services/programs including DOH, OMH, OASAS, DCJS, OCFS, OPWDD, DOL, ACCES-VR, NYSED, SUNY, and CUNY.
- Funding to support, expand, integrate, and maintain these programs. These services must be readily available and known to every family receiving behavioral health services, open to the public, and not limited to Medicaid billable services.
- Increase and braid funding across agencies to support the cross-systems work necessary to address the complex needs of young people and the successful integration of the youth peer workforce.
- Expand funding to the cross-systems Youth Peer Services Advisory Council which serves as the credentialing body for youth peer services in New York State.
- Develop a clear process through which the Youth Peer Services Advisory Council will advise the state on the development of cross-systems youth peer support and training services.

"Peer Support needs to be included in all services. Everything is easier when speaking to someone like yourself."

RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS:

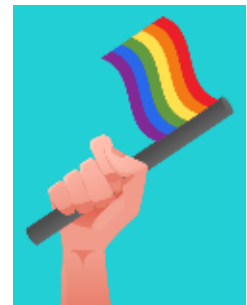
Strengthen anti-bullying initiatives and accountability within schools, communities, and systems.

- Support and develop bullying prevention and intervention programs not only in schools but across state systems, in local communities and on the internet. These programs must include peer mediators and ensure the current bullying laws are fully implemented.
- Schools need to be held accountable for abiding by current bullying laws, including the Dignity for All Students Act signed into law in 2010, and following through on addressing reported instances of bullying.
- A method for identifying the performance levels of schools must be developed collaboratively by young people, school administrators, and other stakeholders to further support accountability regarding the enforcement of bullying legislation.
- Education for young people and their families on their rights and how to report bullying and cyber harassment must be increased.



Strengthen Anti-Discrimination Efforts, LGBTQIA Rights and Protections, and Address Disproportionality.

- Cultural competency training regarding all protected classes (race, national origin, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.) must be required of all employees in human and social service settings including those who are not direct service providers.
- Increase opportunities for young people representative of protected classes and system experiences to participate in workforce development and training events as educators pertaining to their culture, identities, and experiences.
- All health and human services must be equipped to support and integrate LGBTQIA youth with the highest level of respect.
- The name, gender, and pronouns transgender and non-binary youth identify with must be respected and utilized in community, residential and hospital settings.
- NYS must work to address racial disparities and disproportional representation of young people of color and young people with disabilities in institutional settings and across systems. Services must be offered equally to all people. We urge the State to take a data-driven approach to disproportionality to track improvements, publish results and share best practices across counties.



Assure informed consent and that young people are empowered and supported in making decisions.

- Ensure transition age youth are informed of their rights, including bodily autonomy, in a manner that is developmentally appropriate and that those rights are protected.
- Ensure young people are provided phone numbers and website addresses for advocacy and protection agencies.
- Ensure young adults can exercise their rights without fear of retaliation.

"We should be given all of our options, not just what providers think is best for us."

RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS CONTINUED:

Reduce and eliminate restraint and seclusion across ALL systems.

- Provide funding, guidance, and support for the use of comfort and sensory tools in all children's settings.
- Standardize training and reporting requirements across all systems.
- Mandate reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion instances in all state licensed programs.
- Ensure all children's services are trauma informed and provide funding to support training in these practices throughout all systems including: DOH, OCFS, OMH, OASAS, OPWDD, NYSED, SUNY, CUNY, ACCES-VR, and DOL.
- Continue cross-systems partnerships to address the systemic issues leading to instances of restraint and seclusion. Ensure self-advocacy groups and all levels of government and service provider leadership are engaged.



"Young people need to be more informed of what medications are being prescribed, why they are being prescribed, and when they no longer have to take them."

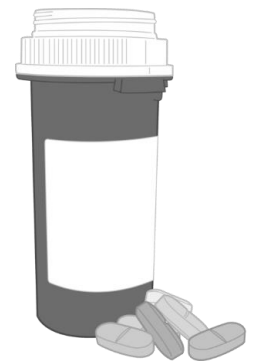
"Restraint is not necessary and can be avoided in a number of ways such as allowing the youth to talk to another staff that they trust in order to calm down."

Ensure enforcement and implementation of the ADA, IDEA, Olmstead, and the NYS Human Rights Law.

- Increase efforts to systematically address the implementation and enforcement of these laws.
- Increase social marketing and public education of available advocacy and reporting resources for individuals with disabilities and their families.

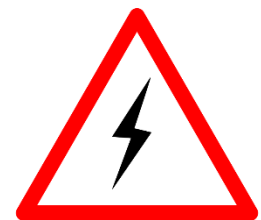
Improve medication practices across systems and increase monitoring of prescribing practices and their outcomes.

- Create systemic approaches to address the use of prescribed medications to control behavior in institutional and congregate care settings.
- Ensure education and informed choice for youth about medications and treatment planning.
- Monitor prescribing practices in state operated programs especially in regard to medications that are not approved for use with children.



Stop the flow of New York State tax dollars to the Judge Rotenberg Center and ensure their practices which have been condemned as torture are not used on young people.

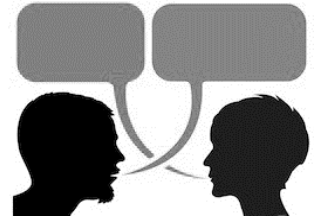
- Ensure parents and caregivers are fully educated on alternative options for support.
- Shift the flow of tax dollars to address the lack of sufficient services in New York State.
- Continue efforts to reduce out of state placements. These efforts must maintain the Executive Office's attention and support.
- New York State must support banning the use of Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) devices.



MENTAL HEALTH:

Ensure cross-systems community-based mental health care is available, affordable and sustainable.

- Ensure adequate fee-for-service rates for children's clinics to maintain quality services and a well-trained workforce.
- Make community-based services available and known before a crisis or threat of hospitalization or residential placement.
- Ensure community-based services for Medicaid recipients are available in all counties in New York State.
- Improve coordination with the education system to ensure youth transitioning from residential and inpatient settings are getting an appropriate education and earn credits that will lead to a diploma.
- Increase funding for youth-guided, family-driven anti-stigma campaigns.
- Enhance statewide suicide prevention efforts and ensure they are trauma-informed, youth-guided, and community-based.
- Provide funding to support the infrastructure, training, and recruitment necessary to implement youth-guided practices and integrating Youth Peer Advocates.
- Fund Youth Peer Advocacy training and continuing education.
- Increase the availability of integrated supportive housing units designed for young adults.



ADDICTION:

Increase and expand youth-guided, recovery-oriented supports and education.

- Provide small grants and incentives for better linkages between treatment and prevention providers with youth development programs, after school activities, and community centers.
- Create ways to obtain consistent youth input through a funded statewide youth advisory body.
- Improve family engagement in treatment by increasing the amount and availability of treatment facilities and community-based services across the state. Additionally, innovative approaches to family engagement, including video communications, must be explored and supported.
- Maintain funding for public education campaigns to bolster public awareness messages regarding the prevention of drug abuse and use, such as the Combat Heroin NY campaign. These campaigns must be developed in partnership with young people.
- Continue to expand efforts to address the availability of synthetics and illegal use of opiates on and around OMH & OASAS residences and the State's efforts to outlaw the production and sales of synthetics.



DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES:

Improve the coordination of services, knowledge of supports, and efforts to consult actual autistics first on matters of policy and legislation.

- Improve the collaboration between OMH and OPWDD for youth to receive both mental health and developmental disability services and ensure supports are coordinated in a timely fashion.
- Increase young people's knowledge of support services, including housing support and opportunities to support independent living.
- We insist that government officials and legislators consult with autistic run groups and organizations on matters of policy and legislation.

"Help Youth with Developmental Disabilities become more independent. Housing, Relationships, Finances. I want to Pick My Own Clothes!"

CHILD WELFARE:

Strengthen programs and invest in targeted community-based supports that utilize Family and Youth Peer Advocates with lived experience.

- Expand the Family Assessment Response (FAR), an alternative to CPS that protects children by engaging families and providing support services without “indicating” a case.
- Fully fund the Foster Youth College Success Initiative and increasing funding to support youth pursuing higher education who either are or had been in foster care.
- Shift financing for the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) from the Foster Care Block Grant by making it akin to adoption subsidies.
- Strengthen the housing subsidy program for foster youth by increasing the monthly housing subsidy allowance; increase the upper age limit eligibility from 21 to 24 so that youth who age out of foster care at 21 can avail themselves of the subsidy for up to 3 years; and allow youth receiving the housing subsidy to live with unrelated roommates.



REFORMING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM:

Invest in a restorative system that emphasizes developmentally appropriate approaches and increase efforts to improve relations between law enforcement and the community.

- Eliminate Unnecessary Incarceration of Youth and develop more community supports and programs as a method of prevention.
- Address disparities that include an over-representation of young people of color and disability status
- Increase regular and consistent youth advisory methods within juvenile justice.
- Fund family and youth peer support linked to facilities.
- Ensure full funding for local Raise the Age implementation by increasing investments in the front-end diversion services that keep youth in their communities rather than incarceration and restoring State support for Close to Home.
- Increase community programs for diverse groups of young people to have positive interactions with the police.

“End police brutality for people of color.”

EDUCATION:

Individualized supports and pathways that reflect the diverse needs, strengths and experiences of young people.

- Develop performance-based assessments and portfolio-based graduation options for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in contexts that are familiar and relevant to their high school experiences in lieu of each regents exam.
- Support legislation requiring that Disability History Awareness be taught as part of the required NYS curriculum.
- Increase knowledge and support for ALL educational and vocational opportunities after high school, including trade schools.
- Increase access and availability to landline-based broadband internet.
- Increase access, availability, and awareness of assistive technology and ensure students are educated on their rights regarding their use.
- Increase self-advocacy resources and education in schools.
- Ensure young people are invited to their IEP meetings, empowered, prepared and able to participate without negative consequences in accordance with NYS Law.

“Everything is reliant on technology, but not everyone has resources to access the internet.”



INDEPENDENT LIVING & EMPLOYMENT:

Increase initiatives that support the development of young people’s self-advocacy, employment, and independent living skills and ensure transportation is accessible.

- Increase education and training opportunities surrounding independent living skills, such as financial literacy.
- Increase opportunities for young people to advise on the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- Utilize young people to train workforce professionals on youth engagement and supporting self-advocacy.
- Continue to enhance integrated supportive employment programs for young people with disabilities.
- Create more opportunities for youth in foster care to gain employment skills and job placements.
- Continue tax incentives for businesses employing young people with disabilities and experience in systems such as foster care, juvenile justice, mental health and addiction treatment.
- Provide education for young people on how to use public transportation along with their rights and responsibilities.
- Increase the availability of accessible transportation and ride sharing services.
- Ensure all bus routes and rail lines meet ADA standards.
- If public transportation is not available to get to services, alternative transportation options must be provided.



HEALTHCARE:

Improve our healthcare system so that it is culturally competent, family-driven, youth-guided, and guarantees access to both physical and mental health care.

- Ensure young people have meaningful participation in efforts that alter the health care system.
- Expand adolescent sexual health education programs to include substantive information on young people with disabilities.
- Create guidance for programs and families in navigating these discussions in collaboration with all stakeholders.

(Youth need) “Real services that will teach young people about how to: Build real relationships, How to take care of our bodies, How to love.”

ACRONYMS

ACCES-VR: Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
ACA: Affordable Care Act
ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act
CCF: Council on Children and Families
CCSI: Coordinated Children’s Services Initiative
CPS: Child Protective Services
CUNY: City University of New York
DCJS: Division of Criminal Justice Services
DOH: Department of Health
DOL: Department of Labor
FPA: Family Peer Advocate
HARP: Health and Recovery Plans
HCBS: Home and Community Based Services
IEP: Individualized Education Program
ILC: Independent Living Center
LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual

MCO: Managed Care Organization
MRT: Medicaid Redesign Team
NYSED: New York State Education Department
OASAS: Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
OCFS: Office of Child and Family Services
OMH: Office of Mental Health
OPWDD: Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
SNP: Special Needs Plan
SOC: Systems of Care
SSA: Social Security Administration
SSI: Supplemental Security Income
SUNY: State University of New York
TAY: Transition Age Youth
TIC: Trauma Informed Care
WIOA: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
YPA: Youth Peer Advocate