

KEY ADVOCACY POSITIONS

We work to increase Peer Support and Advocacy across all child serving systems. Funding and support must be identified to further develop youth peer advocacy in all New York State counties. Priority systems for YP! include Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, Independent living, Substance Abuse and Foster Care.

We support efforts to increase trauma informed practice in New York State. Support funding for trauma informed care trainings in the Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), Office of Child & Family Services (OCFS) and the New York State Education Department.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ★ Become a Member!
- ★ Join a Working Group!
- ★ Apply for the Board of Directors
- ★ Be a Strong Advocate!

CONNECT WITH US!

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YOUTH POWER! INC. MISSION

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, aware of government operations, their rights and the ability to use their voices to influence policies, practices, regulation and law. We are young people helping other people, ensuring availability of self-help, peer support and changing systems so that young people get the support they need with the respect and dignity they deserve.

YOUTH POWER! INC. VISION

YOUTH POWER! envisions a world that embraces diversity, encourages resiliency, is strength-based and has the ability to adapt. A community, in which young people are inspired, empowered and supported to make informed choices.

DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

We support and actively participate in disability rights and independent living movements, including: the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC); New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL); National Council on Disability (NCD); and National Council on Independent Living (NCIL).

YOUTH POWER!

2013 - 2015 PRIORITY AGENDA



Young people working together to make positive change in New York State systems and communities.

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PRIORITY AGENDA

YOUTH POWER! is the New York State network of young people who have been labeled in state systems and seek to make change. We take action which promotes youth engagement in systems oversight and which ensures equal and quality services for youth and young adults. Since 2008, we have released an annual advocacy agenda which sets the priority issues our network chooses to address.

YOUTH POWER! takes these priorities seriously and works hard to make a difference. We understand that these changes will not happen overnight, and in fact may take several years.

The new YOUTH POWER! Priority Agenda will focus our efforts over the next three years, 2013 - 2015. This move from a one year plan to three will focus our efforts long-term. As a network we will set and reach goals which will transform service systems so that young people will get the support they need with the respect and dignity they deserve.

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!



This document is that of YOUTH POWER! Inc. and it's Network and does not necessarily reflect the policies and positions of Families Together in New York State.

EDUCATION

Young people with disabilities and/or experiences in various state systems deserve the highest level of education. We will pursue our right to a fair and meaningful education and require our involvement in our educational planning.

- We encourage the Board of Regents to implement multiple graduation options for all students, including the re-implementation of a "local diploma." For students with only the most severe disabilities, we support a fair and meaningful Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential.

- We also support initiatives to enhance "Deeper Learning" in NYS including the development of a portfolio based graduation option. Deeper learning prepares students to be college and 21st century career ready. It teaches students to think critically and solve complex problems; work collaboratively; communicate effectively; and be self-directed and able to incorporate feedback.

- We support legislation requiring that Disability History Awareness be taught as part of the standard NYS Curriculum.

AWARENESS

Autism Awareness: Most people know very little about Autism and those with it. We believe the only way to fix this is through autistic-run informational sessions, with direct input and participation from autistic youth. Involvement of autistic people is essential! Their parents, siblings, and people who work with them often forget about the feelings and desires the autistic individual. Only through this autistic peer-driven approach will people truly understand autism and those affected by it.

Anti-Bullying Initiatives: We believe that bullying and discrimination should not be tolerated and victims deserve the highest level of respect and protection. Furthermore, we feel bullies need youth-driven support and positive interventions. We call on every person in New York State to put effort into this important community problem.

- Support bullying prevention and intervention programs not only in schools but across state systems, in local communities and on the Internet. Peer mediation programs should be available in all school settings.



"There needs to be more preparation for Regents, SATs and College. There also needs to be more of a focus on applied skills, not just the final exams or Regents exams. Schools need to focus more on making classes relevant for the youths' future and specific career."

"Leadership forums and advocacy training is something that schools and placements should implement more into the programs."

EQUALITY & RIGHTS

Anti-Discrimination: We support community and government sponsored efforts to combat discrimination and educate the public especially in regards to: disability; sexual orientation; race and ethnicity; Mental Health status; and personal experience systems in state systems.

- NYS must work to address racial disparities and disproportional representation of people of color in institutional settings. Services must be offered equally to all people.
- Cultural competency training should be required of all employees in human service settings.

NYS Olmstead Plan: People with disabilities have the right to receive services and supports in settings that do not segregate them from the community. NY state has high rates of people receiving services in restrictive residential settings. Self-advocates, including young people and their family members, must be included as partners in ensuring effective community based programs are developed.

Restraint & Seclusion Reduction and Elimination: We believe in the use of calming tools, healing environments and trauma informed care. We will work to ensure that restraint and seclusion reduction and elimination is a priority across ALL systems. These traumatizing and dangerous practices must end.

- Support the use of comfort and sensory tools in all children's settings
- Standardize training and reporting requirements across all systems.
- Mandate reporting of restraint and seclusion instances in all state licensed programs.

Medication practices across systems:

Too frequently young people speak about the belief that they are over-medicated. We deserve to be educated and involved in medication decisions. We believe there are many misuses

and abuses of psychiatric medications in child-serving systems, and in many cases, these are direct violations of human rights. We must increase monitoring of prescribing practices and their outcomes.

- Ensure education and informed choice for youth about medications and treatment planning.
- Monitor prescribing practices in state operated programs especially in regards 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 Aversive Interventions are not used on young people: The Judge Rotenberg Center's practices have been condemned as torture by both the past and present U.N. Special Rapporteurs on Torture, Manfred Nowak and Juan Mendez. New York State sends more youth to JRC than any other source.

- Ensure parents are fully educated on alternative options for support.
- Address the lack of sufficient services in New York State should be addressed. We support the Council on Children and Families work to reduce out of state placements.
- The FDA should order the Judge Rotenberg Center to immediately end usage of all Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) devices.

"When I tried to notify staff about side effects of medication, the staff didn't listen and treated me like I was being defiant."

"We want to make sure that human rights are given to all youth and young adults. We also want to make sure that youth and young adults have their voices heard by the systems that serve them."

SYSTEMS & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Transition Support: Young people engaged in state systems face many challenging transitions. Opportunities to develop self-advocacy, independent living and coping strategies should be offered to youth and young adults.

- There is a lack of age-appropriate services available to young adults. Training on youth culture and development must be offered to adult human service providers.

- There must be a larger focus on building independent living and self-advocacy skills for young people. Basic life skills such as budgeting, building credit, finding housing and personal care must be taught.

Foster Care: Youth deserve and need love.

We must have the best quality environment to grow and have the opportunity to make informed choices and not be segregated from our communities and peers.

- Ensure local agencies provide quality foster care services through improved oversight and accountability methods.
- Establish and promote a clear process for youth to report grievances with their foster family or case worker.
- Ensure the best possible matches for foster families are made by replicating model programs that provide comprehensive, holistic services for youth entering the foster care system.

- Increase training for case workers and foster parents on trauma informed practices and cultural competency applied in the home setting.

Juvenile Justice: The unnecessary incarceration of youth must end. We need more community supports and youth development programs. We will ensure our human rights are met.

- Raise the age which youth can be tried as adults to 18 in the criminal justice system. Youth should never be sent to adult prisons.

- Young people must be involved in every

stage of the reform of the Juvenile Justice system.

- Savings from the closing of facilities must include reinvestment in strength-based, youth driven, community supports such as youth peer advocacy, peer-to-peer family support and mentoring programs for youth who are at risk or involved in the Juvenile Justice system.

Health Care Reform & Medicaid Redesign: Health care reform and Medicaid redesign are of the most important systems transformation initiatives taking place today. Young people should have meaningful participation in these efforts.

- Support efforts to increase independent peer support services for youth, young adults and their family members.
- Support care coordination across-systems.
- Community-based services should be available before a crisis or threat of hospitalization/residential placement.