Expanding Youth Peer Advocacy Across Systems:
Statewide Trainings and Resources

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YOUTH POWER!

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YOUTH POWER! Mission Statement:

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 use their voices to influence policies, practices, regulations and laws. We are young people helping other people, ensuring availability of self-help and peer support while changing systems so that young people get the support they need with the respect and dignity they deserve.
Strategic Goals of YOUTH POWER!

1: To expand and strengthen the YP! network while remaining youth run

2: To successfully advocate for systems change to ensure better opportunities for young people

3: To increase empowerment, skill building, leadership and advocacy opportunities for young people with disabilities and system specific labels

4: To improve quality of youth peer advocacy & involvement by offering technical assistance and training opportunities to young people and adult allies

5: To practice and promote cultural competency & diversity
1) write in a few words:
what authentic youth/adult partnerships looks like

2) Write:
Roles of a Youth Peer Advocate

Activity: “in a few words”
What are the differences between Youth Involvement and Peer Support?

Where is there overlap?

Are the strengths and challenges the same?

Are the people always the same?
**Definition of Youth Guided**

*Youth Guided* means that young people have the right to be **empowered, educated**, and given a decision making role in the care of their own lives as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all youth in the community, state and young people a **sustainable voice** nation. This includes giving *and then listening to that voice.* …

...Further, a youth guided approach recognizes that there is a continuum of **power** that should be shared with young people based on their understanding and maturity in a **strength** based **change process**. Youth guided organizations recognize that this process should be **fun** and **worthwhile**.

This definition was developed by Youth M.O.V.E. National, in conjunction with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
Ladder of Youth Participation

- **Non-Participation**
  - Tokenism
  - Decoration
  - Manipulation

- **Degrees of Participation**
  - Assigned but informed
  - Consulted and informed
  - Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth
  - Youth-initiated and directed
  - Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults

Current Landscape for Youth Peer Leaders

Differing Titles:
• Youth Advocates
• Youth Peer Support Person
• Youth Peer Mentors

Differing Settings:
• Residential
• Inpatient
• Community

Differing “Systems”:
• Building in Foster Care and in the Disability Independent living movement

Lack of continuity, clarity and unified training and supports
Youth Peer Advocate (YPA) Services are designed to:

- Facilitate the use of natural resources and the enhancement of resiliency-oriented attitudes such as hope and self-efficacy, and community living skills.

- Promote skill building
Youth Peer Advocates Must:

• Be able to use lived experience (with disability and/or within a service system) to assist in supporting youth.

• Demonstrate qualities of leadership, including the development and implementation or facilitation of peer-to-peer groups or activities.

• Have the ability to maintain confidentiality and adherence to Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirement at all times.

• Abide by Justice Center requirements
Responsibilities of a YPA

- promote positive behaviors through modeling.
- provide mutual support, hope, reassurance and advocacy that include sharing one's own "personal story" as the YPA deems appropriate as beneficial to both the youth and them.
- facilitate or arrange youth peer support groups.
Responsibilities of a YPA

- assist youth with gaining and regaining the ability to make independent choices and assist youth in playing a proactive role in their own treatment
- connect youth to community resources and services.
- help youth develop a network for information and support.
What do YPA’s report as barriers?

- Ageism
- Stigma
- Fear, discomfort, misunderstanding
- Lack of clarity in the role as Youth Advocate (Expectations?)
- Understanding responsibilities of self and others.
- Frequency of meaningful training
- Lack of needed supervision & support
- Regulating strong emotions & wellness (secondary trauma)
- Defining words like "Safety" and "Boundaries" and how they are used.
Key Ingredients for Success According to Youth Move National

Everyone play’s a part in success!!!

- Strong youth leadership foundation
- Strong organizational Infrastructure
- Competent & Supported Workforce
Building Infrastructure for Success

According to

Understanding the Values and Principles of Youth Driven Care

Understanding the Values and Principles of Youth Peer support

Understanding value added of peers in the service setting

Demonstrating a commitment to creating work cultures that embrace lived experience and youth driven programs

Understanding the continuum of supports that can be offered to youth and young adults
What is YP! doing to promote readiness?
YP! Education and Technical Assistance

- YP! employees offer a variety of workshops for adults and youth.
- They provide technical assistance to counties and agencies.
- Participation in NYS Success and other cross-systems initiatives increase access, demand, and means to develop educational materials.

More information is on www.youthpowerny.org
YP! Training efforts

• YP! is working with several groups to conduct trainings and webinars on:
  • Youth-Guided practices
  • integrating YPAs into the treatment/service team.
  • Supporting YPAs

• Expanding Peer Leader Support and Development (PLSD) groups
Regional Youth Partners (RYP)

• Young adults with personal experience in receiving services from multiple state systems
• Ensure meaningful two-way communication between youth-serving agencies and the young people using their services
• Are charged with networking youth involvement on a regional level
• Assist local youth peer support and advisory councils to build, develop, and strengthen advocacy skills

Visit YOUTHPOWERNY.org for contact information.
• 4 day conference modeled after the college experience
• Major in Systems Advocacy or Peer Advocacy
• Stay overnight in a dorm or attend as a day student
• Leaders’ Dinner with state government officials
• Planned by the YP! special events working group
• 2nd annual took place in June 15-18 2015
Office of Mental Health Home and Community Based Waiver

- OMH is awaiting CMS approval of their HCBS waiver application.
- Upon approval Youth Peer Advocacy will become a billable service and YPAs will become a part of the treatment teams.
OMH Waiver YPA Training

Online and in person training components covering:

★ Role of Youth Peer Advocate in the Waiver System
★ Peer Advocacy and Support
★ Group Facilitation Skills
★ Professional Expectations: Confidentiality / Supervision
★ Self-care and support
★ Systems navigation
OMH Waiver YPA Training Development

- YP! & Cornell University Partnership
- Developed draft curriculum
- Held Focus group in NYC with peer advocates
- Held a Pilot 2- day training in Rochester
- Analyzed pilot evaluation and made revisions
- Finalized online pieces
- Held a Training of Trainers (TOT) in July
- Awaiting waiver approval to conduct regional trainings
YOUTH POWER!
YOUTH PEER ADVOCATE TRAINING

Characters:
- Zoe
- Sean
How Youth Peer Advocates Make a Difference

What makes Youth Peer Advocates unique? Why is their work important? Find out in the following introductory video.

As you can see from this video, Youth Peer Advocates promote wellness by being good role models. The Youth Peer Advocate (YPA) service provides one-on-one support and advocacy for young people with serious emotional disturbances. Through this service, Youth Peer Advocates help young people take active roles in their own treatments. They provide support, hope, reassurance, and advocacy.
In your work as a YPA, you will encounter lots of abbreviations for programs, legislation, and more. Some of these shortened terms are called acronyms. Can you identify the terms in the list below?

Drag and drop the long, spelled out terms to match them with their shortened acronyms.

**Sort elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Long Form</th>
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<td>CASSP</td>
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Sean is 14 years old. He lives with his mother and two younger siblings in Queens, NY. Sean recently returned home after a year in residential care due to a long history of oppositional behavior and anger management issues. A month ago he started back in school. At the same time, he was referred to HCBS Waiver services. School has been difficult for Sean because he has a learning disability and he has trouble reading and comprehending information.

For each question below, choose the best answer.

**Module 2 Quiz - Navigating the System**

**Question 1 of 5**

Question #1: Sean does not understand how the system works. How would you help him?

- [ ] Refer him to the NYS Office of Mental Health website
- [ ] Educate him about his rights as a young person with a disability
- [ ] Tell him to ask his psychiatrist

[Save & Next Question »]
What are we currently developing?

- Definition of Youth Peer Services across-systems
- State Plan YPA services
- Training within OMH state-ops
- Identifying ways to build the workforce
- And….
Credentialing

• Developing a YPA credentialing advisory Board
  • Advise on the development of the required training for the YPA credential
  • Advise credentialing process/ body
Setting the Stage

• Partner with youth led groups including YP!

• Evaluate readiness – (tools are available)

• Have a flexible plan that leaves room for problem solving and creativity

• Prepare Staff and Clinicians– make sure they are aware of the purpose, role and activities that are to come. Ask them to help create an environment where youth are meaningfully engaged.
Recruitment of YPAs

- Building an understanding of and connection to our social-justice & civil rights movement
- Utilizing existing movement events and activities to draw in new people
- Initiating Youth Advisory/Leadership groups
- Holding recruitment events
- Partnering with other organizations/agencies
- Recognizing the effects of stigma and discrimination
- Ensuring approaches are culturally competent and address current youth culture
Retention of YPAs

• Providing clarity of role and expectations
• Providing consistent supports and coaching
• Recognizing the expertise young people bring
• Ensuring the workplace is accepting of the YPA and their role
• Providing guidance on how to appropriately request accommodations
• Utilizing YP! for professional development and connections to other young peer leaders
• Seeking technical assistance when facing challenges
• Providing opportunity for YPA career growth
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