

# ABOUT YOUTH PEER SUPPORT

**Who is it for:** Youth Peer Support services are formal and informal services and supports provided to young people who are experiencing social, medical, emotional, developmental, substance use, and/or behavioral challenges in their home, school, placement, and/or community centered services.

**Where:** This service can occur in a variety of settings including where the young person lives, works, attends school, engages in services, and/or socializes.

**Who provides the service:** A New York State Credentialed Youth Peer Advocate (YPA) is a young adult between 18-30 who has self-identified as a person with first-hand lived experience with a disability, mental health challenge, substance use disorder and/or experience in juvenile justice, special education, and/or foster care.

**Families  
Together**  
in NYS **Youth Power!**

For more information, visit  
[www.FTNYS.org/YOUTHPOWER](http://www.FTNYS.org/YOUTHPOWER)  
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**YOUTH PEER  
SUPPORT**  
FOR YOUTH, BY YOUTH



## WHAT DOES YOUTH PEER SUPPORT INCLUDE?

There are five categories of Youth Peer Support. A Youth Peer Advocate is able to offer all five categories based on the individual needs and preferences of the young person.

1. Skill Building
2. Coaching
3. Engagement, Bridging & Transition Support
4. Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy, & Empowerment
5. Community Connections & Natural Supports



## PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH PEER SUPPORT

***Is Youth Guided*** - Acknowledges that every young person has a choice and should be informed, consulted and active participants in their own lives, as well as policies and procedures governing care for all young people in their community, state, and nation.

***Partners with Young People*** - Recognizes that power should be shared in making decisions with young people based on their understanding and maturity.

***Promotes Independent Recovery*** - Provide young people with the tools to make educated and informed decisions on their own health and wellbeing.

***Provides Mentoring*** - Shares personal journey of recovery to foster hope for youth and their families.

***Promotes Advocacy*** - Listens to young people without judgment and promotes environments where young people are heard and their voice is sustained.

***Is Culturally Competent*** - Creates safe environments that respect and empower young people to feel a sense of pride in their cultures and beliefs that they identify with.

***Makes Connections*** - Facilitates connections between young people; their services, agencies, activities, training, and peers for support and advocacy.

***Is Individualized*** - Acknowledge that a young person's recovery journey and experiences are unique to them.

***Is Strength-Based*** - Moves the focus away from deficits towards building on the strengths and resources that the young person can use to better their own lives.

## WHY WOULD YOUTH WANT A YPA?



Being young can be hard. Sometimes it feels like no one understands or gets it. Youth Peer Advocates do! They've been there, maybe not in your exact situation, but they're here to help.

YPAs foster the development of skills to overcome challenges and support young people in their resiliency/recovery and wellness journeys. They utilize their personal lived experience and training to foster self-efficacy skills in young people.

YPAs help create environments where young people can be heard, leading to higher rates of youth engagement and reaching individual goals. Peer support has also been linked to lower rates of hospitalization, re-hospitalization and placements in higher levels of care (Gagne, 2018).

For more information on how to become a Credentialed YPA, visit [ftnys.org](http://ftnys.org)