

Youth Peer Support and Training Services Scope of Work

This information was developed based on the Child and Family Treatment and Support Services Provider Manual. Information was adapted to be more plain language. Please refer to the Provider Manual for more details.

Youth Peer Support and Training (YPST) 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. YPST pairs Youth Peer Advocates with young people to provide training and support to them. The purpose is to ensure engagement and active participation of the young person in their treatment and decisions that affect their lives. YPST is provided by a trained and credentialed Youth Peer Advocate who has personal experience as a young person with a social, emotional, medical, developmental, substance use, and/or behavioral challenge, or has received services in any one of the child serving systems (juvenile justice, foster care, special education, or addiction recovery). YPST can be provided in individual and group settings.

Types of Youth Peer Support and Training Services

Skill Building	Support young people to develop skills for wellness, resiliency and recovery including developing goal-setting skills and community living skills. These skills support young people to manage psychiatric symptoms, trauma, and substance use disorders and prepare them to independently navigate service systems.
Coaching	Enhance resiliency and recovery-oriented attitudes in young people by encouraging hope, confidence, and self-efficacy. Promote wellness through modeling and providing mutual support, hope, reassurance and advocacy. YPAs share aspects of their own personal recovery/resiliency story as they feel is appropriate and beneficial for the young person. YPAs may also share their recovery story with caregivers as a means to engage caregivers and help them “see” youth possibilities and hope for their future in a new light.
Engagement, Bridging, and Transition Support	YPAs act as a peer partner as young people transition into different levels of care and into adulthood. They partner with young people and assist families and service providers to help young people understand what to expect, how and why they should be active in developing their treatment plan and to enhance their natural supports.
Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy, & Empowerment	Develop, link, and facilitate the use of formal and informal services, including connection to peer support groups in the community. Serve as an advocate, mentor, or facilitator to support the resolution of barriers. YPAs assist in navigating service systems by being a bridge between young people and their service providers during transitions in care. YPAs help young people develop self-advocacy skills in meetings where young people ask for their support. Assist young people in gaining and regaining the ability to make independent choices so that they feel empowered to play a proactive role in their own treatment. Guide young people to effectively communicate their individual perspective to providers and families. Assist young people to develop skills in advocacy so they can advocate for needed services, benefits and seek to effectively resolve their unmet needs. Assist young people in understanding their treatment plans and help to ensure the plan is individualized and reflects the young person’s values and culture.
Community Connections and Natural Supports	Connect young people to community resources and services. The YPA may be asked to accompany a young person to appointments and meetings for the purpose of mentoring and support but not for the sole purpose of providing transportation for the young person. Help young people develop a network for information and support from others who have been through similar experiences, including locating similar interest programs, peer-run programs, and support groups. YPA is encouraged to facilitate and arrange youth peer resiliency/recovery support groups with the support of the agency.

Youth Peer Support and Training Provider Qualifications

Youth Peer Support is delivered by a New York State Credentialed Youth Peer Advocate (YPA). To be eligible for the YPA Credential, the applicant must:

- Be an individual 18 to 30 years' old who has self-identified as a person who has first-hand experience with social, emotional, medical, developmental, substance use, and/or behavioral challenges.
- Be able to use lived experience with a disability, mental health challenge, juvenile justice, special education, substance use disorder, and/or foster care to assist in supporting youth in their resiliency/recovery and wellness.
- Have a high school diploma, high school equivalency preferred or a State Education Commencement Credential (e.g. SACC or CDOS). This educational requirement can be waived by the certifying agency if the person has demonstrated competencies and has relevant life experience sufficient for the peer certification.
- Complete Level One (online component) and Level Two (online and in-person) training of the Youth Peer Services Advisory Council recommended and State approved training for YPAs followed by a minimum of three consultation calls.
- Submit three letters of reference attesting to proficiency in and suitability for the role of an YPA including one from YPAs supervisor.
- Agree to practice according to the Youth Peer Advocate Code of Ethics.
- Document 600 hours of experience providing Youth Peer Support services
- Complete 20 hours of continuing education every 2 years
- Demonstrate qualities of leadership, including:
 - Knowledge of advocacy
 - Group development and/or facilitation of peer-to-peer groups or activities
- Be supervised by a credentialed YPA with four years direct service experience or an individual who meets the criteria for a "qualified mental health staff person"

Definitions

Youth/young person: Individual under age 21

Parent/Family: Family is defined as the primary care-giving unit and is inclusive of the wide diversity of primary caregivers in our culture. Family is a biological, adoptive or self-created unit of people residing together. They consist of adults and/or young people, with adults performing parental/caregiver duties for the young person/child. Persons within this unit share bonds, culture, practices and a significant relationship. Biological parents, siblings and others with significant attachment to the individual living outside the home are included in the definition of family. For the purposes of this service, "family" is defined as the persons who live with, or provide care to a child and may include a parent, spouse, sibling, children, relatives, grandparents, guardians, foster parents or others with significant attachment to the individual.

Service Provider: Refers to individuals and organizations that provide formal services to young people and their family from all children and family serving systems (mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, substance abuse treatment, education, health, etc.).

Natural Supports: Natural supports are individuals and resources a family can access "naturally," independent from formal services. These supports are a significant source of culturally relevant emotional support and caring friendships for young people and their families. Natural supports can be short-term or long-term and are usually sustainable and available to the young person and the family after formal services has ended.