



NYS JUVENILE JUSTICE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The NYS Juvenile Justice Youth Advisory Council is an initiative of DCJS and the State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) which formalizes a process to regularly receive input and feedback from young people regarding juvenile justice policies and practices.

Mission:

To empower youth who strive to improve the juvenile justice system by assembling and advocating for members' recommendations, concerns, and perspectives through the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group.

Primary goal:

To provide juvenile justice policy-makers and those in positions of power with a youth perspective on what we value, would like to change, and why it matters.

Who we are:

- young adults between the ages of 16 and 25,
- representing communities across the state from New York City to Buffalo,
- with a personal interest in or experience with the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems.

*There is no formal application or referral process necessary to participate.
Energy, passion, and a commitment to make a difference are the only qualifications.*

As YAC members we believe that...

young people should have a real voice in their communities. We should have the chance to be advocates and policymakers, and to participate in the decisions that shape how youth live, learn, work and play.

The YAC creates a partnership between young people and their adult allies to make sure that youth have a say in how juvenile justice policies are made at the state and local level.

We also believe that...

we have valuable expertise gained through personal experiences and can make meaningful contributions to programming. We have a knowledge base that can't be taught in the average classroom, but nevertheless we can be teachers. Because the only way to get the youth to talk about these issues is if they trust and look up to those asking the questions, we can play a key role for the JJAG and New York State juvenile justice reform.

Why we participate:

The YAC offers unique opportunities to belong to a positive group of peers, support needed change, and learn a variety of leadership styles. Through various activities we have an opportunity to develop an increased understanding of issues and how to interact effectively with a diversity of people while working toward a common goal of improving the juvenile justice system.

What we do:

The YAC works with state and local leadership to address the thoughts and concerns of young people through the development and implementation of peer-led projects. Targeted focus groups will be facilitated in an effort to gather information and evaluate existing programmatic efforts. Council members will also be involved in the development of outreach strategies and resource materials for youth and other community members; participate in site visits and monitoring of funded programs, and serve as representatives to the JJAG and other justice-related committees.

The YAC also:

- **provides incentives for participation;**
- **has an executive council (Chairperson, Vice-chair, and Secretary) working with DCJS staff and interns to coordinate council activities;**
- **meets quarterly as a full council in Albany;**
- **elects regional officers (NYC, Downstate, and Upstate) responsible for coordinating local projects; and**
- **is currently planning a focus group project in collaboration with the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children to discuss youth and families' personal thoughts and experiences with the processing of juvenile delinquency cases in family court.**

**If you would like more information about the YAC or want to participate, contact:
Courtney Ramirez at (518) 485-1091 or Courtney.ramirez@dcjs.state.ny.us**