



YOUR EXPERIENCE HAS POWER

»» BECOME A YOUTH PEER ADVOCATE (YPA)

Are you a young person who is between the ages of **18 and 30 years old** with first-hand experience with mental health, special education, or foster care services? Are you curious about ways you could help a younger person who is facing some of the same challenges you faced?

If so, consider becoming a **Youth Peer Advocate (YPA)**. Learn more about how you can use your own experience with recovery to make a positive impact in another young person's life.

»» WHAT DOES A YOUTH PEER ADVOCATE (YPA) DO?

A **Youth Peer Advocate** plays a unique role in partnering with young people to provide a sense of hope. YPAs are young adults between the ages of **18 and 30-years-old** who provide support to adolescents facing certain struggles. Youth Peer Advocates are different from other professionals because they have direct experience with the challenges, losses, and stresses young people enrolled in programs face.

Youth Peer Advocates work **one-on-one**, either in a home or a community setting, to advocate for the people they work with. They attend meetings such as school and treatment planning meetings, act as mentors and role models, and share personal experiences including strategies that worked or did not work during recovery.

Hearing these stories helps young people understand that recovery is real and possible. This creates hope, which motivates them to take care of themselves, overcome barriers, and think positively about the future.

» WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A YOUTH PEER ADVOCATE?

To become a Youth Peer Advocate, you must:

- Be an individual 18 to 30 years old with experience receiving mental health, substance use, juvenile justice, or special education services, and/or have been in the foster care system.
- Have either a high school diploma, high school equivalency, or NYS State Education Commencement Credential (e.g. SACC or CDOS).
- Be willing to work with youth.
- Work alongside other professionals.
- Be cleared by the State Child Abuse Registry and Justice Center requirements.
- Complete fingerprinting for a criminal history background clearance.
- Have a valid driver's license (preferred).
- Complete required training and become a credentialed peer.

Youth Peer Advocates should also be able to demonstrate an understanding of their own recovery. They should possess leadership skills and knowledge of advocacy. YPAs should also understand the facilitation of peer-to-peer groups or activities.

Importantly, you should be able to use your own lived experiences with mental illness health challenges to assist youth in their recovery and wellness.

» WHAT TRAINING IS REQUIRED TO BECOME A YOUTH PEER ADVOCATE?

Youth Peer Advocates undergo a two-part training. The first part is available online and consists of a four module training course.

The second part is a two-day, in-person training. There are other requirements, such as hours of work experience, prior to credential completion. After completing the first part of training, individuals may work while earning their credential.



familiesfirstessex.org
518.873.9544