



FAQs: Youth Mental Health Advocate Program

Program Overview

The Youth Mental Health Advocate program is part of **Working the Gap**, a collaboration between the CUNY School of Professional Studies' [Youth Studies Program](#) and the [Academy for Community Behavioral Health](#). Working the Gap offers applied skills training, paid work experience, and college-level courses to young people ages 17-24 who have completed high school or a GED and are not currently enrolled in college.

The [Youth Mental Health Advocate](#) pilot will equip young people with skills to provide culturally responsive mental health support to other youth. Between September 2023-June 2024, this program will fund 25 part-time Youth Advocates to work in youth-serving community organizations across NYC. The Academy will provide training, coaching, and support to the Youth Advocates and their host organizations.

YMHA is made possible by funding and support from the [Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity](#) and [HRA Work Progress Program](#). Working the Gap and the Youth Mental Health Advocates program also receives funding from the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation and Summerfield Foundation.

Eligibility

1. Who is eligible to apply to host youth advocates?

This program is open to New York City nonprofit community-based organizations that already deliver services to youth and young people. Organizations must have 501c3 status. If your organization does not currently have 501c3 status but is operating under a fiscal sponsor that does, we encourage you to apply and we will review your eligibility.

2. Are current WPP providers eligible to apply for the YMHA Program?

Yes. If selected, current providers will include the YMHA program on their WPP application, and the award will include YMHA.

3. What are the eligibility requirements for the youth to become a youth mental health advocate?

Youth Advocates must be between the ages of 16-24, have a high school diploma or GED earned between 2018 and June 2023 and are not currently enrolled in college. Unfortunately, undocumented youth are not eligible to apply.

4. Are current program participants in our programs eligible to participate?

There are two ways youth can participate in the Youth Mental Health Advocate program:

- a) If they are enrolled in Working the Gap during the summer of 2023, they will be eligible to continue as Youth Mental Health Advocates for September 2023-June 2024. The Working the Gap application is open and youth can apply [here](#).
- b) We will likely offer a second round of enrollment later in the year to try and match youth already engaged at each participating agency. However, these spaces will be limited.

5. Are background checks required?

Background checks are not required by WPP to participate in the YMHA program, however, youth who participate in SYEP first will have been through a background check already. Organizations should indicate in their YMHA application if their organization requires background checks. If matched with an organization that requires a background check, the YMHA program will support the Youth Advocates through the process.

How to Apply

Organizations must complete an [application](#) by June 30, 2023.

Wages and Reimbursement

1. How much will youth advocates be paid?

Youth Advocates will work up to 15 hours per week at a rate of \$20/hour. Wages are reimbursed to the host organization through the HRA Work Progress Program (WPP). Due to WPP guidelines, youth advocates may not work more than 15 hours per week.

2. How does the reimbursement process work for organizations?

Host organizations need to be WPP providers. Selected organizations who are not already WPP providers will need to sign up for an account in PASSport, the City of New York's digital procurement platform.

WPP providers will onboard Youth Advocates as staff to cover wages and fringe benefits. (Internal HR processes should be in consideration when applying to become a WPP provider.)

CBOs will pay the Youth Advocates upfront, then will submit reimbursement requests (invoices) to WPP. Payments are typically received 8-10 weeks after finalized reimbursement requests are submitted. WPP providers are encouraged to utilize a payroll service such as ADP to provide payroll summary reports which are mandatory for reimbursement.

3. Are there any other costs to the organizations covered, or just the youth advocates' salaries?

The YMHA program covers the Youth Advocates' salaries (\$20/hour) plus fringe up to 25%. Organizations will also receive a one-time payment of at least \$1,500 to be used flexibly. In addition, organizations will also receive specialized training and support from the Academy.

4. Can the youth advocates be provided MetroCards or be reimbursed for travel?

We are currently looking into options to cover the Youth Advocates' travel, but this has not yet been finalized.

Youth Advocates' Roles and Responsibilities

1. What does a youth mental health advocate do?

Youth Advocates will be trained and coached by the Academy to provide mental health support in one-on-one conversations, deliver group-based psychoeducation, and make referrals.

2. Who sets the schedule for the youth advocates? Are afternoon or evening hours possible?

Scheduling for the Youth Advocates are set by the organization, as they do with any other staff member.

3. Can the youth advocates work remotely?

The goal is to work with the current structure of your organization. For example, meetings the Youth Advocates participate in may be on remote work days. Schedules are worked out with the organization directly.

4. Our organization services clients 18+. Do the youth advocates only work with youth or can they work on projects and programs that benefit all our clients?

As we learn more about the sites and the programming, we hope to be able to tailor the role to best fit the organization's needs. We will evaluate each match and consider what programs and services are already in place.

Supervising Staff Roles and Responsibilities

1. What are the responsibilities of the clinical supervisor? Do they have to have a license?

Clinical supervisors are responsible for helping Youth Advocates manage the emotional demands of their work, process specific situations or experiences, and develop their judgment and skills for providing high-quality services to other young people. While it would be helpful to have someone who has training in youth mental health and is interested in working with the Youth Advocates, they do not have to have any special licensure.

2. What are the responsibilities of the administrative supervisor?

Administrative supervisors are responsible for helping Youth Advocates understand and apply organizational policies and procedures, have the resources needed to carry out their roles (e.g. space, technology), navigate workplace questions or challenges, and provide support to complete expected tasks.

3. Can the clinical supervisor and administrative supervisor be the same person?

Yes

Program Expectations and Supports for Selected CBOs

1. Do the three advocates have to be placed in the same site?

Ultimately, the selected organizations will make that decision based on their needs. However, we encourage youth to be placed together as there is value in having each other for support, rather than being isolated.

2. Can services be provided in school building?

The Academy is working to see if peer to peer and/or younger youth can receive the services/supports from the Youth Advocates.

Program Expectations and Supports for Youth Advocates

1. What other supports or services will youth advocates receive?

As part of this program, Youth Advocates will receive training and coaching through the Academy for Community Behavioral Health, college-level courses in youth development from CUNY SPS Youth Studies program, support to identify and pursue the next step in their career development (work or college), and up to nine (9) college credits.

Youth Advocate Placement

1. How will selected youth advocates be matched to organizations?

We will try to give youth as much choice as possible and will consider interest area, age, location and other factors in the matching process. A job description will be provided to organizations for their consideration and input. We will also convene conversations with the organizations and youth to facilitate the matching process.

Reporting Process and Requirements

1. If we are current WPP Providers, would the youth in YMHA be included in the reporting process for current WPP youth, or will youth advocates be viewed as a separate program?

There will be separate reporting requirements for YMHA.