

[illegible]

Partnership for Children, Youth & Families

Why do we need an Advocacy Handbook?

This Advocacy Handbook was created to be a tool to help you work with the local, state, and national elected officials. Youth Bureaus, by nature, are strong advocates for youth. They focus on positive youth development and delinquency prevention programs and services that are planned and delivered on the local level, based on local needs, and often are delivered in the critical out-of-school hours.

Kids are in school a maximum of 1,300 hours per year. They sleep about 3,000 hours each year, leaving 4,500 hours each year! Youth bureau programs and services and school-age child care programs play a critical role in helping families and communities address these non-school hours. Ultimately, it takes funding to provide quality services to our children. Youth development professionals and advocates must speak out on behalf of young people. Many issues of importance are constantly brought to our elected officials' attention. It is imperative that we keep youth development services and programs on their "radar screen."

Law enforcement, parents, business groups, and educators have all agreed that the "Prime Time for Crime" is the after-school hours between 2:30 to 7:30 p.m. Research has shown that prevention programs work, and that asset building & youth development make a positive difference for youth and adults. It is good business for a community!

It is important that we educate elected officials, community leaders, and policy makers on the range of youth development and delinquency prevention programs- their value, importance, relevance, and demand. Youth Bureau programs and services are critical for all young people and their families. These programs and services complement and supplement the efforts of the schools and parents/caregivers. We encourage you to make sure that local and county elected and appointed leaders know what your Youth Bureau or program does, and who benefits from your services.

For too many years, Youth Bureaus have provided services in local communities without adequate funding. Youth Bureau services are cost effective compared to the cost of addressing problems at the other end of the continuum such as prisons, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, illiteracy, and illnesses. We know prevention makes good sense, but we must continually find ways to educate our elected officials and community organizers of the benefits!

We hope that you find this Advocacy Handbook helpful. Not all strategies will work for all youth bureaus and regions. Each Youth Bureau is unique and different. What works for one youth bureau may not work for another. Please take some time to review, and select a few strategies that may be new to you, and try them. We would value your feedback. Remember that advocacy is continuous, and never ending. Elected officials need to be kept up-to-date on our issues. There are always new officials to educate, new relationships to cultivate, and new issues to address. We must continue to remind officials who we are and what we do for kids. **If we don't do it, who else will?**

Sincerely,

Anthony Evans

Anthony Evans
President, Association of NYS Youth Bureaus

Nancy Zahler

Nancy Zahler
President, **Partnership** for Children, Youth, and Families



About the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus:

Founded in 1971, the Association has over 200 members representing Youth Bureaus and Youth Boards, not-for-profit youth service organizations and municipalities throughout New York State. The Association is built on a regional structure, with each of the regions represented on the Board of Directors.

Mission: Promote the physical, emotional and social well-being of youth and families in New York State through a unified, statewide network of youth service programs and professionals.

The Association also works to support and strengthen its member Youth Bureaus and local youth bureau contract agencies through a comprehensive training program.

Local, regional and state-wide events are held throughout the year in addition to the Association's annual conference. The Association provides a unified planning and advocacy network for its members and affiliates using a comprehensive team approach to strengthen youth development initiatives.

Contact: Phone: 518-436-8712 Email: nassocia@nycap.rr.com Web: www.anysyb.net



About the Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families:

The Partnership is a 501(c)3 organization committed to promoting positive youth development at the local, county, regional, and state levels of New York. The Partnership works with the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus to provide mentoring and support for Youth Bureaus and their local partners.

Partnership for Children, Youth & Families

How can the Partnership help?

Partnership Board members have considerable experience in planning, implementing, evaluating, and coordinating youth development programs and systems. They offer their time as mentors, consultants, and trainers to support new and existing Youth Bureau staff. The goal is to supplement, not replace, the technical assistance available to Youth Bureaus from other sources. They seek to promote peer support among youth service professionals so that the overall system can better serve the children, youth, and families of New York State.

How does it work?

Partnership members are available to consult by phone or email with individual Youth Bureaus on a number of topics. In some cases, Partnership member(s) may be willing to attend a regional Association meeting to discuss a topic of shared interest. Anyone can call with a question or request anytime.

Contact: PartnershipCYF@gmail.com

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
I. Local and Regional Advocacy Strategies That Work!	4
1. Events and Celebrations	4
2. Recognition	5
3. Visits to Elected Officials	6
4. Visits to Your Programs	7
5. Keep Them Informed!	7
6. Don't Forget to Say Thank You!	8
7. Letters	8
8. Letters to the Editor	9
9. Legislative Events	10
10. Fundraisers	11
11. Local Support	12
12. Don't be Shy--Promote Yourself!	13
13. Be Responsive to Request from Elected Officials	13
14. Other Ideas to Incorporate into Year Round Advocacy Strategies	14
II. Overcoming Barriers to Advocacy	15
1. Getting Around a "No Advocacy" Policy	15
2. "This Takes Time, I Have Many Other Things to Do!"	15
III. Acknowledgements	16

I. STRATEGIES THAT WORK!



Use multiple methods!

1. EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

SUMMARY:

- Invite elected officials to events and celebrations connected with your municipal and/or local youth bureau, or with regional youth events.
- Develop a youth recognition program. Invite elected officials to attend and participate. (If serving food, please check with NYS JCOPE on ethics & lobbying guidelines @ www.jcope.ny.gov)
- Participate in a “meet your candidates” event.

TIPS:

- These activities are usually fun and non-confrontational; they help to highlight the work that your youth bureau does.
- Invite elected officials to say a few words at the event.
- Invite the press; look for photo opportunities that include the elected officials and youth.
- If certificates or awards are to be given out, ask the elected officials to assist you with the presentation.
- Youth and Youth Board members can attend and advocate for youth programs.

2. RECOGNITION



SUMMARY:

- Look for opportunities to recognize local and state elected officials.

TIPS:

- This could include giving an elected official an award, or asking him/her to be an honorary chair of event or activity.
- Host an annual recognition for elected officials highlighting their contribution in all areas.
- Get to know your local county legislators, especially your oversight committee. Send them reports, announcements, holiday cards, conference material, etc.
- Let your local and state legislators know the variety of programs and services your youth bureau is involved in. Have your board members contact them a few times during the year.

3. VISITS TO STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS



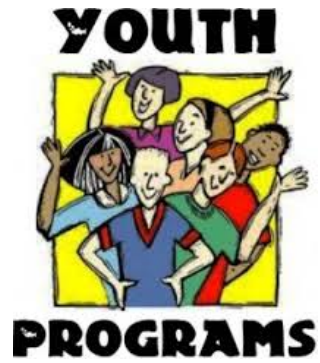
SUMMARY:

- Schedule a visit with state elected officials in their home office or in Albany.
- Attend their town meetings.

TIPS:

- Take others with you –
 - youth from your programs
 - your youth board members
 - community stakeholders who benefit from your services (school representatives, parents/caregivers, etc.),
 - contract agency staff, board of directors, etc.
- Decide ahead of time what message you want your elected official to hear. Develop talking points and review these with anyone who is going with you.
- For home visits, Friday tends to be a good day to schedule a visit.
- Take a group of youth each year to Albany (such as at the Youth Leadership Forum and Legislative Day). Arrange to meet your local state representatives in scheduled appointments.
- Hold a local Legislative Breakfast or Luncheon with youth and board involvement. Again, if serving food, please check with the NYS JCOPE guidelines.
- Bring a handout to leave behind. Be sure to include your youth bureau contact information on all materials.
- Send a thank you; hand written notes from the youth are very well received. Make sure to put your youth bureau address on all correspondence.

4. VISITS TO YOUR PROGRAMS



SUMMARY:

- Ask legislative aides to visit programs that the youth bureau funds or operates.
- Invite elected officials to visit an agency to discuss impending budget or announced budget cuts and the impact of those cuts.

5. KEEP THEM INFORMED!



SUMMARY:

- Use social media and include your elected officials in messaging; if they visit your youth bureau, attend an event - tag, tweet and talk it up.
- Join elected officials' social media pages as the Youth Bureau; like their events and post pictures of yours with them.
- Put elected officials on your mailing and announcement lists for the things you routinely send out such as newsletters, annual reports, emails, etc.
- Send elected officials press releases and news articles on positive things youth (connected to your program) have done. Use links to newspaper articles, etc.
- Develop a legislative committee on your youth board.
- Send an annual summary to elected officials showing numbers served for each program and the results achieved indicating dollars well spent. This is a powerful document to show what individual programs have accomplished.

6. DON'T FORGET TO SAY THANK YOU!!

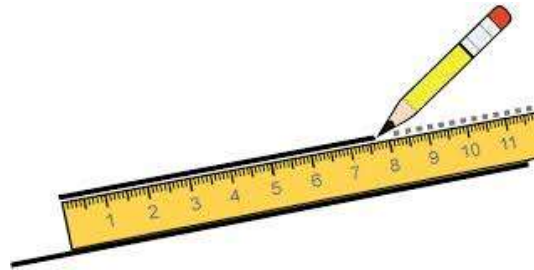


SUMMARY:

- Look for opportunities to thank your elected officials either through phone calls, letters, notes, emails, or faxes.

TIPS:

- Opportunities to thank elected officials could include an increase in funds (no matter how slight), or a piece of legislation which passes and which benefits youth bureau, kids, etc.



7. LETTERS

Measure your words carefully- make them count

SUMMARY:

- Write letters to elected officials clearly stating what you are seeking. Use the ANYSYB legislative agenda.

TIPS:

- Save this strategy for budget time. Use the other advocacy strategies throughout the year.
- Promote the ANYSYB legislative agenda so that the elected officials hear a consistent message from across New York State.
- Ask stakeholders to write letters – this includes contract agencies, youth, parents, municipalities, schools, etc. Develop the letter for them and ask them to personalize it.
- Use email, Twitter, Facebook, etc., to enhance the support of others and emphasize your message.

8. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



SUMMARY:

- Educate/inform the public at large, especially when it looks like there isn't sufficient- or any – coverage of an issue/event in the paper.
- Enlist/encourage public support.
- Make the public aware of your gratitude to the elected officials and/or media personalities responsible for doing something positive for the youth in your area. (This should not be in lieu of direct, individual thank yous, it should be in addition.)

TIPS:

- Follow the published guidelines of your local newspaper and media outlets.
- Include a daytime phone number (to enable editorial staff to verify that the letter is yours).
- Be Brief. Try to limit yourself to making one point per letter; if you have to make more than one point, number them. Limit to three!
- Let your local editor know the article is coming and follow up to be sure it was received and ask when it will be published.
- If your Youth Bureau is unable to contact the press due to county policy, have a youth or a youth board member make the contact. Inform your county official that this is happening.

9. LEGISLATIVE EVENTS



SUMMARY:

- Sponsor or co-host a local or regional legislative event with your collaborators.
- Participate in other agency events such as Mental Health Advocacy events.

TIPS:

- Use this as an opportunity to highlight some of the youth bureau services.
- Invite contract agencies, board of directors, youth from your programs, etc., to attend and to participate.
- Invite the press; look for photo opportunities with elected officials.
- Hold the event where there are youth activities going on. The ideal location would be at a program that is using youth bureau funding, or that the youth bureau operates directly.
- Connect to some other activity in partnership with your contract agencies, such as a youth volunteer driven event. Examples are canned food drives, walk-a-thons, fundraisers for cancer victims, etc. Be sure to include youth in planning and marketing!

10. FUNDRAISERS



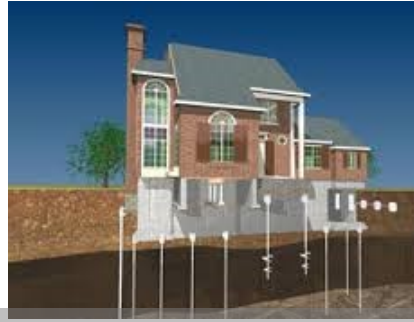
SUMMARY:

- Attend fundraisers for your local and state elected officials.
- Consider making a personal financial donation to your local and state elected officials' campaigns.
- Have youth or agencies host an annual fundraiser that may be appealing to elected officials, while benefiting specific youth initiatives, i.e.:
 - Youth/ community walk to support family and youth issues.
 - Create a fundraiser with proceeds to support youth attending the Youth Leadership Forum in Albany.
 - Youth/community raise funds for Child Care Scholarships
 - Youth raise funds to support capital improvements of schools, City Hall or public building.

TIPS:

- The practice of attending fundraisers, making donations, and/or supporting individuals running for office varies greatly from location to location. Local political history, custom, and atmosphere must be carefully considered.
- Support for children has been and should be bi-partisan. To retain the support of all political parties we need to be strategic in what we support to maintain the best interest of children and youth. If you are considering taking a position on a particular policy issue, talk with other Youth Bureaus in your region or contact ANYSYB.
- If making a donation, make sure you write a personal check which has your name on it. (If you write a check for a spaghetti dinner, for example, your elected official will have a record of your support even if he/she does not see you or it is crowded and he/she does not remember if you were there.)
- Support your contract agency and municipal fundraising events by sharing the information such as posting on your website, Facebook and distributing flyers at appropriate meetings.

11. LOCAL SUPPORT



Build a strong foundation

SUMMARY:

- Get your municipal local government (town, city, county) to pass a resolution which supports youth bureau funding and programs.
- Get locally elected governmental body (i.e. county legislature, board of supervisors, town supervisors, village mayors, common council, etc.) to send state elected officials letters of support for youth bureau related programs and funding.
- Work with the local elected body to pass a resolution adopting a youth month highlighting youth and youth programs each week.

TIPS:

- Involve a variety of local stakeholders. In addition to elected officials, involve county human service collaborations, school boards, school superintendents, PTA, local press, local civic groups.
- Find “champions” for youth services that are well-known, respected individuals who are passionate about youth and youth programs. A school superintendent, a faith leader, a business leader may have access to local and state leaders in professional or social settings where they can speak on your behalf with credibility.

12. DON'T BE SHY- PROMOTE YOURSELF!!



SUMMARY:

- Stay current on youth development issues. Become a valuable resource for elected officials and the media.

TIPS:

- Work to become known as an expert on youth issues. Let others seek you out on youth related issues.
- Promote your services and let them know which funding sources are critical to your programs and success. Let them know what harm cuts will have on your programs and services for children, youth and families in their districts.

13. BE RESPONSIVE TO REQUESTS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS

SUMMARY:

- Earn the trust of your elected officials and they will depend on you for information and recommendations.
- Be responsive to state legislative requests regarding constituents.
- Be responsive to local legislative requests regarding contract agencies (aware of your county policy).

14. OTHER IDEAS TO INCORPORATE INTO YEAR ROUND ADVOCACY STRATEGIES



- When working on projects which involve partnerships with others, look for ways to include elected officials.
- Consider asking a local elected official to co-chair a task force or special team project. This will give them visibility while raising the profile of your Youth Bureau. They learn more and get invested in finding resources to help your cause.
- Keep up active communication with legislative aides - get to know them, and let them know what you are doing.
- When a public event is being held that elected officials will attend (such as a state budget hearing), get an advocate to attend and ask the officials where they stand on certain youth issues and youth programs. This puts their commitment on public record.
- Recruit and retain volunteers who can help you with your advocacy efforts.
- Youth Voice is powerful: encourage, plan, and coordinate youth leadership activities, youth councils, etc.!



II. OVERCOMING BARRIERS to ADVOCACY



Carefully check the
things you need to do!

1. GETTING AROUND A “NO ADVOCACY” POLICY

Does your county, town, or city prohibit you from doing direct advocacy? There are still many ways that you can support advocacy efforts without “being on the front line”.

- If you can’t send out letters or emails; contact your contract agencies, municipalities, other stakeholders, etc. directly asking them to contact elected officials, ask the ANYSYB to do that for you. You just need to give them an email list.
- Contact your local allies (we all have them) and ask them to help you get the word out.

2. “THIS TAKES TIME, I HAVE TOO MANY OTHER THINGS TO DO”

Look at many things that take up your time. Are there resources you could get to free up some time? Here are examples:

- Get a local college intern to do a project for you.
- Recruit a Title V (Older Americans Act) or RSVP Volunteer to assist you, in order to free up some of your time to do advocacy or to help you with your efforts. Older people speaking out for youth can be persuasive.
- Use youth speak-outs and forums as advocacy tools.
- Use youth to volunteer at the Youth Bureau and they can earn credit for their school’s community service program.

REMEMBER:

Some strategies “fail” the first time – you just try again- ***our kids are worth it!***

III. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original Advocacy Handbook originated from a June, 2000 work session of the Association of NYS Youth Bureaus. Several Association members who were present at the meeting laid the initial foundation for what became the Advocacy Cookbook. It was first published in 2000 using contributions from many Youth Bureau Directors. Several members of that original group are now retired and are members of the Partnership of Children, Youth and Families.

The Partnership and the Association appreciate the hard work of the previous generation of Youth Bureau directors who created the first version of this tool. In 2015, members of the Partnership and the Association who had found the Cookbook to be a useful tool agreed to update and reprint this 2016 Advocacy Handbook. We would like to thank all of those involved in compiling and revising this present handbook and hope you will find it to be a useful tool in your Youth Development work!

The Partnership and Association will continue to revise and update this Advocacy Handbook. Please tell us about creative advocacy strategies that have worked for you and the tips you have for others who might try them. With your help we can do an even better job of building support for children, youth, and families.

We need your experience and action to strengthen our advocacy to ensure that all youth have the services, opportunities, & supports they need.

Please share your feedback or stories. Email either the

Association: nassocia@nycap.rr.com, or Partnership: PartnershipCYF@gmail.com

Partnership Board	Association of New York State Youth Bureaus	
R = Retired Tn = Town Co = County		
Carol Chichester, Orange County-R	Anthony Evans, Cattaraugus County	Jillian Gorman-King, Tn. Cheektowaga
Joanne Eddy, Madison County	Wes Carr, Saratoga County	Brian Chetney, Oswego City-County
Nita Hawkins, Livingston County-R	Rachel Wilson, Orange County	Amie Hendrix, Tompkins County
Dennis McLaughlin, Tn. Colonie-R	Jocelyn Sikorski, Genesee-Orleans	Joanne Sevicik, St. Lawrence County
Colleen Monaghan, CCE Sullivan Co	Meghan Lutz, Niagara County	George McDonnell, Schoharie County
John Trojanowsky, Tn. Lancaster	Michael Gray, Washington County	Janeen Cunningham, Putnam County
Frank Williams, City White Plains	DaMia Harris, City Mount Vernon	Sara Mark, New York City, DYCD
Michelle Yanche, Good Shepard Svs	Margaret Martinez Malito, Nassau	Nancy Lynott, Tn. Southampton
Nancy Zahler, Tompkins County- R	Joanne Eddy, Madison County	Jackie Negri, Exec. Dir. ANYSYB

Advocacy Handbook

2nd Edition

Printed by Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families

In cooperation with

Association of New York State Youth Bureaus

May 2016