



**ACADEMY FOR COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**  
**CALL FOR COLLABORATORS: SENIOR ADVISOR, YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH**

The Academy for Community Behavioral Health seeks an experienced Senior Advisor with expertise in youth-centered mental health approaches and participatory methods to help the Academy strengthen its Youth Mental Health Advocate pilot program.

This is a consultant role expected to take place between Summer 2024 and June 30, 2025. The role may be extended, contingent on continued project funding.

**The Academy will review applications on a rolling basis through July 31, 2024.**

**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The [Academy for Community Behavioral Health \(the Academy\)](#) at the [CUNY School of Professional Studies](#) partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) and other non-profit social service providers to improve access to compassionate, culturally responsive care. Established in June 2021 with funding from the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health and Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity, the Academy builds capacity for proactive behavioral health support through services that include:

- a) Free courses that equip providers with actionable behavioral health skills and tools to manage the emotional demands of their work
- b) Pilot programs that use participatory methods to strengthen community-based care and surface new insights about what works

In FY24 (July 2023-June 2024), the Academy launched a [Youth Mental Health Advocate](#) pilot program as part of **Working the Gap**, a collaboration with CUNY SPS Youth Studies. Working the Gap provides young people ages 18-24 who have completed HS or a GED and are not currently enrolled in college with applied skills training, work experience, access to college level courses, and support to pursue a next step in their education or career.

Through this pilot, the Academy is co-developing a Youth Mental Health Advocate scope of practice and curriculum that includes comprehensive training, coaching, and implementation support for the youth advocates and their host CBOs. Based on Pilot Year 1, we anticipate this program can have positive impacts for youth advocates, the CBOs they work in, and young people seeking services at those CBOs.

In Pilot Year 2 (FY25: July 2024-June 2025), the Academy will support a cohort of 15 youth mental health advocates at 5 CBOs across NYC. Youth advocates will work 20 hours/week between October 2024-May 2025, with funding from the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity and HRA Work Progress Program (WPP).

**The Senior Advisor will use their expertise to help the Academy:**

- a) Develop a strategy to invite and apply input from youth advocates, CBOs, youth seeking services at the CBOs, and others to inform program design, implementation, and improvement;
- b) Refine the program focus, including the Youth Mental Health Advocate scope of practice; and,
- c) Improve the Youth Mental Health Advocate curriculum.

We expect these activities will advance key goals of the Youth Mental Health Advocate pilot, including to:

- Validate and build the unique capabilities of youth, and youth-serving CBOs, to help design and deliver effective youth-centered mental health support
- Develop a program model that matches the priorities, strengths, and needs of participating youth and youth-serving CBOs
- Provide youth advocates with meaningful learning and work experience, helping them clarify and take steps toward their professional goals while gaining tools to care for their own mental health
- Assess implementation facilitators and barriers and program impacts
- Clarify the potential role of youth mental health advocates in youth-serving CBOs in NYC, including by refining the intervention focus and identifying helpful common elements across settings, along with important variations

**Academy Learning Programs**

The Academy prioritizes practices that include, but are not limited to:

- Create welcoming, accessible, and caring learning environments
- Identify clear learning goals and program outcomes. In the Youth Mental Health Advocate program, this includes:
  - Youth advocate outcomes, such as developing specific relational skills, implementing new skills in real world settings, and strengthening inner resources and behaviors for navigating the emotional demands of professional helping roles
  - CBO outcomes, which may include skill gains or behavior changes among individual staff and program-level practice changes
  - Outcomes related to the ways youth are engaged and supported at participating CBOs, such as increased youth engagement in CBO programming or positive impacts on youth mental health
- Match learning strategies to intended outcomes, implementer experiences, and implementation settings
- Prioritize experiential learning and ongoing supports needed to achieve skill gains and practice changes, such as: skills practice; supportive, accurate, and timely performance coaching; guided self-reflection; shared learning and reflection in a supportive peer cohort; and more
- Support helpers to manage the emotional demands of their work and strengthen inner resources for compassionate, skillful action

In Pilot Year 2, the Academy will seek college credits within CUNY for the Academy's Youth Mental Health Advocate training program and the part-time work that youth advocates perform in CBOs via a credit for prior learning initiative. The Senior Advisor will contribute to curriculum development in line with Academy standards and the criteria needed to successfully pursue college credits.

## ROLE DESCRIPTION

The Academy seeks an experienced Senior Advisor for Youth Mental Health to guide the improvement of its Youth Mental Health Advocate program in Pilot Year 2. Working with the Academy team, the Senior Advisor will help develop and execute a strategy for refining the existing curriculum to maximize program effectiveness and impact. The ideal candidate will demonstrate expertise in participatory methods and youth-centered mental health approaches.

The Senior Advisor will report to the Academy's Director and will have opportunities for consultation with other experts in the Academy network. The Program Director will assign staff or other resources to activities that the Senior Advisor leads or consults on, as needed and based on Academy capacity.

## KEY TASKS

In Pilot Year 2, the Senior Advisor will:

- a) **Develop a Year 2 program co-development strategy.** We aim to create a clear, feasible structure for participatory program development that takes into account the experiences of youth advocates, their host CBOs, and the young people each CBO serves, along with other relevant experts. This is expected to include, but may not be limited to:
  - Review the Year 1 curriculum and lessons learned; consult on existing strengths and opportunities for improvement
  - Propose a feasible strategy for collaboratively refining the Youth Mental Health Advocate curriculum in Year 2, given available resources and program timeline
  - Design specific co-development activities to meet agreed upon goals
  - Recommend additional expertise needed to maximize program effectiveness, where applicable (e.g. targeted literature reviews, consultation with other experts)
  
- b) **Lead specific program development activities** (such as, but not limited to: experience mapping, focus groups, self-report methods, or other co-program development activities). These activities should invite the perspectives of youth advocates, CBOs, youth the CBOs serve, and other key stakeholders. This is expected to include, but may not be limited to:
  - Develop protocols or tools for specific activities
  - Lead implementation, such as by:
    - Facilitating activities
    - Training or equipping other stakeholders to carry out key activities, where appropriate (e.g. project staff, CBOs who may be better positioned to invite input from youth participants)
  - Analyze inputs from these activities
  - Coordinate with the Academy to validate findings or next steps with relevant stakeholders
  - Provide expert recommendations on how best to integrate findings into the program model
  
- c) **Help produce a revised Youth Mental Health Advocate curriculum**, in line with Academy standards and credit for prior learning goals. Curriculum development may include:
  - Propose updates to the overall program model, including the Youth Mental Health Advocate scope of practice

- Propose updates to the specific learning goals, learning sequence, and learning activities used to equip Youth Mental Health Advocates and their host CBOs to implement this program
- Create or update specific training, coaching, or implementation support materials to best achieve program goals
- Advise on strategies to measure the learner experience and learner outcomes, consistent with strengths-based and competency-based approaches

**d) Consult on program evaluation and/or spread.**

**e) Other activities to strengthen the Youth Mental Health Advocate program,** as determined with the Academy. Based on the Senior Advisor's interests, capacity, and expertise, the Academy may consider expanding the scope of this role to include activities such as:

- Training or supporting lead instructors
- Delivering training, coaching, or implementation support to youth advocates or their host CBOs
- Collaborating with the Academy to publish findings, implementation resources, or other products
- Other

## **DELIVERABLES, TIMELINE AND BUDGET**

Final deliverables, timeline, and budget will be determined between the Academy and the Senior Advisor.

We expect deliverables to include:

- Recommend program strengths and opportunities for improvement, based on review of the Year 1 curriculum and lessons learned
- Propose a clear and feasible plan to collaboratively improve the Year 2 program model and curriculum, including an overall co-development strategy and structure
- Develop materials needed to implement specific co-development activities; equip others to facilitate co-development activities, where applicable
- Create, review, or update Year 2 curriculum materials, such as:
  - Recommendations to strengthen overall program goals and approach
  - Updates to the Youth Mental Health Advocate scope of practice
  - Updates to specific curriculum components, including:
    - learning goals, learning activities, learning outcomes, and outcome assessment
    - specific training, coaching, and implementation support materials (e.g. PowerPoint slides, facilitator guides, worksheets, or other learning materials)
  - A program logic model
- Collaborate with the Academy team, including through regular program meetings

Year 2 of the Youth Mental Health Advocate pilot runs from July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 (FY25). We anticipate a commitment of up to 150 hours in FY25 for this role at a proposed rate of \$225/hour. This project may require a higher time commitment in some months than others. Final scope, budget, and schedule will be determined with the Senior Advisor.

## QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal candidate may not have all the qualifications listed below, or may have other relevant qualifications. We encourage you to apply if you believe you have the experience and expertise needed for this role.

### Minimum Qualifications

- Demonstrated experience using collaborative, participatory methods to co-develop, implement, and assess a youth-focused mental health intervention in a community setting. Successful candidates will:
  - Have meaningfully engaged youth and other relevant stakeholders in program design
  - Have designed and tested one or more specific, youth-centered mental health interventions in a community setting
  - Have experience conducting interviews, focus groups, and other participatory activities; experience also training others in participatory methods is preferred
- Demonstrated experience designing and implementing successful learning programs to help others apply mental health skills, including:
  - curriculum development skills
  - an evidence-informed teaching approach that includes experiential learning
  - strong facilitation skills
  - a record of assessing the learner experience and program outcomes
- A thoughtful, well-informed perspective on issues relevant to this program, including:
  - The roles that young people, and youth-serving CBOs, can play in community-based youth mental health care
  - Co-developing accurate and helpful understandings of youth mental health, and the strategies that support it, to counter disparities driven by racism, discrimination, and other forms of violence
  - Ways to effectively build mental health capacity in and with community-based organizations, including translating promising practices into action and learning from community expertise that may not be reflected in formal research
  - Collaborating with diverse partners to define and achieve program goals

We encourage applications from those who have developed their perspectives, knowledge, and skills in part through experience that may include:

- Having navigated social services or mental health care as a young person in NYC or a similar setting
  - Having lived in a community disproportionately impacted by health and socioeconomic disparities and their underlying causes
  - Having worked in a youth-serving community organization in NYC or similar setting
  - Other relevant lived experience
- Advanced training and specialization in youth mental health, including:
    - Evidence of your own continued learning and skill development
    - Proficiency in any skills that you teach others
  - Advanced degree in a related field

- Strong writing and organization skills
- Shared commitment to the Academy’s vision, mission, and values

**Preferred qualifications**

- Prior experience working in or with NYC community-based organizations
- 5+ years’ experience delivering evidence-supported mental health care to adolescents or young people in a community setting
- Specialization in one or more areas related to the Academy’s work, such as, but not limited to:
  - Task sharing
  - Trauma healing and posttraumatic growth
  - Countering harms related to racism and discrimination
  - Harm reduction
  - Contemplative practices
  - Evidence-based counseling skills
  - Implementation science
  - Adult learning
- Experience applying community-based participatory research methods
- Experience developing or teaching college-level courses

**TO APPLY**

To apply, please send a **brief cover letter and your resume or CV** to [academy4cbh@sps.cuny.edu](mailto:academy4cbh@sps.cuny.edu) with the subject **“Senior Advisor: Youth Mental Health”** no later than **July 31, 2024**.

The Academy will review applications on a rolling basis. Select candidates will be invited to 1-2 interviews. At least one interview will include presenting a relevant work sample that demonstrates your experience with key tasks, such as participatory program development or curriculum design.