



FAQs: Youth Mental Health Advocate Program Pilot Year 2 (2024-2025)

Program Overview

The Youth Mental Health Advocate (YMHA) pilot 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 \(the Academy\)](#). Working the Gap offers applied skills training, paid work experience, and access to college-level courses to young people ages 18-24 who have completed high school or a GED, are not currently enrolled in college, and have not completed a bachelor's degree.

The [YMHA](#) pilot will equip young people with skills to provide culturally responsive mental health support to other youth. In this second pilot year, between October 7, 2024-May 30, 2025, this program will fund 15 part-time Youth Advocates to work in 5 youth-serving community-based 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 YMHA also receive funding from the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation and Solon E. 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 (CBOs) 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.

We seek host organizations who will nurture the personal and professional development of Youth Advocates, including by fully onboarding and integrating them into your program or team, providing them with opportunities to learn, and offering consistent supervision and support.

Recruiting Youth Advocates

1. What are the eligibility requirements for youth to become a Youth Mental Health Advocate?

Youth Advocates must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- between the ages of 18-24
- have a high school diploma or GED earned before June 2024
- have not yet earned a bachelor's degree
- are not currently enrolled in college

Additionally, candidates should have an interest in working with other youth to promote their mental health and wellbeing, and a desire to participate in the full Working the Gap experience. We also recommend that Youth Mental Health Advocates are familiar with, or live in a community served by, your CBO.

Unfortunately, due to funding restrictions, undocumented youth are not eligible to apply.

2. What is the process for selecting and hiring Youth Advocates?

CBOs will directly recruit, select, and hire three (3) Youth Advocates to work in your organization. The Academy will provide support to host CBOs in the hiring process (see question 3, below).

By empowering CBOs to directly recruit your own Youth Advocates, we anticipate that you will select Youth Advocates who are a good fit for your program(s), based on qualities that you prioritize. This may include youth who are from the communities you serve; who live close to your program location; who may already be familiar with your services; or who are otherwise a good fit with your program(s).

3. What supports will the Academy provide for youth recruitment?

While selected CBOs will directly recruit their own Youth Advocates, the Academy will provide the following supports:

- Provide a Youth Advocate job description template that each CBO will customize
- Provide an overview of Working the Gap and the YMHA program to help potential Youth Advocates decide if this is a good fit for them
- Help CBOs advertise open Youth Advocate positions
- Answer program eligibility questions

The Academy will require that each CBO designate an onboarding liaison to guide selected Youth Advocates through the hiring process at your organization and ensure a start date the week of October 7, 2024.

4. Are current participants in CBO programs eligible to participate?

Yes, we encourage CBOs to recruit candidates who may already work at your CBO, participate in your programming, or are otherwise familiar with your organization to be Youth Advocates, as long as they meet Working the Gap eligibility criteria.

5. Are background checks required?

Background checks are not required by WPP to participate in the YMHA program. If your CBO requires background checks for employment, this should be clearly indicated to potential candidates in your recruitment materials.

6. What is the timeline for recruiting Youth Advocates?

Selected CBOs will be notified of their acceptance into the Year 2 pilot no later than August 12th. We expect CBOs to begin recruiting Youth Advocates in mid-August 2024 and will provide additional materials to accepted CBOs. **Youth Advocates must have a start date (be fully hired and on payroll) during the week of October 7, 2024.**

Wages and Reimbursement

1. How much will Youth Advocates be paid?

Youth Advocates will work 20 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 20 hours per week. **These 20 hours/week must include Academy training and coaching sessions.**

2. How does the reimbursement process work for organizations?

Host organizations must be registered as 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, following your standard hiring process.

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 any other CBO costs 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 stipend of \$5,000 to be used flexibly. In addition, organizations will receive specialized training and support from the Academy.

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 engage other young people and provide mental health support, including in 1:1 conversations and group settings. The curriculum will be reviewed and adapted with input from selected host CBOs and the youth advocates.

2. Who sets the schedule for the Youth Advocates? Are afternoon or evening hours possible?

Each CBO will determine a set work schedule with your Youth Advocates, as you do with any other staff member. This schedule should be standardized for the duration of the program (October 2024-May 2025), and will be submitted to the Academy in advance of the YMHA program start in October.

The Academy will make every effort to schedule YMHA training and coaching sessions during the Youth Advocates' established work schedules. Given variation across CBOs and the emphasis on cohort-based learning among all YMHAs, there may be times when the Academy needs to schedule events outside a Youth Advocates' standard schedule. We will provide both CBOs and Youth Advocates with advance notice of planned Academy training and coaching sessions.

3. Can the youth advocates work remotely?

Youth advocates should complete their work on-site at your organization. Virtual Academy training should also be completed on-site at the CBO. This means that all CBOs must provide each youth advocate with space and equipment to work on-site, including a quiet workspace, computer with Zoom capability, and a camera.

4. Do all three Youth Advocates have to be placed at the same site?

Selected CBOs will make this decision based on their program needs and staffing capacity. Where possible, we encourage sites to place Youth Advocates together or otherwise create opportunities for them to regularly interact, as there is value in having each other for support, rather than being isolated.

We ask that Youth Advocates only be placed at a work location where there is adequate staffing capacity to support them. This includes ensuring that, at minimum, their Administrative and/or Clinical Supervisor is available on-site during their work hours. CBOs should take this into account when developing Youth Advocate schedules.

Supervising Staff Roles and Responsibilities

1. What are the responsibilities of the clinical supervisor? Do they require 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. Previous experience providing supportive clinical supervision in this way is strongly recommended.

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.

4. **What are the responsibilities of the onboarding liaison?**

The onboarding liaison will assist selected Youth Advocates to complete the hiring and onboarding process and ensure they are onboarded with a start date the week of October 7, 2024. This includes clearly describing the hiring and onboarding process to Youth Advocates and supporting them to complete required forms and obtain any documentation required by your organization (ex: background check, fingerprinting, medical forms, etc.).

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 specialized training and coaching through the Academy for Community Behavioral Health, access to 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 8 college credits.

WPP Reporting Process and Requirements

1. **What are WPP's reporting requirements?**

All CBOs will attend a WPP orientation session, to be scheduled (early Fall 2024). Throughout the program year, CBOs will need to meet ongoing WPP reporting requirements, including a **Monthly Provider Update (MPU)** and quarterly **Hires and Outcomes Progress (HOP) Report**. CBOs will also need to submit timely invoices to WPP, including payroll backup documents, for reimbursement of Youth Advocate wages.

How to Apply

Interested organizations must complete an [application](#) by July 26, 2024.

Questions

Please send questions to ymha@sps.cuny.edu.