

VOICE

Our Model

YAP VOICE (Vocalize, Organize, Inform, Collaborate, Empower) is an agency-wide system change initiative that seeks to empower and support our young people, their families and staff to improve human services systems. YAP VOICE has as its overriding goal for systems to rely less on institutional care and rely more on supporting families, neighborhoods and communities. YAP VOICE is poised to reach out to communities nationwide to bring about systems change.

Vocalize

Speak out on the issues that are negatively impacting children, youth, families and adults with complex needs and become active in the policy-making process that addresses those issues.

Organize

Organize staff, advocacy groups, children, youth, adults and families, and other stakeholders to influence policy at the state and local levels.

Inform

Inform the public on effective community-based solutions to juvenile crime, mental health, and child abuse and neglect and other issues that are of public concern.

Collaborate

Form partnerships and coalitions with other organizations that support similar causes and share YAP's mission and core values.

Empower

Empower YAP children, youth, families and partners to advocate on the behalf of themselves and others.

Our Program

Groups of alumni, current YAP involved youth and family members and staff form voluntarily to tackle system improvement related projects. Participants reach out to community members and policy makers to understand current local issues. Partnerships are developed with like-minded organizations to develop awareness and create solutions. Examples of identified issues include addressing minority overcrowding in detention centers; improving services and "quality of life" for youth living in residential centers; increasing community-based options for youth and improving access to quality mental health care for youth in communities and in residential care.

The following activities are being implemented as part of the VOICE initiative:

- Training/preparing alumni leaders
- Preparing youth, parents and caregivers to "share their story"
- Develop self-advocacy training for youth and family members
- Develop educational guides for kids and families
- Cultivate alumni service groups to assist communities
- Plan and implement media campaigns to improve service systems
- Create advisory groups to assist YAP in its service delivery
- Lobbying and letter-writing campaigns
- Create a Speakers Bureau

The Speakers Bureau

The YAP VOICE speakers bureau is available for public presentations and conferences geared for both youth and adults. The Speakers Bureau is made up of youth and adults who have experienced the juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, and other systems firsthand. They are ready and willing to share their remarkable stories in order to raise awareness and to facilitate change.

Let's Work Together...

"If you look to identify and develop the strengths in people, develop a respectful relationship, folks can create important roles for themselves and reach out to others as well."

— **Jeff Fleischer**, YAP CEO

Our nationally recognized services model is being used to help states and counties enhance their juvenile justice and child welfare systems. To help bring VOICE to your community, call **Peggy Thorpe**, National Voice Coordinator, at 607-220-4216 or email pthorpe@yapinc.org. Please visit us on the web at www.yapinc.org.

