

# Youth Advocacy Values Explained



**T**hese program values were developed together with program staff and program members. These values are subject to change as new members and staff offer new perspectives to the program values. Any individuals looking to develop their own youth led advocacy program should consider developing program values together with staff and youth.



## 1. Expertise

The people most affected are at the forefront. Your stories are power. We believe everybody's voice matters and by choosing to share personal experiences to elevate impact, it is our job to design spaces and identify methods that work best for everyone to feel welcomed, empowered, and comfortable. Your experiences are the foundation of your expertise, this program, campaign work and

collaboration. We work to get youth involved in advocacy in their communities. We work hard to educate youth on their rights and arm them with tools and opportunities.

## 2. Sharing what you're comfortable with

You have full autonomy over your story. It is the responsibility of staff to work to create an environment where you can tell your story in a way that is strategic, meaningful, effective, and most comfortable to you. Juvenile Law Center created its Youth Advocacy Program to allow other agencies and policymakers to hear youth's voices and solutions to problems using their stories.

As the author of your story, we want to make sure that we create a brave space to allow the sharing of information with us, the group, and other staff members at the Juvenile Law Center before you speak about your experiences in front of other audiences. We also bring in experts to help teach us all best practices and ways that we can tell our stories that feel most comfortable to us, and so we can help identify what we are comfortable and not comfortable sharing. We believe in trauma informed practices. This means no one has to share anything they don't feel comfortable with.

## Important!

What is shared in a group should stay in the group unless someone says otherwise. You can share how little or how much as you like. You control your story and how you want to share it!

### 3. Consent: Confidentiality & Privacy

We should be reminded that nothing should be implied or implicit. We should always ask about sharing information and be mindful of asking individuals about repeating their stories. We want to manage confidentiality for everyone and gauge comfort level within the group throughout every point of the campaign year. We should do the same for every aspect of our work, no matter how redundant.



What is said or shared in workshops (in person or virtually) or in check-ins should stay in those spaces unless the individual has given permission to share that information outside of those spaces. If you are participating in a virtual workshop, please try to participate in a private space away from the ears of non-group members. If that is not possible, we encourage the use of headphones and can help members purchase those supplies.

### 4. Attendance, Punctuality, Accountability, and Respect

We want your expertise to be included in group workshops on a regular basis. Being present, on time, and ready to work helps strengthen the

group, and the impact we want to create. If participation becomes difficult, you are encouraged to reach out to Youth Advocacy Staff so that we can explore ways to support your participation/engagement in the program. Also know that Youth Advocacy Staff will reach out to you but will respect any space you may need.

*If you need to come late, let Youth Advocacy Staff know before workshops or events, by calling or texting. When entering workshop late, please be respectful of your peers by limiting noise as much as possible (e.g. as soon as you come on Zoom mute yourself).*

### Attending Virtually

There might be times when attending virtually is the best thing for you. **Be Present!** We want people to attend the whole workshop because it is a more holistic experience that begins with the ability to check in and gauge the temperature of how people are feeling so that we all know how to work together throughout the rest of the session.



### 5. Race, Equity & Inclusion

We are committed to taking an explicit and thoughtfully centered anti-racist and anti-white supremacist approach in our work. We work to engage in frequent discussions of race and the intersectionality of race in the justice and child welfare systems in all our youth-led campaigns, partnerships, and interpersonal relationships in the program. Every piece of policy reform, intervention model, communication, or publication is developed with an understanding and appreciation for unique experiences, sexual identity, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, politics, and socio-economic status.

Name calling, bullying, harassment, physical altercations, or discrimination in any form is unacceptable. We do not want anyone using derogatory words that could potentially be harmful to individuals. If any of these situations occurs, staff will meet with youth to discuss why this behavior is harmful and come up with a plan for the best next steps forward so that it doesn't happen again in the future.

Although we may not share the same beliefs or values, we should respect the values, beliefs, and ideas of others without imposing our own onto others. This allows us to create a foundation of honesty, trust, meaningful conversations throughout our time together.

We should always strive to be *welcoming* and create a balanced understanding of the community's views.



## Language we Should Avoid:

- "Juvenile delinquents"
- Using the word "crazy" to describe people
- "retarded" in any conversation
- "gay" to describe something uncool
- "ghetto" to describe behavior
- general stereotypes about culture or race
- Racial slurs including the "N" word

## Alternative Language to Use:

- Let's use the word 'survivor' instead of 'victim'
- Let's call it 'Family Policing' not 'Child Welfare'

### *Mandated Reporting*

Youth Advocacy staff are mandated reporters; this means that if you share information with us that may involve a minor being harmed we may be required by law to report this information. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

The YA program strives to work with youth most impacted by systems to build power and arm them with tools to push for system transformation and advocacy in their communities.

We believe society must take responsibility for the harm placed on children. Children and youth deserve humanity and protection, they deserve better.

