

Young Women's Project Annual Report: 2024-25 Program Year

The Young Women's Project (YWP) builds the leadership and power of young people so that they can transform DC institutions to expand rights and opportunities for DC youth. YWP programs engage youth on three levels – **as organizers** (educating, engaging, mobilizing their peers, working as teams to make decisions), **as advocates** (presenting testimony to city Council, convening accountability meetings of Agency leaders, developing and passing policies) and **as system rebuilders** (developing programs, creating new peer-led systems, integrating youth into decision making). Our work engages under-resourced youth of color, ages 14-21, with a focus on teen women and youth in care. During the past year, we hired and trained 221 young people from 25 DC public and charter schools, all backgrounds and identities, all Wards, mostly Black and Brown youth and women. Half of our youth live or go to school in wards 5, 7 and 8; 20% identify as LGBTQ. Youth Advocates meet twice a week (once in person, once virtual with 15-25 youth each team). Our in-person training sessions take place at our DuPont Office, Shaw Library, Capitol View Library, and MLK Library. YWP Youth Advocates ([Youth Staff bios here](#)) work in two program earning \$10-\$17 an hour. About 25% Youth Advocates are paid as part of the DOES School-Year Internship Program (SYIP), which pays \$10 an hour for up to 8 hours of work each week (legislation that YWP created and passed in 2021, working closely with DC Council). Founded in 1994 as a Collective, by and for women working across race and class, YWP has a staff of 6 and an operating budget of \$650,000. We are value-driven, anti-racist, feminist, grounded in youth development and partnership, and work every day to dismantle oppression and rebuild institutions.

Goals: YWP is working to create a community where young people have the power to thrive as individuals and to shape the institutions that impact their lives. We aim to develop youth leaders who:

1. Have a strong self-concept, a powerful sense of their own worth and potential;
2. Are dealing with and solving problems in their own lives;
3. Value their opinions and speak assertively;
4. Have information, knowledge, and understanding of larger issues;
5. Are setting and achieving goals: and improving their own lives;
6. Are able to build cooperative, supportive relationships;
7. Understand they can contribute to their communities and have impact;
8. Understand how to navigate institutions to secure rights-services and how to impact policy;
9. Create and carry out projects and campaigns that challenge DC institutions;
10. Win policy and institutional changes that improve the lives of youth.

Youth Needs: DC youth exposure to hardship and trauma and the resulting impact of depression, suicide, and anxiety is well documented and urgent. [DC 2023 YRBS data](#) shows 33.8 of HS youth (22.6 male, 43.9% female) were so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing regular activities; 21.4 overall (14.6 males, 27.3 females) said that they felt stressed, depressed, or anxious in the past 30 days; 17.2 considered suicide, 15.2 had a plan and 11.4 attempted. According to a recent [YWP's 2024-25 Youth Mental Health Survey](#), (with 1,040 youth), 75% of survey takers experience high stress, 35% overwhelming stress; 54% have difficulty sleeping. Unfortunately, our school-based mental health systems are fragmented, inaccessible to students. Most [YWP's 24-25 MH Survey](#) respondents did not know the name of their mental health counselor (53%) and received less than an hour of mental health education (71%). Youth prefer peers as health resources (55%) and 38% would first tell a friend if they were suicidal. On the sexual health front, youth are not getting sex ed in school (61.8% of [YWP Sexual Health Survey](#) respondents reported zero hours of instruction). Only 10.5% of respondents used condoms or dental dams during their last sexual encounter. Meanwhile, [CDC estimates](#) that youth ages 15-24 are 25% of the sexually active population, but 50% of new STIs. DOH sexual health programs (condom distribution, STI testing, school-based clinics) are not fully utilized, as [YWP's 2024 Clinic Assessment](#) shows.

YWP Program: YWP's work is organized into two program areas—mental health and wellness and sexual health -- driven by long-term-system-change-focused goals with accomplishments detailed below.

School-Based Mental Health Programing: *Launched in 2019 to respond to the Covid-19 emergency and rising rates of already high depression and suicide among DC youth, the [Mental Health Campaign](#) works to expand school-based health education, connect youth to services, and increase resilience building and coping skills. In five years, MHC has trained and employed 500 youth advocates who educated 25,000+ peers, connected 3,000+ youth to services, conducted 5 [Youth Mental Health & Wellness Surveys](#) with more than 5,000 students--documenting high rates of youth stress, depression, and isolation and low rates of service access. MHC youth advocates [presented 102 Performance Oversight Testimonies](#) to DC Council, created the [Student On-line Support \(SOS\) Virtual Wellness Centers](#) to 16 schools and in [Spanish](#), and built dozens of school based partnerships with health teachers and counselors. During the 2024-25 program year, in partnership with Department of Behavioral Health, YWP trained and supported a cadre of more than 122 peer mental health leaders (ages 14-19) from 30+ DC public schools. As part of the **P2P-SBMH (Peer to Peer School Based Mental Health Program)**, YWP peer leaders used education, referrals, social media, and [Student On-line Support \(SOS\) Virtual Wellness Centers](#) to educate to engage 12,032 students (including 2,200 each week with [personalized messages](#)) through training, text chats, social media, and presentations, covering 10 health issues including toxic stress, resilience building, sleep, trauma, anxiety, healthy relationship building, consent, conflict resolution, meditation, mindfulness, breathing, brain science, depression, substance use, suicide, nutrition, and accessing school based and city-wide mental health services. We also connected more than 2,400 youth to counselors and other supports, presented [42 testimonies](#) to DC Council and submitted [82 written testimonies](#), and conducted a survey with 1,040 students from 36 schools including 16 DCPS and 14 Public Charter Schools, 3 private, and 3 middle schools living in all DC wards with significant representation from wards 7 and 8 (30% of survey takers), 4 (24%) and 5 (15%).. Since 2020, YWP Peer Educators have conducted an annual [Youth Mental Health & Wellness Survey](#)--documenting high rates of youth stress, depression, and isolation and low rates of service access. Here is the [2024-25 Survey as well as the attached slides](#) and the link to [school-specific slides and summaries](#). We used the survey findings and our experience to educate teachers, counselors, principals, and agency leaders on the needs of youth – who are still in crisis with high rates of depression (31%), suicide (14%) and high stress (77%). SB-BH 2 was created by the Committee on Health (Councilmember Christina Henderson) as the [School-Based Behavioral Health Student Peer Educator Pilot \(P2P Pilot\)](#), codifies the essential role of peer educators into law. YWP advocated for it's creation in 2022-23 and was funded through this initiative in FY2024 and FY2025.*

Sexual Heath Programming: Now in it's 12th year, the **Youth Health Educator Program (YHEP)** develops youth as sexual health advocates who work to reduce DC's unintended teenage pregnancy and STI rates through peer education, resource provision, and clinic referral initiation. The [YHEP Team](#), including 80 youth on the ground in 18 schools, reached 8,367 peers with classroom presentations, weekly VPSA messages, and social media and distributed 45,076 condoms and safer sex materials were distributed to youth at schools and community events. YHEP Peer Educators reached 2,178 youth through [classroom presentations](#) on issues including healthy relationships, consent, conflict resolution, decision-making, and body autonomy, contraception, pregnancy prevention, STI prevention, accessing community clinics, and basic anatomy. Another 4,215 youth were reached through weekly VPSA (Value–Problem–Solution–Action) messages focused on building sexual health knowledge and practical skills. These messages included infographics, worksheets, and links to services and support. In addition to education sessions, Social media outreach has continued to play a critical role in education efforts, with [71 Instagram posts](#) reaching 1,974 accounts and generating 21,487 total views. Content focused on contraception, STI prevention, setting boundaries, clinic access, and understanding sexual health rights. A key resource remains [Sexual Health Virtual Wellness Centers \(VWC\)](#), which were relaunched in 16 schools this year, including Spanish-language versions. These digital hubs provide students with 24/7 access to health resources, wellness tools, slide presentations, and referral information to school-based services. This year's team presented [30 testimonies to the DC Council](#) on the need for expanded school based sex education, condom distribution, and clinic outreach. YHEP

staff conducted the [2024-25 Youth Sexual Health Survey](#), the only annual DC youth sexual health survey. Taken by 829 youth across 24 DC High Schools, here are summaries and [school specific results](#). The YHEP team completed a school-based clinic access survey which verifies the lack of communication, accessibility, and youth outreach on the part of school-based clinics. YHEP staff and youth work in partnership with DC Health to facilitate the DC Youth Advisory Council (DC YAC), comprised of 30 youth who work closely with DC Health to education agency leaders on youth needs, support DC Health projects in condom distribution, STI testing, and clinic outreach, and present at DC Health events. Representing 13 DC high schools, YAC youth leaders educated 300 peers with weekly VPSA messages, reached 2,250 through classroom presentations, and distributed 7,000 condoms.

Youth Led Campaigns: In 2024-25, YWP youth staff worked on two additional campaigns. **Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Take 2:** Vote 16 DC Campaign: In April 2018, YWP co-launched campaign to expand DC voting rights for youth by lowering the voting age to 16, working with CM Charles Allen who introduced the legislation, which ultimately failed in spite of a dozens of youth testimony, numerous media stories, and youth lobbying. The legislation failed. Youth leaders at Jackson-Reed High School have reignited the campaign and will be reengaging with DC Council members in Spring 2024. Youth leaders also launched a campaign to defeat legislation requiring all day phone bans in DC public and charter high schools, [mobilizing 24 youth to testify](#). The legislation passed anyway. We are working with youth organizers in individual schools to exempt their schools from the ban.

Fundraising and Financials: In FY2024 and FY2025, YWP benefitted from a diverse funding stream that included both government and foundation grants. YWP's expenses during the FY2024 were \$521,487. Total liabilities and equity was \$1,453,018. Our income was \$921,324 with \$575,000 from government grants and \$330,000 from foundations. Here is the link to our [Financial Statements 10.1.23-9.30.24](#) and [funding sources](#). YWP's audit for FY2022 and FY2023 is [here](#).

YWP Staff Team and Board of Directors: YWP is led by a talented, committed, and highly productive staff team of six with degrees in public health, law, education, and social work and decades of collective experience working with under-resourced youth to reach ambitious leadership and health outcomes and whose own experience and diversity reflect the cultural, racial, linguistic, and geographic diversity of our youth. During the 2024-25 program year, YWP was supported by a full time staff of 6. Executive Director Nadia Gold-Moritz (she/her) has 30 years of experience in youth leadership development, program design, campaign work, curricula design, and organizational development). Executive Director [Nadia Gold-Moritz](#) leads the YJC Mental Health Campaign Team and provides overall direction, financial management, and curricula development. YHEP [Program Manager Shahad Mohieldin](#) is a first generation Sudanese American with a BA in Public Health from American University. Prior to joining YWP's staff, Shahad worked with Global Public Health Linkages and Birthing Project USA and as a Teaching Fellow with Generation. She provides management, program development, and oversight to all YHEP work along with training and supporting two teams. [MHC Program Manager Kia Nwadiora](#), MSW, provided oversight, support for MHC and trained two teams. MHC Program Coordinator [N'Dia Smith](#), trained and managed two teams. Training and Research Associate [Haley Lemp](#), MPH, provides training and management of two YHEP teams and coordinates data collection, evaluation, and survey development for that team. We want to thank our intern staff for their amazing contributions to training, communications, curricula development, and research. They include communications intern [Siya Angus](#) and Training intern. [Keyana Alexis](#) and [Gabi Woodward](#).

Youth Engagement in Decision Making: YWP is an organization founded by young women, grounded in young people's experience and needs, and dedicated to nurturing their leadership and building their power. Youth have a central, significant, meaningful role and will be actively engaged in all operational, decision-making, and program implementation. One third of our board positions are reserved for youth and 20% of our budget goes directly to youth wages. All YWP adult staff works directly with youth staff. Youth board members, staff, and program participants have input into program and organizational decisions. Our youth staff decides on campaign strategies, implement campaign work, make decisions, build networks, conduct trainings, give testimony, negotiate with decision makers,

and design and implement projects. As a youth-adult partnership, YWP empowers youth to shape and define the program they are a part of and take on a range of roles as leaders, project developers, trainers, and peer supporters. Youth leadership development prepares them to take on larger roles – with peers, friends, family, and the larger community. Workforce preparation – and getting paid – is key to supporting all of this other work. Client feedback is collected weekly through session evaluations, surveys, and other data collection methods.

History & Organizational Milestones: YWP is a nationally recognized leader in youth development and civic engagement with a 30-year track record of rigorous, successful, outcomes-based programming and training, youth leadership development, policy development, and institutional change successes. Since 1994, YWP has developed more than 7,000 youth leaders and has worked in partnership with a number of DC agencies to develop policy and implement programs in sexual health education and services, foster care rights and opportunities, youth employment, and other issues. On the health policy front, we drafted and guided passage of the 2016 [DC Health Education Standards](#) (Approved 4.1.16 for an 8.16 implementation), working closely with the State Board of Education, DC Public Schools (DCPS), and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Specifying concepts and skills that students need to know and do, from pre-K through 12th grade, standards are used to develop curriculum and professional development, inform teacher lesson plans and instruction, and monitor student progress. Since 2010, YWP employed and engaged more than 500 foster youth who advocated to secure several rights and resources for DC foster youth through the development several youth policies. We developed and passed [group home](#) and [independent living regulations](#) in 2002; successfully advocated for the Foster Youth Transit Subsidy policy, and developed and helped pass [The Foster Youth Rights and Responsibilities Amendment Act of 2012](#) which details 40 rights in education, privacy, health, transportation, and other issues. Youth leaders successfully advocated establishing a [\\$1,464 a year clothing voucher](#) system for youth in care, a [\\$100 monthly mandatory allowance](#), and an increase the independent living stipend for youth in care. From 2.2017 to 9.2019, YWP ran the Center for Young Adults, provided training and support to more than 150 emancipating youth during the past two years—connecting them to jobs (57%) and housing (68%). In 2020, YWP worked with Committee on Labor and Workforce Development to create part-time work opportunities and career supports for high school students. Launched in January 2021 and expanded in 2022, [the DOES School-Year Internship Program \(SYIP\)](#) provides year-round internship opportunities for 1,000 students in grade 9-12. Students work at nonprofits, schools, government agencies, and private businesses up to 6 hours a week for 6-9 months, and are paid \$10/hour.

Partnerships: YWP has a vast and deep network of school, clinic, and agency partners, built over 28 years of youth development and advocacy work and 10 years of partnership with DC Health. YWP partners include 26 schools (18 DCPS and 8 charters), and a network of school and community-based clinics run by Children's Hospital, Unity Health Care, MedStar. Agency partners include DOH (HAHSTA & CHA), DBH (School-Based Expansion), CFSA, DHS, DME (Out of School Programming), and DCPS (Student Support Services). YWP is part of several Coalitions including Strengthening Family Coalition (Children's Law Center), Youth Economic Justice and Housing Coalition (DC ACT), Community of Practice and Adult Youth Partnership (Center for Health and Healthcare in Schools), and the Youth Sexual Health Coalition (DOH). YWP has 20 years of DC Council partnership. Recent partnerships include working with CM Elissa Silverman on the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development to create and then expand the DOES School Year Internship Program (SYIP) – which now provides part time jobs to 1,000 youth. YWP's youth staff were engaged in reviewing the legislation, providing testimonies about the need and implementation to our Committee in March. We also work closely with CM Henderson and the Committee on Health *to develop the* [School-Based Behavioral Health Student Peer Educator Pilot \(P2P Pilot\)](#) *codifies the essential role of peer educators into law.*