

What is Youth Advocacy?

Your Voice. Your Story. Your Power.

Advocacy Made Simple

Advocacy is speaking up, sharing your experiences, and taking action to create positive change. It's about identifying a problem, offering solutions, and helping decision-makers understand why it matters.

"You don't need permission to care about your community."

Types of Youth Advocacy



Personal Advocacy

Speaking up for
yourself



Peer Advocacy

Helping friends or
student groups



Community Advocacy

Taking action in
schools or
neighborhoods



Policy Advocacy

Working on
rules, policies,
or laws

Advocacy vs. Activism vs. Lobbying

Understanding the difference between advocacy, activism, and lobbying helps you choose the best way to make your voice heard and create change.



Advocacy: Sharing your story,
educating others, suggesting solutions.



Activism: Public actions like rallies or
campaigns to raise awareness.



Lobbying: Asking lawmakers to
support or oppose a specific bill.

- **You don't need to be an expert.**
- **You don't need a title or a certain age.**
- **Advocacy is not arguing; it's influencing.**



Why Youth Voices Matter

Young people bring:

- Fresh ideas adults may overlook
- Real life experiences from schools, neighborhoods, and systems
- Communication skills across platforms
- Energy and creativity to challenge the status quo

Youth voices help leaders see what is actually happening — not what they assume is happening.

Examples of Youth Advocacy

- *Students leading anti-bullying initiatives.*
- *Teens influencing school dress code reforms.*
- *Youth coalitions advocating for mental health resources.*
- *Young people testifying at school board meetings.*

The Youth Advocate Mindset

Advocacy isn't just about what you say, it's about how you show up.

- **Be curious.** Start by asking questions. Curiosity helps you understand different perspectives, uncover root causes, and learn how decisions are made.
- **Be respectful.** Communicate clearly, listen actively, and treat others with dignity. Respect builds trust and keeps doors open.
- **Be persistent.** Many successful advocacy wins come from people who didn't give up when they were first told "no."
- **Be solution-oriented.** Decision-makers are more likely to respond when you bring realistic, thoughtful solutions.
- **Know that your story is powerful.** Your lived experience matters. When you connect your story to a larger issue, you make advocacy human and harder to ignore.