



Youth Advocacy Matters Finding a Voice Through 4-H

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Introduction

Youth advocacy refers to youths' positive development through experiences and processes that can influence their social and political attitudes and behaviors. Youth advocates typically work alongside adults and peers fighting for issues, such as health, civil rights and justice reform (Woolworth, 2014). Advocacy experiences can take place in a variety of places, such as public organizations, non-profits and the private sector – all with the goal of working for change and solutions. Through advocacy roles, youth are able to develop important life skills, develop social skills and strengthen educational experiences (Tommey et al., 2018).

4-H youth are able to gain numerous skills through advocacy experiences, such as:

- **Participating in community problem solving and discussion**
- **Understanding the impact of social, economic and environmental issues on communities**
- **Learning how important decisions are made on issues that impact the community or an organization**

Background

Young people have always been a voice of change and have pushed to create change where needed. Many have a desire to make a difference and be a voice of change. The intent behind youth advocacy is often to change the world or be the difference in someone's life. This change can be associated with a young person's desire to be an active and engaged citizen in the community. Sometimes their actions

are attached to their desire to find a deeper meaning in life. Other times, youth advocacy is simply a response to injustice young people either face or witness but cannot stand by idly and ignore.



Key Terms

Civic Engagement – an approach that encompasses individuals getting involved and addressing public issues in their community (Delano-Oriaran, 2015).

<https://4-h.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/authentic-youth-engagement-gid-jul101.pdf>

Lobbying – activities dedicated to letting politicians know of interests and thoughts from special interest groups (Black, Hashimzade, & Myles, 2017).

<https://freechild.org/youth-as-lobbyists/>

Nonpartisan – a neutral individual who does not choose between any political groups

<http://coalition4evidence.org/>

Social Justice – the idea that individuals deserve an equal chance to be involved in their community opposed to what others may think (Delano-Oriaran, 2015).

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/dd590a_72a1bbcd26ae4b44ba8a5877bb40370b.pdf

Resources to Implement Youth Advocacy Programs

- **Youth leadership advocacy clubs** focused on increasing awareness of teen programs that meet needs of the community and interest of group (i.e., www.pyninc.org, <http://www.yapinc.org/resources>)
- **Organizing focus groups and rallies** for youth to have more voice in their community on important issues <https://www.youthuprising.org/programs/civic-engagement>
- **Youth campaigns that can educate their community about social justice issues** through creating flyers, posters, digital videos and 4-H visual arts programs (i.e., www.4-h.org/get-involved/grow-true-leaders/)
- **Lobbying with public/local charities on nonpartisan issues** (i.e., YMCA)
- **Partnerships with rural and urban civic groups** to push more citizens to vote through non-profit voting participation (i.e., www.pano.org) <https://www.vachamber.com/>, <http://www.blackgreek.com/>

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