

## So What Happens at The Youth Experience?

The Youth Experience is part support group, part speak-out, part hang-out. The group is what the young people who attend make of it. Sometimes that means sitting around a table and talking about important issues in our own lives. Sometimes that means talking about serious policy issues that affect you and your peers. Sometimes it just means singing karaoke or talking about birth signs for an hour. There may be a planned agenda, but because the meeting is all about *your* voice, it's the young people who decide what happens in the room.

## Why Does The Youth Experience Work?

One of the strengths of The Youth Experience is that it is a "staff"-free zone. Staff are encouraged to assist you in getting to The Youth Experience, but the meeting itself is peer-run. There are a number of young people who have been hired throughout the City of New York and the surrounding areas to be youth advocates. These advocates are young people who themselves have gone through many of the same things that you may have gone through when they were younger. Because the group is peer-facilitated, you'll understand from the beginning that this meeting is different. The youth advocates facilitate and support the young people in the direction of where the young people want the meeting to go. As a group all we ask is that all participants respect each other and maintain the safety of the group.

## Why Should I Come to The Youth Experience?

More than just the opportunity to be yourself for a couple of hours, there are a number of benefits to participating in The Youth Experience. First, there's the free food. Who doesn't love free food? Second, there's the opportunity to receive support from peers who have gone through similar things as you have, and the opportunity to give that support as well. Third, there's the opportunity to be connected to one of our many youth advocates who attend if you feel that you need one. Lastly, but most importantly, it's a chance to learn about all of the ways you can have *your* voice heard, including how you can become a youth advocate yourself.



## When & Where Does The Youth Experience Meet?

The Youth Experience meets at 330 5<sup>th</sup> Ave on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor from 6:00 – 7:30 on the third Friday of every month unless otherwise noted. Food and transportation is provided. In order for us to know how much food we should order, RSVPs are encouraged.

## How Do I Get Involved?

You can either just show up at one of the regularly scheduled meeting times, or you can contact any of the youth advocates listed here for more information.

## What about Other Youth Groups?

The Youth Experience is only held once a month because we know that you may have other groups that you belong to. The goal of The Youth Experience is not to duplicate what happens in other groups, but to support and strengthen what happens everywhere. We hope that you will spread around whatever you take from The Youth Experience wherever you go.

## Definitions:

**Youth** – Person under 18

**Young Person/People** – Depending on the context anyone under 30 or under 25

**Young Adult** – Depending on the context anyone between the ages of 18-30 or 18-25.

**Peer** – A person with similar lived experience (i.e. a graduate of foster care would be the peer of a youth in foster care and vice-versa)

For More Information Please  
Contact:

Brian Lombrowski – Youth Involvement  
Specialist – NYS OMH New York City  
Field Office  
(212) 330-1675  
[oncfbml@omh.state.ny.us](mailto:oncfbml@omh.state.ny.us)  
[Brian.Lombrowski@gmail.com](mailto:Brian.Lombrowski@gmail.com)

Ewelina Wiecek – Youth Advocate – St.  
Luke's Waiver Program  
(917) 532-7894  
[ewiecek@chpnet.org](mailto:ewiecek@chpnet.org)

Margaret Martinez – Youth Advocate –  
Brooklyn Parent Resource Center  
(718) 290-8100  
[m.martinez1121@gmail.com](mailto:m.martinez1121@gmail.com)

Shavonne Jackson – Youth Advocate –  
Mental Health Coordination Unit for  
Foster Care IOC  
(212) 442-8622  
[Shavonne.jackson@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:Shavonne.jackson@dfa.state.ny.us)

Gregory Bloomfield – Youth Advocate –  
Staten Island Parent Resource Center  
(718) 698-5307 x287  
[Gmny456@tmail.com](mailto:Gmny456@tmail.com)

Carlos Flores – Youth Coordinator –  
Nassau County No Wrong Door  
(631) 264-5438 x104  
[Carlosflores.nwd@gmail.com](mailto:Carlosflores.nwd@gmail.com)

# The Youth Experience

August 28, 2009  
September 18, 2009  
October 16, 2009  
November 20, 2009  
December 18, 2009

330 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY  
6:00 P.M – 7:30 P.M

# The Youth Experience

Have *Your* Voice Heard  
Change the System,  
Change the Future

What is The Youth Experience?

The Youth Experience is a monthly meeting of young people who are “systems experienced”.

Who is The Youth Experience?

We welcome all young people to attend, but our focus is on young people who have been involved in the special education, mental health, child welfare, and/or juvenile justice systems as well as runaway/homeless youth. While our meetings take place in New York City, we welcome all young people, regardless of where they come from to participate. Our group is designed for transition aged youth and young adults (14-24). Older peers may participate as facilitators and mentors.

Why The Youth Experience?

Because young people who have been through the system often have their voices silenced. The Youth Experience is our way of finding our voices again.