

 <p style="text-align: center;">County of Sacramento Department of Health Services Division of Behavioral Health Services Policy and Procedure</p>	Policy Issuer (Unit/Program)	Mental Health Services
	Policy Number	02-21
	Effective Date	07-09-09
	Revision Date	05-25-18
Title:	Functional Area:	
Youth Advocate	Contract Administration	
Approved By: <i>Signed version available upon request</i>		
Melissa Jacobs, LCSW Division Manager	Sheri Green, LMFT Health Program Manager	

Background/Context:

Youth Voice is recognized as a valuable addition to every youth serving treatment team. Youth Advocates share their personal life experiences and unique perspectives in a culturally competent and strength-based manner, making services more accessible to other youth by informing services and improving systems of care. It is expected that Youth Advocates will not serve in more than one position at an agency.

Definitions:

- **Youth Advocate (YA):** A person who has had direct life experience with receiving services from a mental health system, alcohol and drug services, child welfare, and/or juvenile justice system.
- **Lead Youth Advocate:** A member of the organization’s leadership team representing the youth voice in program planning and administration at the executive level, provides advocacy and supportive services to youth and families as part of the treatment team, and will ensure coordination among all YAs within their agency. In agencies with only one YA, that YA will be a member of the leadership team to represent the youth voice.

Purpose:

To define and outline the role and scope of a YA and Lead YA within an agency. A YA has personal experience navigating systems of care and has a unique and valuable perspective to contribute to the delivery of service.

Details:

1. Each program serving children/youth/transition aged youth will provide access to a YA. Each contract provider will ensure sufficient access to a YA to support youth advocacy within the system of care. If the provider does not have a YA on staff, they are expected to access available resources within the County.
2. Each program will be required to have the YA attend the following training within twelve (12) months from hire date:
 - a. Cultural Competency and Diversity Training

- b. Mental Health First Aid or Youth Mental Health First Aid
 - c. Trauma Informed Care
 - d. Peer Certification (as it becomes available)
 - e. Effective Goal Setting with Clients
 - f. Ethics, Boundaries, Confidentiality and Compliance
 - g. Documentation
3. As a part of the treatment team, the YA shall:
- a. Provide assistance and support to youth, including: peer support/mentoring (in person or over the telephone), in-home support, accompanying youth and parents to meetings, such as Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, providing community resource information, advocating for services, informing clients about recovery and services, training, experiential sharing, relationship building, group facilitation, skills building, mentoring, goal setting, socialization, self-esteem building, team communication and assistance in overcoming barriers to seeking services due to racial, ethnic, cultural or language barriers.
 - b. Have knowledge about mental health and substance use challenges or help to access such services for individuals who may need them.
 - c. Provide advocacy and supportive services to youth and families as part of the treatment team, supplement existing treatment with education, empowerment and aid in system navigation.
 - d. Work within their scope of practice as it pertains to advocacy, education, navigation, referrals, and support without providing clinical, medical, and/or legal advice.
4. The YA will not work at the same agency where they had previously received mental health services within 2 years from their date of discharge. The YA will not work in a dual role. The YA must not be supervised by anyone who has provided mental health services to them. The YA is recommended to be between the ages of 18 and 29 years of age, including Transition Age Youth (TAY). The YA must have the knowledge, skills and ability to relate to youth, have experience navigating the above systems, and be seen as a positive role model. The YA must learn how to tell their story while maintaining boundaries and managing counter transference. Agencies may have one or more YAs; if so, one will be designated as the Lead YA.
5. The Lead YA shall:
- a. Provide feedback to the leadership team.
 - b. Participate in agency policy planning meetings.
 - c. Review and provide feedback on policy and practice.
 - d. Be a part of the hiring team by participating in hiring decisions and new staff orientations.
 - e. Facilitate/co-facilitate training/workshop(s) pertaining to youth empowerment and advancement in their recovery and their community.
 - f. Provide training, support, and consultation to other YAs, the clinical team, and other staff within the agency.
 - g. Document all services in accordance with Medi-Cal standards.
 - h. Attend Sacramento County's Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Provider meetings, Youth Advocate Committee meetings, and Provider Monitoring meetings.
 - i. Continue to provide additional YA duties outlined below.
6. All YAs shall:
- a. Communicate, represent, and advocate on behalf of the youth perspective within the agency, Sacramento County, and communities.

- b. Participate on treatment teams as needed (i.e. intake, treatment planning, consultation, decision making, additional support, etc.).
- c. Not provide clerical services or reception duties as part of Youth Advocate job duties.
- d. Not be utilized as a transporter unless part of providing a Youth Advocate intervention.
- e. Attend the Youth Advocate Committee (YAC) which includes YAs from other provider agencies throughout the County.
- f. Attend at least the 2nd and 4th Quarter BHS Provider Monitoring meetings.
- g. Document both billable and non-billable services provided in the client's Electronic Health Record.

Reference(s)/Attachments: N/A

Related Policies: PP-BHS-MH-02-20-Family Advocate

Distribution:

Enter X	DL Name	Enter X	DL Name
X	County Mental Health Staff	X	Children's Contract Providers
X	Publish to Intranet	X	County Operated Programs
X	Publish to Internet		

Contact Information:

Melissa Jacobs, LCSW, Division Manager, Mental Health Services jacobsme@saccounty.net

Sheri Green, LMFT, Health Program Manager, Mental Health Services greenshe@saccounty.net