



Westchester County Youth Councils

A program of Family Services of Westchester

Thank for you for your interest in the Westchester County Youth Councils (of Family Services of Westchester). In this packet you will find our mission statement, descriptions of the Junior Council and Senior Council, frequently asked questions, and programming highlights. Becoming a member of the Westchester County Youth Councils is a unique opportunity to join a rich history of youth leadership and to develop the skills to create positive change in your peer groups, schools, and community. After reviewing this packet and completing an application, please contact us in order to schedule a brief interview.

Thank you!

Kind Regards,

Marisa Ragonese
Program Director
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Mission

The mission of the Westchester County Youth Councils (of Family Services of Westchester) is to promote civic engagement among youth in Westchester County. The Westchester County Youth Councils consist of two distinct groups: The Junior Youth Council and The Senior Youth Council. These countywide, youth-led and adult supported multi-issue advocacy programs are designed to empower and equip young people to create positive change in their communities. The Youth Councils create opportunities for youth to cultivate valuable leadership skills and exercise them through a wide variety of youth-led community service, advocacy, and activism initiatives.

Junior Youth Council

The Junior Youth Council, a program for youth **ages 10-14** years old, meets our mission through supporting members in identifying the issues that matter to them and organizing opportunities to learn more and take action through community service and advocacy projects. Junior Council projects have included creating their own community garden, creating a mobile mural to educate their peers about mental health, advocating for youth issues to the Westchester Board of Legislators, fundraising for hurricane relief, volunteering at different cultural events, and participating in inter-generational advocacy events across Westchester. The Junior Council also gets the chance to enjoy fun activities and trips to art exhibits, rock climbing, improvisation workshops, local farms, yoga classes and social justice events. Junior Council members are able to increase knowledge, self-efficacy, and autonomy as they practice the creative and practical skills necessary to creating change.

Senior Youth Council

The Senior Youth Council, a program for youth **ages 14-18** years old, meets our mission through providing training on leadership and advocacy skills and strategies. Members put these skills into practice by organizing events and projects to address the issues that are important to them. Members become active voices on these issues through participation in forums, round-table discussions and public hearings. Senior Council members collaborate with local governments, commissions, task forces, schools, and community organizations thus developing and implementing their agenda while honing in on their skills as leaders.

The Westchester County Youth Council FAQ's

Q: What is the Westchester County Youth Council?

A: The Westchester Youth Council is a youth run multi-issue advocacy program. The program consists of youth representatives from throughout Westchester County with a diverse mix of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Interested youth are appointed to the WCYC after initial application and interview with the Director and the Program Coordinator, after which they become full-time members.

- The WCYC is split into two distinct groups; The Junior Council (ages 10-14) and the Senior Council (ages 14-18)
- The Junior Council meets every Thursday from 3:30pm-5:30pm
- The Senior Council meets every Wednesday from 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Weekly attendance is preferred but not required
- All meetings are held at FSW's Center For All Ages, 106 North Broadway, White Plains NY
- Food is provided for members during the meeting
- Transportation is available for local members in need but not guaranteed
- Members are required to RSVP to weekly events and activities
- The WCYC provides all programming free of charge to its members!

Q: What do Youth Council Teens do?

A: Youth Council members:

- Develop and promote a county-wide youth action based agenda
- Interact with local governments, commissions, organizations, task forces and individuals to raise and address the interests of youth while becoming more aware of community leaders and their concerns
- Interact with other agencies which assists in developing and implementing their agenda in the form of training, education, events, advocacy and other activities
- Create long lasting relationships with peers and adults working towards creating lasting change in our communities

Q: What do the teens get?

A: Westchester County Youth Council teens receive:

- Leadership and advocacy training
- Friendship and peer support
- Valuable community service experience
- Recognition throughout Westchester County
- Community service hours
- Opportunities to go on fun and interesting trips

Q: What agencies are involved in the Westchester County Youth Council?

A: The Westchester County Youth Council is the product of an alliance between:

- The Westchester County Youth Bureau
- The Westchester Children's Association
- Family Services of Westchester

Q: What has the Youth Council accomplished?

A: Follow on to the next page to view some of our programming highlights from 2021

WCYC's Program Highlights 2021

January 2021: Members started the year by reviewing youth identified goals for the year. We start every year by reviewing S.M.A.R.T goals and explaining the significance in relation to leadership and advocacy building. We brought in Dr. Juna Bobby, a neuroscientist and social scientist who dedicates her business to helping youth through stress and transitional periods. During this year we were dealing with the effects of COVID-19 on schools and youth organizations.

February 2021: Member's main focus was to meet with New York State Legislators to advocate for the importance of programs like the Westchester County Youth Councils of Family Services of Westchester. Members met with NYS legislators via Zoom this year instead traveling to Albany because of the COVID 19 pandemic. NYS Legislators met with include Assemblyman Steve Otis, NYS Senator Pete Harckham, Assemblyman Mondaire Jones, Senator Shelley Mayer and Majority Leader of the NYS Senate Andrea Stewart Cousins.

March 2021: The Junior Youth Council spent March honing their civic engagement skills. Members strived to define a working definition of the term "civic engagement" in conjunction with learning about current events through a gaming program called FanSchool. Members improved their public speaking skills by taking part in regular and age-appropriate debates.

April 2021: The Junior Youth Council began developing ideas for service projects including virtual volunteer opportunities with Gilda's Club, a cancer support group in White Plains and the Saw Mill River Cleanup, a local river cleanup. Additionally, members attended a virtual dance workshop led by ArtsWestchester and the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County's workshop "learn how to community garden". Members wrapped up the month with an active listening workshop.

May 2021: The Junior Youth Council Members took part in a service project with Gilda's Club in which they put together gift baskets for the children that go to Gilda's Club for cancer support groups. Members also began researching topics for the annual Youth Action Training. Topics include COVID 19 Awareness, cultural appropriation and Latinx representation.

June 2021: The JYC participated and attended the Westchester County Youth Council's annual Youth Action Training. After attending members completed a discussion surrounding how to improve the youth action training. Members continued to improve on their public speaking skills through debate games and finally got together in person for a hike at Rockefeller State Park.

July 2021: members spent the month meeting via zoom. Conversations had revolved around COVID – 19, how schools were responding to the matter, regulations. Other topics included unity vs non-solidarity, media literacy, diversity and systemic racism and media disinformation.

August 2021: Members focused on meeting to speak about volunteering for the White Plains Wellness Week. Volunteers opportunities include assisting the youth bureau information booth, assisting set up and pack up and community outreach through social media outlets. Members also began taking interest in attending local school board meetings to speak about the interest of diversity, equity and inclusion.

September 2021: We focused broadly on student led conversations including what to do about the COVID – 19 pandemic, infrastructure issues associated with serving people with a diverse set of health needs, community policing, and environmentalism. The Westchester County Youth Councils began brainstorming for their yearlong capstone project.

October 2021: Members met with Feeding Westchester to see how they can get involved. Opportunities include hosting a fundraiser, helping from home bags and hosting a food drive. Members also attending Girls Inc International Day of Girl workshop. Various fun meetings were planned to reward members for working so hard.

November 2021: Members began actively participating in this year's capstone project. Members worked with ArtsWestchester's resident artist in developing ideas for their mural project. Members began by brainstorming themes for their mural and decided to make a project about youth mental health. Members also began creating the layout of their mural and sketching.

December 2021: Westchester County Youth Councils members continued to work on their mural. Additionally, members led conversations surrounding environmentalism, switching schools to carbon neutral by 2030, diversity equity and inclusion & school safety and attended our yearly Holiday Party to celebrate the work we did this year.

The Westchester County Youth Council Application

The Westchester Youth Councils are exciting volunteer groups for youth ages 10-18 years old who are interested in community service, activism, and leadership. The Junior Council is for youth (10-14) and Senior Council is for youth (14-18). To apply to join, please answer the following questions...

Applicant Information: (Please print clearly)

Today's Date: _____

Full Name: _____ **Age:** _____ **Birth date:** _____/_____/_____

Address: _____ **City** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Your Cell: _____ **Email:** _____

School: _____ **Grade** _____ **Parent Name:** _____

Parent Number: _____ **Parent Email:** _____

How do you self-identify? Sex/Gender: _____ **Race/Ethnicity:** _____

How did you hear about Youth Council? _____

What school activities or clubs are you involved in? _____

What activities are you involved in outside of school? (e.g. volunteer work, faith programs, community programs)

In your opinion, what are the biggest problems affecting teens in our county? _____

Please list two people who we can contact for a reference (ex. a teacher, guidance counselor, principal, coach).

Name	Relationship	Phone #	Email
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please have the application signed by your Parent/Guardian.

I understand that _____ is applying for appointment as a member of the Westchester County Youth Council and I support their participation.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ **Date** _____/_____/_____

Thank you for your interest in joining Youth Council! Upon receiving your application, we will contact you to schedule a brief interview. **PLEASE RETURN YOUR APPLICATION TO:**

Marisa Ragonese
Program director
Family Services of Westchester
106 N. Broadway, White Plains, NY 10601
Phone 914-358-5571 Fax 914-289-0566 Email mragonese@fsw.org

Family Services of Westchester
One Summit Avenue
White Plains, NY 10606
914-872-5224
Fax 914-289-0566

WESTCHESTER COUNTY YOUTH COUNCILS PROGRAM

TRANSPORTATION PERMISSION FORM

RE: Child's Name: _____

D.O.B. _____ Referred by: _____

The staff of the Westchester County Youth Councils Program have permission to transport the above named child for program activities.

PICK UP AND DROP OFF PLAN

___ I agree to be present at pick-up and drop-off of my child.

___ If I am unable to be present for either pick-up or drop-off, I authorize the following person(s) to represent me: _____

___ My child is over 15 and may be dropped off to an empty home or apartment.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

- Alternate numbers for caregivers (cell, work, etc.) _____

Other Emergency contacts (family, friends, neighbors etc.)

- Name/Relationship: _____ Contact info: _____
- Name/Relationship: _____ Contact info: _____
- Name/Relationship: _____ Contact info: _____

Signature of Caregiver/Legal Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Witness Signature _____ Date: _____



Model Release Form For Photographs and Video

I hereby give to Family Services of Westchester

- A) The unrestricted right and permission to copyright and use, re-use, publish and republish photographs and video of me or in which I may be included intact or in part, with no restriction, in any and all media now or hereafter known for promotion, advertising or any other purpose whatsoever. I understand this is not for commercial purposes, but to promote and advertise Family Services of Westchester and its programs, and I waive any rights of compensation.
- B) I also permit the use of any printed material in connection therewith.
- C) I hereby relinquish any right that I may have to examine or approve the completed product or products, or the advertising copy or printed matter that may be used in conjunction therewith or the use to which it may be applied.
- D) I hereby release, discharge and agree to save harmless Family Services of Westchester, its legal representatives and all persons functioning under its authority from any liability by virtue of any blurring, distortion, alteration, optical illusion, or use in composite form whether intentional or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in the taking of said picture or video or in any subsequent process thereof, as well as any publication thereof, including without limitation any claims for libel or invasion of privacy.
- E) I hereby affirm that I am over the age of majority and have the right to contract in my own name or for my minor child. I have read the above authorization, release and agreement, prior to its execution; I fully understand the contents thereof. This agreement, shall be binding upon me and my heirs, legal representatives and assigns.

NAME: _____

SIGNED: _____ DATED: _____

ADDRESS: _____

STATE/ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____

WITNESS: _____ DATED: _____



Making a difference right at home

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