
Erie County Youth Bureau

2025 Year in Review



Introduction

For decades, the Erie County Youth Bureau has been a leader in implementation of Positive Youth Development programs in Erie County. The Youth Bureau has served thousands of youth and dozens of youth-serving providers to continuously bolster the network of youth supports across the region. 2024-25 has been a tremendous year with over 40,000 youth served by Positive Youth Development, Juvenile Justice Diversion, and Runaway and Homeless Youth programs and services across six programs areas.

Cross-sector collaboration is paramount to our work to ensure that all youth-serving systems are working effectively. The Erie County Youth Bureau, as a division of the Department of Social Services, plays an integral role as a “hub” of youth services, often engaging professionals from child welfare, mental health, probation, OCFS, and community agencies to support, link, problem solve, and collaborate. This cross-system collaboration is critical to ensuring a strong safety net for youth.

The Youth Bureau is in an exciting transition phase. First, our Strategic Framework is being updated. The NYS Office of Children and Family Services, the Youth Bureau oversight agency, is undertaking an analysis of the Positive Youth Development Framework which guides program allocation, monitoring, and evaluation. The new, updated Framework will be implemented in 2027.

Second, the Youth Bureau is now an independent unit within the Dept. of Social Services, allowing the Bureau to focus on community-wide planning effectively while engaging more services, when needed, while engaging in comprehensive planning to meet needs across a spectrum of services.

Finally, our new approach will involve focusing on strategic alignment of funding programs to ensure that Youth Bureau funds are being leveraged effectively, and we are supporting collaboration amongst our providers.

Now, more than ever, youth and families need our services, and they need services to be effective and collaborative. The youth-serving safety net must remain strong. With threats to critical support systems looming on the horizon, we cannot work in silos. This is an exciting time for the Youth Bureau, as we work to shore up resources and processes for the betterment of our youth. Thank you to all of our partners who continue to work tirelessly to this end every single day.

In Partnership,

Kate Hilliman, MSW

Executive Director

Youth Bureau Functions

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH COORDINATION

In addition to guiding and managing all aspects the Youth Bureau, the Executive Director serves as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Coordinator for Erie County. This role entails coordination of RHY services (funded and not funded), approval of shelter extension requests, completion of the annual Child and Family Services Plan for RHY services, and oversight of RHY-funded programs.

In the 2024-25 program year, Runaway and Homeless Youth Services served over 500 youth with residential (crisis) shelter and non-residential resource support services.

YOUTH SERVICES PLANNING COORDINATION

The Youth Services Planning team consists of two Youth Services Planning Coordinators who have two main areas of responsibility: 1) Agency Monitoring and Support; 2) Reporting. The Youth Services Planning Coordinators are the “boots on the ground”, maintaining communication with and monitoring of funded programs to ensure they are providing the best Positive Youth Development Programming possible while providing support and technical assistance, when needed. The Planning Coordinators are also responsible for completing documentation required by the Youth Bureau oversight agency, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services.

In the 2024-25 program year, the Youth Services Planning Coordinators completed over 150 site visits to funded agencies and completed over 200 program reports for the OCFS Resource Allocation Plan.

JUVENILE DIVERSION SERVICES TEAM

The Juvenile Diversion Services Team (JDST) is a team of Juvenile Justice Counselors based at Erie County Family Court and Family Services Team. In collaboration with Juvenile Probation Officers, this team of specialized staff links justice-involved youth at Probation Intake, Pre-Dispositional Supervision, and Youth Part Voluntary Services with needed services with the goal of diverting them from further justice-system involvement and addressing global needs contributing to their criminal behavior. Juvenile Justice Counselors work collaboratively with Probation Officers and Service Providers to monitor youth’s progress, report to the Court, and facilitate cross-sector conferencing (i.e. child welfare, law enforcement, etc.) when needed.

In the 2024-25 program year, the Juvenile Diversion Services Team served over 550 youth, linking them to services focused on mental health, substance use, case management, employment, education/GED, family support, and services preventing detention and out-of-home placement.

Positive Youth Development

Erie County Youth Bureau programs and services are rooted in the Positive Youth Development Framework, which guides funding decisions, service implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. PYD focuses on youth strengths and competencies, seeing youth as assets rather than problems to solve. It is an intentional, pro-social approach that involves a young person's environment, relationships, skills, and protective factors, specifically focusing on the following areas:

Physical and Psychological Safety

Safe and health-promoting facilities; practice that increases safe peer group interaction and decreases unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.

Appropriate Structure

Clear and consistent rules, expectations, and age-appropriate monitoring.

Supportive Relationships

Caring, encouraging adult-youth interactions, peer support, and mentoring.

Opportunities to Belong

Opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities; social inclusion, social engagement and integration; opportunities for socio-cultural identity formation; and support for cultural and bicultural competence.

Positive Social Norms

Rules of behavior; expectations; injunctions; ways of doing things; values and morals; and obligations for service.

Support for Efficacy and Mattering

Youth-based; empowerment practices that support autonomy; making a real difference in one's community; and being taken seriously. Practices that include enabling; responsibility granting; and meaningful challenge. Practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels.

Opportunities for Skill Building

Youth gain and apply new skills in real-world contexts.

Integration of Family, School and Community Efforts

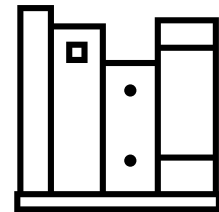
Strong connections with families, schools, and community partners.

Youth Bureau Programs & Year-In-Review

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Youth Development Program (YDP) programs are comprised of funded agencies that target positive youth development for ages 6-20 which focus on prioritized areas including academic enrichment, career enrichment, mentoring, counseling, youth leadership, service, and civic engagement, among other types of programs.

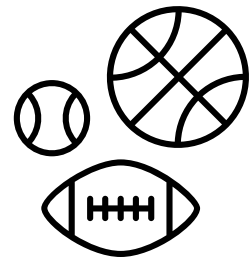
- Total Funding Allocated: \$1,507,000
- Total Youth Served: 25,082
- # Programs Funded: 131
- Program Types Funded: *Summer Camp, Physical Health, Career Development, Life Skills, Delinquency Prevention, Academic Support, Youth Leadership*
- Special Populations
 - # Disconnected Youth: 33 (PT)
 - # Children with Incarcerated Parents: 233
 - # Runaway/Homeless Youth: 498
 - # Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: 69
 - # Justice-Involved Youth: 67



YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS

Funded programs must provide a variety of sports for a broad range of youth in under-resourced communities. OCFS encourages a wide and flexible definition of sports that encompasses any organized activities with movement, including physical fitness activities such as yoga, hiking, dance, and active outdoor pursuits.

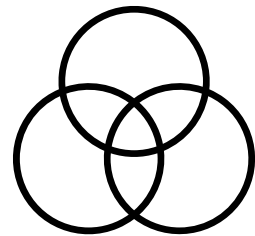
- Total Funding Allocated: \$696,000
- # Programs Funded: 46
- Total Youth Served: 14,172
- % Youth Who Completed Programs: 92%
- % Youth Who Improve on a Skill: 90%



SUPERVISION AND TREATMENT SERVICES FOR JUVENILES PROGRAM (INCLUDING STSJP-RAISE THE AGE SERVICES)

The Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP) plays a key role in transforming New York State's juvenile justice system. Since its inception in 2011, STSJP incentivizes local programs to divert youth from detention to residential care by referring justice-involved youth at different stages of disposition (with a focus on pre-disposition) to intensive services, in partnership with Probation, with the goal of successfully adjusting and disposing of cases. RTA legislation passed in 2017 expanded the eligible population for STSJP services to include older youth subject to RTA. STSJP services are implemented by funded agencies referred to by Youth Bureau staff in the Juvenile Diversion Services Team.

- Total Funding Allocated (Including RTA): *\$1,078,820*
- # Youth Referred: *160*
- % Youth Successfully Discharged: *88*
- % Youth Who Avoid Re-Arrest: *86.36%*
- % Youth Who Comply with Court Appearances: *100%*
- % Youth Who Avoid Remand (not Detained): *81.82%*



RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

The Youth Bureau funds residential and non-residential services for youth presenting as having run away from home or are homeless. These services include crisis shelter, transitional independent living programs, and non-residential supports such as resource centers or drop-in centers.

- Total Funding Allocated: *\$377,000*
- Total # Youth Served (Crisis Shelter): *237*
- Total # Youth Served (Resource Center): *376*
- % Youth Discharged to Stable Housing: *96.32%*



Thank You

Collaboration is at the core of the Youth Bureau work and mission. We wish to thank the following individuals for their support and partnership.

Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz

Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera

Erie County Legislature

NYS Office of Children and Family Services

Dept. of Social Services Commissioner Karen Rybicki

Probation Commissioner Richard Robillard

Mental Health Commissioner Sarah Bonk

First Deputy Commissioner (DSS) Catherine Gavin

First Deputy Commissioner (DSS) Mary Ellen Brockmyre

Deputy Commissioner (Youth Services) Kenneth Simmons

Erie County Youth Board

Erie County Department of Mental Health

Erie County Family Services Team

Staff of the Erie County Youth Bureau

The many youth-serving providers of Erie County!



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