



701 S. Wayne Street • Arlington, VA 22204
703-338-3289 • www.FAVYouth.org
Liane Rozzell, Executive Director
Liane@FAVYouth.org

Northern Virginia Juvenile Justice Family Partners

Volunteer Job Description and Qualifications

Introduction

Families & Allies of Virginia's Youth is a diverse, family-driven group with a two-part mission:

1. We organize, empower and support families and youth who encounter the justice system, and
2. We advocate for reforms so that young people involved in the justice system have better chances to change, learn, and heal.

We help families get the information they need to successfully navigate the juvenile justice system, and we are passionate about transforming the system so that it is more rehabilitative.

We are creating a team of volunteer Juvenile Justice Family Partners for Arlington, Alexandria and Falls Church. The Family Partners are people who have a child or significant family member who has been in the juvenile justice system or who have personal experience with being in the juvenile justice system.

Volunteer Job Description

Family Partners will perform the following functions:

1. Provide information and peer support to families and youth who are coming into contact with the justice system;
2. Engage in public education, organizing and advocacy for juvenile justice system reform.

Family Partners will:

1. Be knowledgeable about the juvenile justice system (through training);
2. *Not* give legal advice;
3. Be respectful and culturally aware;
4. Have good listening skills;
5. Maintain confidentiality;
6. Support each other and work as a team;
7. Be trained and supervised.

Family Partners will represent Families & Allies of Virginia's Youth in the community, spreading the word about our work and about juvenile justice issues, supporting families in need, and communicating the fact that parents and families should be seen as part of the solution when youth get in trouble.

Training

Family Partners will attend two initial day-long training sessions on **Saturday, March 5 and Saturday, March 12**. Initial training will include topics such as a review of juvenile court processes and procedures, rights of youth and parents throughout the process, legal resources, social services resources, juvenile justice reform principles, peer support skills and advocacy skills.

Additional training will be incorporated in regular monthly meetings. Additional training may include topics such as special education, mental health, substance abuse, racial and ethnic disparities, girls and juvenile justice, trauma, cultural competence, and public speaking.

Activities

Once they are trained, Family Partners will meet **monthly for 2 hours** (time to be determined by the team) and will spend an additional 5 to 12 hours per month doing one or more of the following:

1. Reaching out to families at the courthouse and/or detention center.
2. Supporting families by telephone or in person.
3. Accompanying family members to court.
4. Leading or participating in information and support meeting(s) for families.
5. Making presentations on juvenile justice to community organizations (for example, PTAs, church groups) or creating informational material to share with others.
6. Participating in advocacy activities, such as detention home commission meetings or other local meetings, bringing a family perspective and expertise to the table.
7. Possible “field trips” (for example, Baltimore Family Resource Center).
8. Additional skill training.
9. Team conference calls if needed in between monthly meetings.

Family Partners will report on their own activities monthly.

Qualifications and Expectations:

Family Partners must:

1. Be a close family member or caregiver of someone who was involved in the juvenile or adult justice system *while under the age of 18* in Arlington, Alexandria (City) or Falls Church (City) — or have personally been in these justice systems as a youth. This should not be more than about 10 years ago.
2. Be willing to assist family members of youth who are presently encountering the justice system in Arlington, Alexandria or Falls Church.
3. Commit to the volunteer position through the end of 2011, including the training and activities noted in the job description.
4. Agree to the Families & Allies Statement of Principles (attached), which guide our advocacy for reform.
5. Have a phone, email account and internet access, and be able to travel in Arlington, Alexandria and Falls Church.
6. Be willing to listen to and work collaboratively with a variety of people.
7. Be fluent in English. **We *strongly* encourage bilingual people to apply!**

Families & Allies of Virginia's Youth

Statement of Principles

Members of Families & Allies of Virginia's Youth recognize that:

- Youth are whole people, not just the sum of their offenses;
- Youth involved in the justice system can be assets to their communities and families;
- The purpose of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation and prevention of future offending.

We agree with the following ten principles. They guide our advocacy for reform of Virginia's local and state juvenile justice systems.

1. Reduce institutionalization of youth.

Secure detention and incarceration should only be used for youth who pose serious public safety risks. Alternatives to locked facilities should be available for youth who commit nonviolent or status offenses.

2. Reduce racial and ethnic disparity. Youth of color are dramatically over-represented in Virginia's juvenile justice system. African American youth are 23% of the state's youth population, but they are 44% of youth who are brought to intake, 55% of those in detention, 66% of those in youth prisons, and more than 75% of those who are sent to adult court. This "disproportionate minority contact" must be reduced.

3. Replace youth prisons with small, local, rehabilitative facilities. Large, remote juvenile correctional centers are ineffective and harmful; they should be replaced by smaller, local facilities that provide programs and services based on proven youth development approaches. Confined youth must be kept safe from physical and emotional harm, and have access to appropriate educational, medical and mental health services and treatment.

4. Create more community-based alternatives to incarceration. Proven alternative programs based in youths' communities are more effective — and less expensive — than secure facilities for keeping youth from re-offending. These should include restorative justice approaches that address the needs of youth, victims, and communities.

5. Keep youth out of the adult criminal system. Youth tried as adults are much more likely to commit more crimes, to be abused and to commit suicide, especially if they are held in adult jails and prisons. Youth are developmentally different from adults; our response to them should include age-appropriate facilities and services.

6. Maximize youth, family and community participation. Juvenile justice systems must partner with youth, their families and communities in order to create better outcomes. Youth and families are juvenile justice stakeholders who must be represented at the policy-making table at the local and state level.

7. Ensure meaningful access to legal counsel. Throughout the court process, youth should have access to attorneys who are qualified and have adequate resources and training. Youth also have a right to access to legal counsel after adjudication, especially when they are held in secure facilities.

8. Improve planning and services for youth returning to the community. Programs and services, education and/or job placement must be planned and coordinated to help young people succeed when they are released from secure facilities.

9. Serve youth with special needs in community settings. Youth whose primary problems are mental health, substance abuse, learning disabilities, and developmental issues should receive timely services in the community, so that they are not dumped into the juvenile justice system. Schools should use positive and restorative disciplinary approaches that reduce the number of youth who are pushed out or who drop out of school.

10. Hold systems accountable for youth outcomes. Juvenile justice systems must be held accountable for keeping youth safe and for providing the services and programs youth need to develop to their full potential as pro-social adults.