

# Oklahoma Youth Advisory Council (OYAC)

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OKLAHOMA  
COMMISSION ON  
CHILDREN AND  
YOUTH

# Who is the Oklahoma Youth Advisory Council (OYAC)?

The Oklahoma Youth Advisory Council (OYAC) is a statewide youth advisory body focused on mental and behavioral health systems.

- 8–12 young leaders, ages 16–24
- Members have lived experience in state and community systems
- Provides youth perspective on mental and behavioral health services and policies

## **Purpose:**

To ensure that youth and young adult voices are meaningfully included in decisions that affect children, youth, and families across Oklahoma by elevating lived experience and community insight.



# OYAC Background

OYAC was developed through statewide systems planning focused on youth mental and behavioral health.

- Originated through the National Governors Association (NGA) Youth Mental Health Academy
- Partner agencies included:
  - ODMHSAS
  - OSDE
  - OHCA
  - OHS
  - OJA
- One outcome of this work was the creation of a formal youth advisory council

OYAC is supported through the Children's State Advisory Workgroup (CSAW), a cross-system partnership addressing children and youth mental and behavioral health.



# What Success Looks Like

## OYAC Goals Include:

- Engaging youth to inform policy and program development
- Strengthening trust and collaboration between youth and state systems
- Building leadership capacity among young people with lived experience

Success means youth perspectives are incorporated into decisions about programs, services, and policies that impact their mental and behavioral health.



# Why This Matters to Young People

- Young people often experience systems without having a voice in how they are designed
- Youth bring insight into real-world barriers to accessing services
- Youth partnership leads to more responsive, effective, and accessible systems
- OYAC creates a structured way for youth to contribute to solutions, not just describe problems
- This approach improves outcomes while increasing trust between young people and public systems



# Meaningful Ways to Partner with OYAC

State agencies and partners can engage OYAC by:

- Requesting youth input on policies, initiatives, and programs
- Inviting OYAC members to advisory groups or planning efforts
- Co-designing engagement strategies with youth
- Including youth perspective in system improvement efforts

OYAC is designed to be a resource for agencies seeking authentic youth engagement.



# What Makes OYAC Different?

- Youth are trained and supported
- Youth are compensated for their time
- Participation is structured and ongoing
- Connected directly to systems decision-making
- Focused on mental and behavioral health



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## Now Accepting Applications **OKLAHOMA YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL**

### Who Can Apply

- Young people ages 16-24
- Individuals with personal lived experience in mental health, juvenile justice, or child welfare systems.

### Focus Areas

- Mental Health
- Juvenile Justice
- Child Welfare

### Questions

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### What Will Members Do

- Share lived experience to inform state decisions
- Make recommendations to agencies and policymakers
- Participate in monthly meetings
- Collaborate with youth from across Oklahoma

### Commitment

- Two-year term
- Mostly virtual meetings
- Paid \$30 per hour (4-6 hours a month)

Apply by  
**February 13, 2026**  
More at [oklahoma.gov/occy/oyac](http://oklahoma.gov/occy/oyac)

# Questions?

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