



Youth For Justice Program

Training Manual



**OHIO CENTER
FOR LAW-RELATED
EDUCATION**

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Ohio Center for Law-Related Education

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Youth for Justice: Project & Presentations

Introduction

Coordinated by the Ohio Center for Law-Related Education, Youth for Justice (YFJ) is a student-led program designed to encourage and empower youth to be actively engaged citizens who work together to make a positive difference in their community. The YFJ program model asks students to identify an injustice, intolerance or problem relevant to them and to their local community or school. Students then develop a plan of action and work together to remedy the injustice through coordinated effort to enhance awareness and/or make a positive impact in the community.

The program empowers students to create meaningful change through service-based learning. Students advocate for solutions they had a role in developing, while practicing valuable 21st century skills, such as research, civic literacy, communication, and collaboration.

Overview

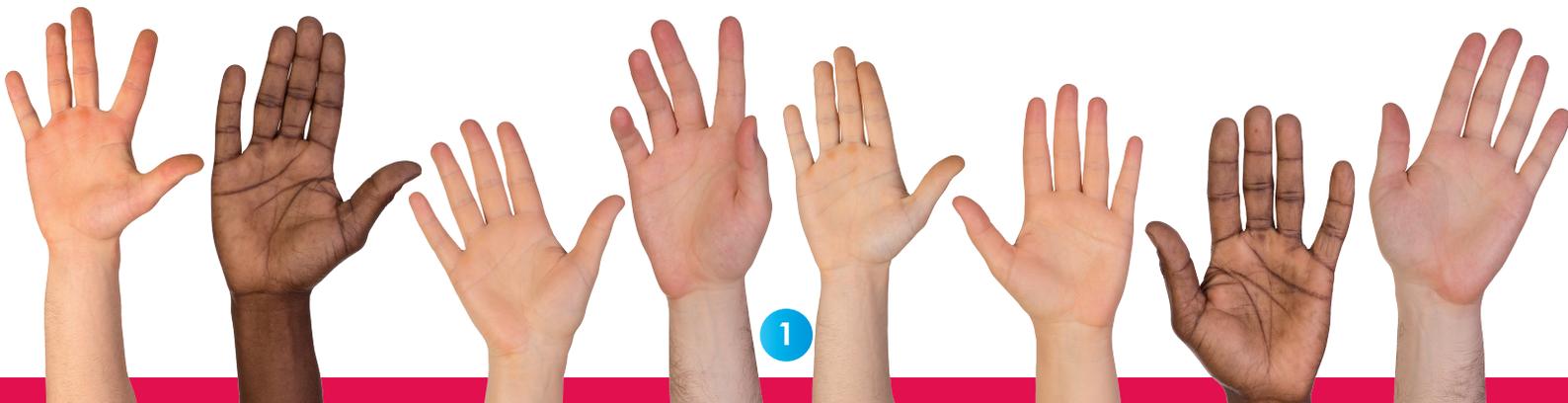
While correlating with state social studies and language arts standards, **Youth for Justice is a valuable example of project-based service learning.** It challenges students to experience the intricacies of community service and develop an appreciation for the value of active citizenship. Students frequently comment, “This was a lot of work, but it was worth it!”

Students are required to work through the following **four phases**: Selecting a topic, researching solutions, implementation and presenting results.

Students should be allowed a great deal of freedom in order that their work reflects issues pertinent to themselves and their peers, as well as their community. However, advisors will, oversee the students’ project and the implementation of solutions.

Presentation Quick Facts

- Students should practice their presentations with peers and/or teachers or advisors prior to presenting to decision makers or community leaders. Practice makes perfect!
- Students are encouraged to be creative and to incorporate technology in their presentations. Just remember to include essential information: why the topic is relevant to you (students) and the local community, from where you gathered information (research), obstacles encountered, and what you propose to help address the problem (implementation plan).



Program at a Glance

When guiding student teams, advisors are encouraged to consider:

Youth for Justice is student driven

- Students take issues more seriously if they choose them
- Ownership is a powerful incentive
- Students work harder for a program in which they are invested

Young people may choose different issues than adults

- Challenge students to develop and defend choices based on mutually accepted set of criteria
- Adults should guide students towards issues, but leave selection to the young people

Agenda gives students more time to talk

- Public speaking is important aspect of program
- Give students the confidence and knowledge to speak in public
- Utilize experts and other resources in community
- Experience speaking with policy makers, community leaders & others

1. The goal of the Youth for Justice Program is to encourage and empower youth to be actively engaged citizens who work together to make a positive difference in their community.
2. The YFJ program model asks youth to identify an injustice, intolerance or problem relevant to them and to their community. Students then develop a plan of action to remedy the injustice through a coordinated effort to enhance awareness and/or make a positive impact in the community.
3. Youth will:
 - Identify an injustice, intolerant behavior/attitude or community problem that affects them and/or their fellow citizens.
 - Research the problem – gather information via interviews, surveys, observations, first-hand experiences and examining what has been done
 - Analyze the information to come to a better understanding of the problem.
 - Develop a plan of action to address the injustice based on their research and analysis.
 - Implement the ‘best’ solution and work to enact change (optional)
 - Most teams implement 50 – 75% of their recommendations.
4. Identify and schedule opportunities for youth to present their work to peers, community leaders, and other interested parties with a vested interest in the issue(s). Presentations may be structured as school assemblies, town hall meetings, or presentations before an appropriate governing board. Students should be able to share and explain their process, as outlined in # 3, above.

SELECTING A TOPIC

PROCESS

Participants select an injustice, intolerance or problem relevant to their school or community. The goal is for students to determine: What issue is of most concern to you and your peers? Students describe how their chosen problem affects their school and/or community, its seriousness, and those individuals or groups that are most affected.

Advisors have the freedom to direct students as they deem appropriate. Teams are urged to involve community resource people throughout the project.

Selecting a topic typically includes:

- A. Student "brainstorming" sessions to generate ideas and select a topic
- B. Collection of research facts about the topic
- C. Documentation of findings and problem statement

GENERATING IDEAS

The following are *examples* of methods to generate ideas and collect facts:

- 1 Look through a local newspaper with students to identify issues they are concerned about and that are *relevant to their school and/or community*;
- 2 Conduct fact-finding sessions with local experts modeling legislative committee hearings where stated problems, statistics, and solutions are presented to students. This method engages students and experts in questions, answers, and opinions about specific topics in an effort to better understand the complexity of the issues and to get a better handle on possible solutions to the problems presented;
- 3 Assign students homework requiring them to think about and write down what they feel is the biggest problem in their neighborhood. It may be effective to invite students' parents to write down what they feel are the biggest problems, too. Both parents' and students' statements can then be tallied and the top vote-getter is the selected topic.

Before selecting topics, you may find it helpful to research and gather information on the issues of injustice, violence, at-risk behavior, intolerance and/or prevention programs. You may come across new perspectives on issues as well as unique ideas for intervention strategies. Many government agencies have toll-free telephone numbers and websites. They also may offer free publications and statistics.

Consider elected officials, agencies, and staff from all branches and levels of government who might have an interest in the issues your team identifies. Don't forget staffers and aides who work either directly for elected officials or for legislative task forces or research offices. Here's a partial list to get you started:

Local

Board of Elections
City Council Members
City or County Clerk
Mayor's Office
Youth Coordinating Board
Corrections Department
Police Departments
Juvenile Justice Agencies
City or County Attorney
Public Defender's Office

State

Secretary of State
Attorney General
Governor's Office
Office of Lieutenant Governor
Members of the Legislature and their staffs
Legislative Research Office
Public Health Agencies
Office of Criminal Justice Services
Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution
& Conflict Management
See www.state.oh.gov

Federal

Members of Congress and their staffs

(www.house.gov or www.senate.gov)

Key Congressional Committees:

- House Education and Labor
- House Judiciary
- Senate Judiciary

Congressional Black Caucus

Senate Children's Caucus

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

- Center for Disease Control
- National Center for Health Statistics

U.S. Department of the Interior

- Bureau of Indian Affairs

U.S. Department of Justice

- Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Uniform Crime Reporting Program
- National Criminal Justice Reference Service
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

U.S. Department of the Treasury

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms

U.S. Department of Commerce

- Bureau of the Census

It is very important that the students choose an issue or problem that is a concern to them and their peers, and their goal should be to make an improvement (in relations, policy, etc.) in their school or community.

The following are topics that past participants have selected:

Conflicts in School

- Violence Within Our Schools
- Anti-Social Behavior of Drop-outs
- Avoiding School Confrontational Violence
- Gang Fights
- Bullying

Youth Violence

- Theft and Violence
- Violence on the Increase
- Avoiding Violence

Interpersonal Factors

- Teenage Pregnancy Prevention
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Peer Pressure
- Lack of Positive Role Models
- Discrimination
- Sexual Harassment
- Racism
- Respect
- Obesity
- Peer Motivation
- Self Esteem
- Healthy Eating

Drugs and Alcohol

- Alcohol and Crime
- Alcohol, Crime, and Drug Use
- Teen Smoking and Drinking

Social Issues

- Going Green
- Distracted Driving
- Clothing Drives
- Poverty
- Literacy

Violence in the Media

- Violence in the Media Increases Teenage Crime
- Violence in Video Games
- Influence of Television and Media Violence

Gang and Gun Violence

- Gangs and Guns
- In-School and Out-of-School Shootings
- Guns in School
- Accidental Shootings/Gun Safety

DIRECTORIES & PUBLICATIONS

Almost every legislative body publishes some sort of directory that will help you identify committee chairs, committee staff, statutory officers, etc. There are publications that range from schedules of committee hearings to task force reports to newsletters published during the session. The most valuable resources can be drafts of bills themselves. Examples of federal sources include U.S. Government Printing Office, *The Congressional Record*, etc.

The Ohio Center for Law-Related Education can provide participating YFJ teams with office addresses and contact information of the state representatives and senators from their respective districts so that teams can make legislators aware of their efforts and try to involve legislators in the project.

Many other local and national agencies can assist you with specific information on issues related to the Youth for Justice goals and mission. You may also refer to the next section of this manual about community resource people.



Phase 2

INFORMATION GATHERING

PROCESS

Students gather information about their topic of concern and then make recommendations toward a proactive goal or solution. They are urged to answer the following question: **Considering this problem and its causes, what are our solutions going to achieve, alleviate, or eliminate?**

Students identify solutions or strategies to help address the chosen problem. These solutions can be based on existing programs or they can generate new ideas. For each solution, students must clearly state who would be responsible for taking action. That is, to whom will these solutions eventually be presented as recommendations – elected officials, students, school board, community leaders, or others?

Solutions can be two-fold

- Those that are directed towards other individuals and entities (local, state, federal policy makers)
- Those that can be implemented by youth locally

Student teams should present research findings and solutions to elected officials, agency personnel, and community leaders.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE

Once your topic has been determined, start thinking about gathering information from those in your community, e.g., surveying peers, community members, etc. Who are potential community experts to utilize when collecting facts on the identified problems and solutions?

Community people can provide a unique opportunity for young people to interact with adult leaders and experts. With some research and the suggestions in this manual, you can identify individuals who have the knowledge for which you are looking. If anyone within your school has access to resource people, ask them to personally extend the invitation.

WHOM DO YOU CONTACT?

When selecting community resource people, it is important to keep in mind issues of accessibility and balanced viewpoint. If possible, select resource people who have experience in working with young people or who have a compelling presentation style. In addition, it is important to inform resource people in advance of the goals and objectives of your students' projects and the nature of your audience. The following pages list possible organizations and websites for various agencies that can assist in researching the team's topic.*

*Please note that the Ohio Center for Law-Related Education does not endorse or support any of these organizations, but they are listed only as resources for research. Some websites may have changed since the printing of this manual.

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

Active Parenting	www.activeparenting.com
Al-Anon/Alateen	www.al-anon.alateen.org
Alliance for Children & Families	www.alliance1.org
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance	www.aahperd.org
American Bar Association	www.abanet.org
American Civil Liberties Union	www.aclu.org
American Counseling Association	www.counseling.org
American Humane Association	www.americanhumane.org
American Humanics	www.humanics.org
American Society for Deaf Children	www.deafchildren.org
American Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Institute	www.sids.org
Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies	www.ajfca.org
Boys Town	www.boystown.org
Center for the Child Care Workforce	www.ccw.org
Child Find Of America, Inc	www.childfindofamerica.org
Child Welfare Information Gateway	www.childwelfare.gov
Childhelp	www.childhelp.org
Children of Alcoholics Foundation	www.coaf.org
Children of the Night	www.childrenofthenight.org
Children's Hospice International	www.chionline.org
Cocaine Addiction Treatment	www.800cocaine.com
Covenant House Nineline	http://nineline.org
Crisis Prevention Institute	www.crisisprevention.com
DARE	www.dare.com
Families Anonymous	www.familiesanonymous.org
Family Resource Center	www.f-r-c.org
Feeding America	www.feedingamerica.org
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	www.fca.org
Focus on the Family	www.focusonthefamily.com
GED Hotline	www.mygedhotline.com
Literacy Center Education Network	www.literacycenter.net
Make-A-Wish Foundation	www.wish.org
Mothers Against Drunk Driving	www.madd.org
National Adoption Center	www.adopt.org
National Alcohol and Substance Abuse Information Center	www.addictioncareoptions.com
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	www.naacp.org
National Black Child Development Institute	www.nbcdi.org
National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine	http://nccam.nih.gov

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children	www.missingkids.com
National Center for Research in Vocational Education	http://vocserve.berkeley.edu
National Child Safety Council	www.nationalchildsafetycouncil.org
National Child Support Enforcement Agency	www.ncsea.org
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement	www.nrcoi.org
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	www.ncadd.org
National Council on Child Abuse & Family Violence	www.nccafv.org
National Runaway Switchboard	www.1800runaway.org
National Stepfamily Resource Center	www.stepfamilies.info
National Urban League	www.nul.org
Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center	www.peatc.org
Parents Without Partners	www.parentswithoutpartners.org
Search Institute	www.search-institute.org
Service Corps of Retired Executives	www.score.org
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration	www.samhsa.gov
Teenline	www.teenlineonline.org
The Nurturing Network	www.nurturingnetwork.org
ToughLove America	www.toughlove.com
United Way	www.liveunited.org
Youth 4 Change	www.youth4change.org

ADDITIONAL POSSIBLE CONTACTS

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Councils	County Juvenile Probation Office
Bar Association – State and County	Department of Disabilities
Board of Supervisors	Domestic Violence Agencies and Shelters
Chamber of Commerce	Media – Local/Public Newspaper, TV, Radio
City Attorney	Mental Health Center
City & County Government	News Station
City Council Members	Police Department
Community Activists	School Resource Officer
County Board of Education	State General Assembly
County Department of Health	State Child Protective Agency
County Department of Parks & Recreation	State Department of Youth Services or Juvenile Justice
County District Attorney's Office	Universities, Colleges, Law Schools
County Public Defender's Office	

Phase 3

IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

The key to real impact for the project is the implementation phase. Teams are strongly encouraged to develop a plan for implementation, documenting the steps taken, deciding what they will do next, and at what time.

This phase helps students to put their words and ideas into action. After identifying the problem and coming up with solutions, teams are expected to state what they plan to do or have already done. The following are guides to help with this step.

1. **Select one of the solutions for the team to take action.**
2. **Write out the basic steps you will take to implement this solution.**
3. **Describe how you will measure the success of the project. Be specific.**

Repeat this process for each solution the team has come up with for their topic. Determine which solution(s) will work best and benefit the most people. Be prepared to explain why the team chose the solution(s).

DEVELOP A PLAN

After you have created solutions, you will create an implementation plan. The following pages provide a sample way to go about this process. Feel free to use this sample as needed and adapt it to fit your needs with your group.



TASK CHART & TIMELINE

- 1 What activities and tasks must you complete to do this action? Include descriptions of meetings, research, acquiring materials, making arrangements, getting permissions, finding locations, etc.
- 2 Who is responsible for each of these activities and tasks? Be as specific as possible.
- 3 In what order and by what date should each of these tasks be completed? Who will be in charge of each task? Write the person's name and due date.

TASK	PERSON	DUE DATE
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

LIST OF SUPPORTERS

- 1 Who is likely to support your project? Look to government, business, non-profit and media organizations, and community members.
- 2 For each supporter answer the following questions:
 1. What can our project do for the supporter?
 2. What can the supporter do for our project?
- 3 What steps can you take to gain their support?

LIST OF OBSTACLES

- 1 What are the major obstacles to successful action? Who is likely to oppose your efforts? Are there existing laws or policies that might make it difficult to enact your solution(s)?
- 2 How can you overcome these obstacles?

EVALUATION OF PLAN

How will you measure the success of the project? Be specific. Document success.

BUDGET

What resources (people, money, skills, materials) will be needed to successfully complete the project? Where and how will you obtain these resources? List supplies, materials, or financial assistance needed. Next to each item, identify ways to meet these needs.

Supplies/Materials

Ways to Meet These Needs

Moving Forward

SET PRIORITIES

You may want to start by prioritizing your solutions. Which one(s) do you want to implement first? Your plan should tell you which solutions will take more or less work.

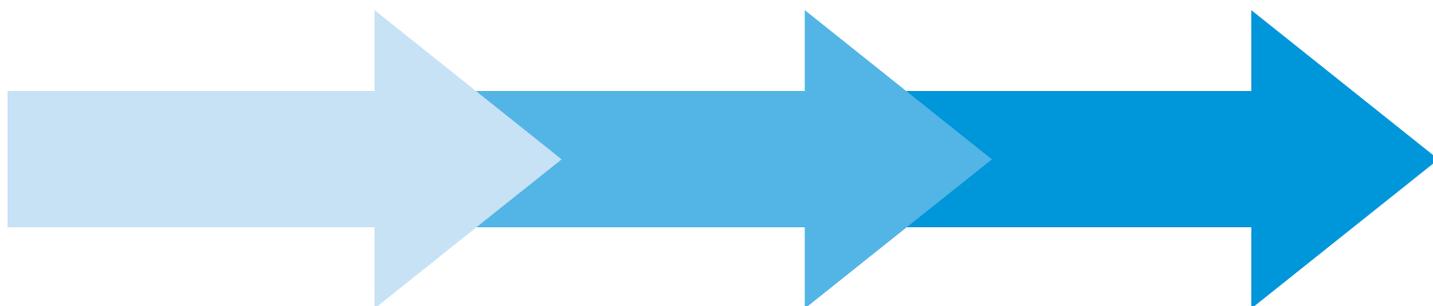
For some solutions, only one or two students may be needed to implement. In that case, you can implement more than one solution at a time. However, the whole team may be required for other solutions. For example, if the team wanted to implement a new peer mediation program, some members would be busy gaining support from the school board, while others would be gaining support from the school staff, and still others would need to raise money for training mediators. This solution would require everyone's help.

WORK THROUGH AS MANY SOLUTIONS AS YOU CAN

Remember, time is limited. You may not be able to implement all or even most of your solutions. Do as much as you can. Perhaps your work will be continued by the next year's Youth for Justice team.

PUT YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION

Every solution requires implementation by the Youth for Justice team. Some of your solutions may be directed toward other groups (parents, teachers, principals, community leaders, etc.). Decide how you are going to get them to heed your suggestions. Remember this is your project. You have to convince these groups to join in on your ideas. Identify and follow through on ways to gain support. Working through the exercises for "LIST OF SUPPORTERS" will help you. Whether it is through presentations in front of groups or one-on-one meetings, you have to get the word out.



At this point, you have done a great deal of work. You have developed a plan, anticipated both supporters and obstacles, and have begun implementing your solutions. However, be sure to document each step of your plan as it is carried out. Documentation provides a number of benefits:

1. Keeps track of your work
2. Keeps you focused
3. Provides data for oral and written presentations

As you put your plan into action, don't forget to document your work. Your team's documentation can take many forms:

1. Written "diary" of steps with dates, activities and results.

Example:

Feb. 19 - Presented research and recommendations to PTA. We asked each parent to talk to their children about drug and alcohol abuse as soon as they got home that night. We passed around a "Pledge to Talk to Your Child" form. Twenty parents signed the pledge.

Mar. 3 - Put up posters in all school halls. The posters warn kids about the dangers of substance abuse. Each one is different and includes the number for a national teen hot-line.

2. Take pictures or video of team implementing project, e.g., making presentations, group discussions, working a hotline, performing a skit.
3. Keep any materials produced by the team (flyers, posters, newsletters). You will want to use these in your presentation.
4. Save and share with OCLRE any news clippings about your Youth for Justice team activities.

Phase 4

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND SOLUTIONS

OVERVIEW

Students should now prepare to discuss and present their research, solutions, and implementation plan. They should be able to explain the connection to the Ohio Youth for Justice goals, the importance of their problem among youth in their school or community, and who will be responsible for implementation of their solutions.

Youth for Justice is designed to encourage and empower youth to be actively engaged citizens who work together to make a positive difference in their community.

***Important note:** One of the primary program goals is to empower youth. Therefore, make every effort to let the students decide what they think should be done and by whom. Students should come up with their own ideas, no matter how naive adults may perceive them.*

YFJ FINAL REPORT

At the completion of a Youth for Justice project, students should take time to reflect on their experience and summarize their work. These final reports can serve as a basis for a final grade, and are a great way to share students' work with OCLRE.

Final Reports should contain:

- Advisor Summary
- Student Reflections
- Materials the team developed as part of its project, ex. photos, posters, artwork, surveys
- Any News clippings about your team project

If you would like to share your students' work with OCLRE, please forward final reports to rsuskey@oclr.org.



Guidesheet for Final Report: Advisor Summary

PLEASE INCLUDE ALL INFORMATION LISTED BELOW IN YOUR TYPED ONE-PAGE REPORT.

SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION NAME:

GRADE LEVEL(S):

ADVISOR(S) NAME:

STUDENT NAMES:

1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Describe, in specific terms, the problem you have selected. Based on your research, list at least three facts about this problem.

You should also answer the following questions:

- How does the problem affect your school/community?
- How serious is the problem?
- What individuals or groups are most affected by the problem?

2 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

What possible solutions to the problem did your team identify? Who would need to be involved to implement your recommendations? What person(s), organizations, or agencies could you contact for help or information? To whom are recommendations directed? Provide one or two statements about each recommendation.

3 ACTION STEPS

What steps have you taken to contribute to solving this problem and/or implementing your recommendations? Have they been (or do you believe they will be) successful? Why or why not? List and describe as many as possible.

4 RESULTS

What were the results of the team's endeavors? How did this project solve the issue or problem on which the students concentrated? How is the school, neighborhood, community, etc better because of the students' project?

Guidesheet for Final Report: Student Reflection

EACH TEAM MEMBER SHOULD SUBMIT A TYPED REFLECTION PAPER.

Do not let this form limit the creativity of how students choose to reflect on their project. If preferred, the reflection may be in a form other than writing – e.g. video, drawing, recorded interview of student, etc.

SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION NAME: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____

1 TOPIC

- What was the topic your group chose?
- Why was the chosen topic important to you?

2 WORKING ON THE PROJECT

- Describe the project you completed:
 - Specifically, what went well?
 - What did not go well?
 - What obstacles did you/your team encounter?
- Did you learn anything new? Please describe.
- How did your group work together in the project?
- What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

3 RESULTS

- How did your project solve the issue or problem you focused on?
- Do you believe your team was successful in solving your topic? Why or why not?

Teams should present to legislators, judges, school board members, state agency personnel, community leaders, and other Ohio YFJ teams. Presentations should be as creative as possible and should include:

- Introduction of team members, school and city;
- Problem statement and research findings; and
- Solutions and planned action steps.

LOCAL PRESENTATIONS

Teams are urged to make appointments with local decision-makers or others to whom they want to make recommendations. For example, if students propose a new policy for the school or district, they can arrange to make their case before the local school board or administration.

Students can learn a great deal about how decisions are made and influenced through this process. Adults can be reminded of the important voice young people can provide.

In past years, teams have made presentations at school assemblies, before student groups, PTA and PTO committees, and local officials. Its local Bar Association honored one team with the Liberty Bell Award. Another team had legislation introduced on the House floor, and was the first youth group to win the Youngstown mayor's Task Force for Crime Prevention Award.



Contact Information



***If you have any questions about the program,
please contact:***

Ryan Suskey
rsuskey@oclr.org
614-485-3510

To view sample projects, or view additional resources
for the Youth for Justice program, visit www.oclr.org/YFJ

OCLRE offers professional development and resources to help teachers interested in project-based citizenship. Visit OCLRE's website at www.oclr.org/professional_dev to learn about upcoming professional development opportunities, or e-mail Ryan Suskey at rsuskey@oclr.org for more details.