

**OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES ANNOUNCES THAT APPLICATIONS ARE
BEING ACCEPTED FOR MEMBERSHIP
ON THE NEW YORK STATE YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Council Will Advise State Policy Makers on Priority Issues for New York State Youth

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) today announced that the state is accepting applications from youth who want to serve on the New York State Youth Council. First announced in Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's State of the State address, the Youth Council will increase participatory democracy by involving 62 young people – one youth from each New York State county – to advise the Governor and state and local policy makers on key issues facing young people and on outreach and communication strategies.

"Young New Yorkers have so much to offer and their unique perspective is vital as the state shapes new initiatives and policies impacting youth throughout the state," **said OCFS Commissioner Sheila J. Poole**. "Youth voice is essential as we work together in addressing the many challenging issues affecting their daily lives."

"Young people want to be engaged and have a strong voice in government," **said OCFS Deputy Commissioner for Youth Development and Partnerships for Success Dr. Nina Aledort**. "We, as policy makers, need to hear from the youth who will be directly affected by the laws we create in Albany. The New York State Youth Council will be the platform from which young New Yorkers will be heard and its members will gain valuable experience in the democratic process and being agents of change."

The Youth Council will provide policy recommendations on education, youth violence, the opioid crisis, juvenile justice, environmental justice, cyberbullying and civic engagement. It will address issues that are of particular relevance to young women and girls, including sexual assault and harassment, female empowerment, economic opportunity and wage parity.

The Youth Council will be run by youth, ages 13 to 21, who will develop its organizational structure and prioritize key issues, and its members will gain hands-on experience in the democratic process. The members will serve two-year terms. Once selected, the Youth Council will convene in Albany for orientation and training and will then be divided into regional teams to focus on specific policy issues.

Interested youth must submit an application that includes an essay and a video demonstrating their interest in one of the council's focus areas. Candidates will be selected based on their character, leadership skills, academic achievement, civic engagement and community service. Youth may apply at <https://nysylc.secure-platform.com/a/solicitations/home/1>.