



A guiding framework for ethical practice and professional integrity among Connecticut Youth Service Bureau leaders, staff, and volunteers.

Originally adopted in 2005 by the Connecticut Youth Services Association (CYSA) Board of Directors to establish shared standards for youth-serving professionals across the state.

Updated in 2025 to align with the YSB Handbook and reflect CYSA's ongoing commitment to excellence, accountability, and the positive development of youth and families.

Recommended Best Practices & Code of Ethics For YSB Professionals and Volunteers

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Code of Conduct

As a Youth Service Bureau professional, I fully understand the trust and confidence that has been placed in my abilities, and the ramifications of my actions upon those we serve. It is my responsibility to uphold the following recommended standards and practices set forth by my professional peers.

Whenever my role as an employee, intern, or volunteer comes into question, I will take the necessary steps to ensure that the integrity of the YSB, and the safety and well-being of our clients, will not be compromised.

Above all else, I understand that my individual actions have a direct impact upon my department/organization and the youth serving profession in general.

At all times when representing this organization, I will consider the legal, ethical, and professional boundaries that must be upheld in order to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of those we serve in the name of youth development work everywhere.

I have read and acknowledge that Youth Service Bureaus shall adhere to 10- 19M Sec. A of the Connecticut General Statutes and that Youth Services Bureaus may adhere to 10-19m Sec. B of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Name/Title of Staff Member: _____ **Date:** _____

Director: _____ **Date:** _____

Connecticut Youth Services Association State Statute and Mission

Statute:

“Mandated by Connecticut General Statute section 10-19m, a Youth Service Bureau (YSB) is an agency operated directly by one or more municipalities that is designed for planning, evaluation, coordination, and implementation of a network of resources and opportunities for children, youth, and their families. In addition, YSB’s are responsible for the provision of services and programs for all youth to develop positively and to function as responsible members of their communities.”

Mission:

Connecticut Youth Services Association leads, strengthens, supports and advocates on behalf of a unified network of Youth Service Bureaus dedicated to the well-being of Connecticut’s youth and families.

Introduction

Recommended Best Practices and Standards for YSB Professionals

Welcome!

The standards contained in this document are recommended guidelines for the professional practice of Youth Service Bureau staff and volunteers. In every instance the legal, financial, moral and/or ethical responsibilities placed in a representative of a YSB shall be held to the highest standards and tests of the general public, government agencies, clients, funding partners and peers.

This user-friendly document recommends standards set forth by your peers and can easily be adapted for both employees and volunteers that have administrative responsibilities or direct client access. Whenever confronted with a question regarding the ethical or legal nature of your role within the structure of your YSB or municipality, time should be taken to contact the Director/Coordinator or their designee to discuss the concern in question.

It is CYSA's goal to advance the professional principles and practices of youth service bureaus.

CYSA Standards of Professionalism

Statement of Purpose:

The behavior of all those involved in youth work and youth services including managers, employees, interns, and volunteers must meet a standard based upon the following universal elements:

- Delivering services in an effective manner
 - Role modeling appropriate adult behavior and boundaries
 - Creating trust among workers and youth participants
 - Developing trust among service organizations, parents and youth
 - Committing necessary financial and human resources to facilitate youth work
 - Operating on a belief that youth can be empowered to make healthy decisions and take effective action
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Statement of Principle:

The Connecticut Youth Services Association and its member organizations strive to meet the highest professional standards with regard to providing services to youth and their families based upon the philosophy of Positive Youth Development. Positive Youth Development includes recognizing youth as resources and actively engaging youth in decision-making processes with the goal of helping them feel empowered to become productive members of their respective communities.

CYSA Recommended Standards

It is recommended that all Youth Service Bureau personnel adhere to the following quality standards:

CONDUCT

Boundaries:

At all times staff members, interns, and volunteers should refrain from personal relationships with clients. Volunteers should refrain from becoming directly involved with individuals seeking intervention services through the agency, unless that is a specific function of their role with the YSB.

Most YSBs have organizational charts that are quite specific regarding reporting relationships. Municipal and private non-profit YSBs historically have developed processes for addressing unresolved conflicts involving staff/client issues. CYSA can assist new YSB Directors in developing these policies.

In any case, within the department or independent YSB it is critically important that volunteers, interns, and staff members mutually agree to respect the hierarchy of the organization. In order to preserve the integrity of the agency and ensure the safety and well-being of clients, at no time should volunteers, interns, or staff members purposely disregard the hierarchy established by the municipality and/or independent YSB.

Client Referrals:

It is recommended that YSB staff members not provide services comparable to those provided by your agency or department to any citizen, municipal department, local organization, institution, business, individual or family served by your YSB. Furthermore, referrals to the private practice of a staff member or associate of the staff member may present a conflict of interest. Be sure to check your local policy prior to making or accepting referrals that may give the appearance of a conflict of interest (you or your coworker could realize financial gain).

Confidentiality:

At all times the confidentiality of clients must be protected, unless otherwise permitted by law. This includes perpetuating rumors, giving information about the identity and background of a client, acknowledging that an individual is or has been served by the organization to any person other than a supervisor or co-worker relative to the nature of the work. Furthermore, staff members, interns, and volunteers understand that records, notes, verbal and written communication should be maintained at the highest standards

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and levels of security at all times, i.e. locked file cabinets and creating an environment that preserves the interests and anonymity of clients.

Written or verbal communication exposed to the general public can be viewed as a serious lapse in judgment, one that could violate the code of confidentiality, expose clients to harm and ultimately damage the reputation of the YSB.

At all times staff members should avoid social gatherings involving clients, thus avoiding potential conflicts of interest. The same can be said for personal or professional acquaintances that cross boundaries regarding agency business. At all times the confidentiality of clients must be protected, as well as the internal operations of the organization.

Conflicts of Interest:

Consultation:

As a member of the Connecticut Youth Services Association, there is an assumption that YSBs provide technical assistance and support to their peer agencies on an as needed basis. We do so as an in-kind service and do not expect any form of remuneration for these services, so long as they do not interfere with day-to-day operations, and occur on an occasional basis.

Outside Employment:

It is critically important that you refer to your own personnel policies, contracts, etc. when determining if the practice of consultation for personal gain is acceptable to your employer. The following suggestions should be considered if the practice of consultation is acceptable to your employers:

- Consultation preparation, communication, and presentation are not being done on your employer's time.
- Consultation time does not in any way interfere with the employee's normal work schedule and agency responsibilities.
- Agency resources are not used for private consulting purposes.
- Your YSB is held harmless from lawsuits deriving from your private work.

Dual Relationships:

Staff members should not accept on the YSB caseload clients that present dual-relationships (refer to the professional code of ethics, AAMFT & NASW).

Example: According to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Code of Ethics – “The ethical codes of virtually every mental health profession prohibit or warn of the dangers of relationships involving conflicts of interest.” Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with clients.

Gratuities or Bartered Services:

No staff member, intern, or volunteer, for their own personal benefit, should enter into a legal contract or casual agreement with any client for which they have professionally served. No staff member, intern, or volunteer should accept personal gratuities of a substantial nature from any client he or she has served. Your municipality or organization should have a policy regarding the maximum value of a gift that may be accepted. To avoid any conflict of interest, staff members should not accept gifts that constitute an ethical dilemma.

Example: The parameters of what is and is not acceptable should be as follows. If a child has prepared a handmade item such as a drawing or cookie, accept with gratitude. On the other hand, a gift that has a clear and substantial monetary value or an implied value such as a bartered service or gratuity should be refused. Rather a person could be encouraged to donate to a charity of their choice in your honor.

Public Representation:

It is expected that when YSB employees, interns, or volunteers make public statements, they shall clearly distinguish personal opinions from those of the organization. Public statements made on behalf of the organization may include, but are not limited to, speeches, debates, panel discussions, group presentations, news releases, and press conferences.

Public Trust/Confidence:

The way that YSB employees, interns, and volunteers conduct themselves in public settings will have a great impact upon how the youth serving profession is viewed and/or judged. The conduct of staff members when representing their own YSB on staff time, and even their actions on personal time, reflects the morals, values, and professionalism of the entire organization. Unacceptable conduct includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate attire, dual relationships, misuse of agency resources, being part of hearsay, perpetuating rumors, breaking confidentiality or criminal behavior. While we fully recognize that each YSB must follow their own municipal or independent personnel guidelines, these are expectations that we share as members of CYSA.

EDUCATION

The youth work profession recognizes the value that exists with regard to a sound theoretical base connected to practical application of youth work skills. It is understood that the connection between theory and practice can be obtained through formal education and/or relevant work experience.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is a critical component to maintaining and enhancing high quality skill levels for administrators and direct service staff that have direct ongoing contact with children and youth. Each Youth Service Bureau should establish a minimum professional development requirement that includes, but is not limited to, requisite annual training. YSBs are encouraged to offer professional development opportunities for staff, such as Level I and II certification training for YSB Directors.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

A successful Youth Service Bureau will actively engage in developing and maintaining healthy cooperative working relationships with a broad variety of public and private agencies.

CYSA works to represent YSBs on many statewide committees and taskforces. A representative of CYSA should always represent the expressed or best interest of the Association. If a conflict arises between the best interest of CYSA and the best interest of the representative's YSB or the representative's personal interest, the representative should remove him or herself from the situation.

GOVERNING STATUTES

YSB employees, interns, and volunteers with direct client access are expected to uphold the following standards covered in (Sec. 10-19m) of the CT. General Statute:

- Each bureau shall state in writing its purposes, programs, and services offered in a form suitable for distribution to youth and their families, referral sources, funding sources, and the public. Programs and services shall bear a direct relationship to the stated purposes of the bureau, shall be based upon identified needs in the community, and shall have the potential to divert youth from the justice system, promote positive youth development, and provide opportunities for youth to function as responsible members of the community.
- Each bureau shall ensure that all services are non-coercive and that the confidentiality of the records of individuals receiving services is maintained.
- Each bureau shall develop and maintain, in a manner satisfactory to DCF, the data necessary to determine and evaluate the impact of its administrative and direct services delivery programs. Each bureau shall provide reports and information as may be specified.

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In summary, every YSB staff member, intern, and volunteer with direct client access should:

- Understand the purpose of youth service bureaus
- Provide services in a welcoming, non-threatening manner
- Protect the client's rights to confidentiality and safety
- Report program data in a timely manner
- Carry out the principles and practices of youth development work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We hope that this document has provided you with valuable information regarding the standards of conduct and commitment expected of youth serving professionals, interns, and volunteers serving CYSA communities.

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