

Staff Research on Youth Services

I. Introduction

Youth Services can be found in parks across the country, contributing their time and energy to improve their communities. Many parks and recreation agencies see the value of working with schools and students in their community to leverage as a volunteer pool to develop relationships with park and agency staff, often returning to visit the site with their families; cultivating potential future employees; and simply completing work that needs to be done. For the teens, Youth Services benefits them by completing community service in local parks and recreation center facilities; it's an opportunity to develop a sense of community responsibility, make a difference and "give back" to their community. Youth Services also gives an opportunity to make friends with similar interests, cultivate job skills, and the chance to try out a job field to see if it is a good fit. Youth Services also assist in strengthening college applications as well by demonstrating community involvement.

City governments are typically involved in youth development and out-of-school initiatives. City government recognizes the value of providing programs to engage the youth and help prepare them for productive futures and to be contributing community members. In some cases, Cities directly administer afterschool and summer programs, but more often they provide support to community-based organizations to administer the Youth Services. Cities often oversee and distribute federal and state resources targeted for youth development programs and services. Generally speaking, the state of Florida relies on private agencies to conduct youth services due to the specific needs of employee resources.

II. How does Parks and Recreation throughout the state of Florida conduct Youth Services?

1. Discover the available city, county, state, and federal public places to host these services. Develop working relationships with private entities/nonprofit groups.
2. Work with youth service groups such as the juvenile justice system, and other nonprofit agencies to connect with local outdoor parks.
3. Looks into opportunities for the youth to engage in beautification, urban forestry, or other major planting projects conducted by City Parks. Such activities can support science programs and reinforce principles of community engagement.

III. Cities in Florida that have Youth Services (divisions, departments)

- A. Leon County** - The Department of Youth Services currently serves forty-five schools within the district. A total of twenty-two deputies are assigned to the unit. Deputies are given primary assignments at each high school, middle school and six deputies cover sixteen elementary schools. Members are also given secondary school assignments and responsibilities as requested.
- B.** In addition to prevention programs, deputies also teach the basic understanding of the Criminal Justice System and the role of a law enforcement officer and their duties. They also take law enforcement action as required within their assigned school.

Some of the other programs School Resource Deputies are involved in are:

- Sheriff's Adventure Camp – served 71 youth in 2017
- Sheriff's Youth Ranch – 25 attendees in 2017
- Sheriff's Explorer Post – 20 youth participating
- Teen Driver Challenge – 106 students were served over the 5 week period

School Resource Deputies transitioned to “soft uniforms,” consisting of slacks, a polo style deputy shirt, and duty gear, designed to make the deputies more approachable.

Generally, outside of what is offered by the Sheriff's office, all Youth in Government is a YMCA program that offers students the opportunity to serve their schools and communities as part of the youth-run, youth-led model government process. The Florida YMCA YIG program was founded in 1957, and for the past 59 years, our delegates have written legislation on state issues that impact their families, schools, YMCAs, and communities. Many of our student-authored bills have gone on to become state law and our program is proud to have alumni such as congressman Dennis Ross, State Representative Dean Cannon (former speaker of the Florida House of Representatives), and State Representative Seth McKeel.

C. City of Palm Bay - Palm Bay Police Explorers Post 597

The [Palm Bay Police Explorer Post 597](#) was established in the early 1970s to develop a more positive relationship between police officers and the youth of the community. The Explorers is one of the most exciting organizations in which a young person can be involved. Explorers are provided first-hand knowledge of law enforcement procedures. The Explorers are chartered through the Boy Scouts of America and are sponsored by the Palm Bay Police Department. The Palm Bay Police Explorers are a not-for-profit organization, 501 (c) (3), and members of the Florida Association of Police Explorers (FAPE). There are over 50 other posts throughout the state that are members of this great association. FAPE Members gather 3 times a year for Delegates Training and once a year at the annual FAPE State Competition. It is our hope, through training and experiences, the youth of our community will become involved in law enforcement and community service.

Membership Requirements

- Male or Female between the ages of 14 to 21
- Completed the 8th grade
- Citizen of the United States
- Complete all necessary waivers and applications signed by a parent or legal guardian
- Be in good health, mentally alert, and sound
- Be willing to submit to a background check of school, criminal, home life, and oral interview
- Enrolled in school or college and maintain 2.0-grade average or greater
- Follow all post rules and be fully committed to 80% of post functions

IV. Cities in the Nation which run Youth Services

A. Town of Windsor, Connecticut

Juvenile Review Board - The Juvenile Review Board (JRB) is a community-based program whose objective is to divert youth from the Juvenile Justice System by providing intervention services to prevent further court involvement.

The JRB acts as a preventative program by diverting first-time offenders from court to an accessible community resource for appropriate services. Diversions promote responsible behavior and help to solve problems that may be at the root of delinquent behavior. These diversions not only create opportunities for the juvenile offender but also alleviate overcrowding in the court system.

The JRB works hard to identify patterns of delinquency and other risk factors so it may implement the most appropriate services for each case.

Offers programs through private entities. Current programs offered are as follows:

- Raising Children with Resilience During the Pandemic and Beyond – Virtually – City offered
- Virtual Volunteering for Teens – City offered
- See-through the Vapor – City offered through a private agency
- Youth Commission – City offered
- Block Parties – City offered

B. North Andover, Detroit

Founded in 1988 as a one-year pilot program, North Andover Youth Services today is a vital part of the town and serves close to 3,000 middle school and high school-aged young people. This multi-service nonprofit agency coordinates a variety of services that range from recreation, sports, and outdoor adventure to counseling, tracking, and crisis intervention with young people and their families.

Types of Programs:

- Big Brother Big Sister of Metropolitan Detroit - Run by the private agency (Big brother Big Sister)
- Don Bosco Hall - Don Bosco Hall is a private non-profit agency, which provides supportive human services to enhance the quality of life for youth and their families residing in the Metropolitan Detroit-Wayne County Community.
- Midnight Golf Program - The Midnight Golf teaches life skills like financial literacy and community activism, as well as the game of golf. This is a 30-week mentoring program. A private agency runs it.
- Pretty Brown Girl - This program celebrates the beautiful shades of brown skin all over the world; while inspiring positive self-esteem and confidence. Their approach is to

provide an engaging platform for the subtext that most girls of color live within throughout their lives. Conducted by Private Agency

- Ruth Ellis - The Ruth Ellis Center, incorporated in 1999, is a youth social services agency that serves the needs of runaway, homeless and at-risk youth. The mission of the Center is to "provide short and long-term residential safe space and support services for runaway, homeless, and at-risk lesbian, gay, bi-attractational, transgender, and questioning youth.

V. Recommendation:

Upon my research, I am recommending that Youth Services be its Department or a separate Division within PRCA. In looking into the current services which are needed within our community, we will need the following positions to meet the needs for a proper Youth Service Department:

- Director/ Manager of Youth Services
- Outreach Supervisor
- Certified Counselors/Therapist
- Youth Development Supervisor
- Intervention Specialist
- Rec. Leaders (2)
- Temporary P/T (2)

Lastly, the City will also benefit from partnering with the local YMCA to facilitate some services. They currently have a YMCA YIG program that was founded in 1957. This program is a Florida-run program that will be easy for them to lift off the ground. They are currently seeking ways to partner with the City and this is a great opportunity.