



NOVA
YOUTH ADVOCACY
LEADERSHIP CENTER

Findings from
NOVA's Youth
Engagement
Summit

August 2025

What does the future of advocacy look like? Who will be leading it, and how should they build it?

Young people—as the inheritors and, inevitably, leaders of tomorrow’s victims’ rights movement—are perhaps the best people to answer these questions. After all, they’re the ones who know most about the world they want to live in and who, if given trust and the right tools, can make that world a reality.

When the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) gathered youth advocates and leaders from youth-serving organizations to tell us about the future of advocacy at our Youth Engagement Summit—that future world and what it would take to build it—we knew the conversation would be powerful. We also knew that it was just the beginning. As we launch our **Youth Advocacy Leadership Center (YALC)**, we’re proud to share our summary of this initial conversation with you.



Who was in the room?

NOVA's Youth Engagement Summit was a convening of youth advocates (ages 15 - 25) and representatives from youth-serving victim service organizations in and beyond the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This convening was led and facilitated by NOVA's Youth Engagement Team and a panel of Youth Advocate Leaders, all of whom are founding members of NOVA's Youth Council.

Panelists & Youth Council Members

Under the Youth Advocacy Leadership Center (YALC), NOVA's Youth Council is composed of Youth Advocate Leaders who are passionate about victim advocacy and violence prevention. The founding members (pictured on the right) are young people who have demonstrated a commitment to advocating for others, whether that's through policy advocacy, direct service provision, or storytelling.

Speakers & Organizers

Opening Remarks

Rosie Hidalgo - *Former Director, DOJ Office on Violence Against Women; Former White House Advisor on Gender-Based Violence*

Facilitators & Organizers

Abrianna Morales - *NOVA Victim Advocacy Corps Program Manager*

Jasmine Uribe - *NOVA Associate Director of Youth Engagement*

Shannon Collins - *NOVA Senior Director of TTA*

Catherine Thompson - *D-SAACP Credentialing Specialist & Training Coordinator*

Anna Bellows - *NOVA TTA Intern*

YOUTH ADVOCATE LEADERS



Kaylyn Ahn
NOVA Board Member



Thanh Nguyen
VAC Student Fellow



Sabrina Javellana
Advocate



Ray Epstein
Advocate

KEY THEMES



Reframing
as a Tool



Cultural
Humility



Youth Agency
& Leadership



Cultivating
Sustainability



Navigating Unique
Challenges



Lineage of
Advocacy

What did we discuss?

Following a panel discussion featuring our Youth Advocate Leaders, attendees participated in a roundtable discussion on two sets of questions:

- What **ethical questions** or concerns exist when it comes to engaging young people? How can we **elevate without exploiting**?
- What do we want the **future of youth engagement** in victim advocacy to look like? What **tools or strategies** should we adopt to maximize the potential of youth to effect change?

What did we find?

Across small and large group discussion of both prompts, we identified six key themes:

- Establishing a **Lineage of Advocacy**
- Prioritizing Support and **Cultivating Sustainability**
- **Reframing as a Tool** to Reach Youth, Uplift Advocates
- **Navigating Unique Challenges** Faced by Youth Advocates
- Embracing **Youth Agency & Leadership**
- Incorporating Principles of **Cultural Humility**



Establishing a Lineage of Advocacy

Youth Advocates keep the momentum by establishing a **lineage of advocacy**—passing down knowledge, procedures, and connections—over generations, especially in the face of pushback from powerful instit. Establishing **peer advocacy networks and groups**, and being intentional about **archiving and sharing information**, allows the work to continue even after young advocates ‘age out’ of their youth role and/or identity.



Prioritizing Support and Cultivating Sustainability

Youth Advocates, who often come to the victims’ rights movement as survivors with lived experience, need support and resources to grow and sustain their engagement. Youth Advocates should be fairly compensated for their time and labor, with supporting organizations aiming to create infrastructure that supports access to self-care, community, and professional development opportunities so that Youth Advocates can grow within the field. Considerations should also be made for protecting Youth Advocates’ physical, emotional, and digital safety.



Reframing as a Tool to Reach Youth, Uplift Advocates

Organizations looking to engage young people in the victims' rights movement should consider ways to reframe discussions around violence and victimization in ways that are accessible and approachable for young people—focusing on healthy relationships as a component of social-emotional learning and life skill building for all young people. Storytelling is essential for building and maintaining interests, and organizations should consider how to leverage tools like visual media (e.g., videos) and social media platforms to connect with youth, as well as reduce stigma around violence and violence prevention work. Leaning on the perspectives of Youth Advocates to direct these approaches is key.



Navigating the Unique Challenges Faced by Youth Advocates

Youth Advocates engaging in public-facing work—as leaders of Youth Advisory Boards, public speakers, and consultants—face unique challenges, especially if they are also survivors with lived experience. Youth Advocates who are interested in engaging in public-facing work in collaboration with organization(s) should be encouraged to consider the implications of sharing their story publicly (e.g., litigation, privacy breaches, permanence of online media, future career impacts) before they speak out. Organizations should also work to help Youth Advocates establish boundaries, offer access to support systems (e.g., lawyers, advocates, mental health resources), and ensure that they are identifying with Youth Advocates as advocates first, taking special care to elevate the Youth Advocate's expertise and knowledge over their survivor story.



Embracing Youth Agency & Leadership in Advocacy



There should never be just one Youth Advocate in the room or at the table. Organizations can avoid tokenization—only offering superficial representation of an identity or group—by ensuring that multiple young people and a variety of youth perspectives are not only included, but actively listened to in decision making spaces. It's essential to not only build infrastructure for both youth participation (via advisory boards, working groups, youth in leadership positions, etc.), but to create mechanisms for accountability to youth (e.g., giving youth voting power, establishing procedures to ensure that youth voices are heard and responded to). Youth perspectives on justice, healing, and advocacy may differ from prevailing beliefs at the organization, and those differing perspectives should be given equal consideration, especially as they pertain to youth programming.



Incorporating Principles of Cultural Humility

Initiatives that work with Youth Advocates should aim to embody principles of cultural responsiveness and humility, actively working to address dynamics of power and privilege—especially when it comes to age (e.g., adultism). Youth, as a vulnerable and often marginalized group, should be meaningfully engaged in creative and decision making contexts, and should always be treated with kindness and respect. Involvement from young people—and the many communities they represent—is key to ensure that programming is supportive, inclusive, and effective.

Conclusions and Takeaways

A better, brighter future for the victims' right movement is coming, and young people are ready to usher it in. From embracing youth agency to building infrastructure that will better support sustainability, the Youth Advocates at NOVA's Youth Engagement Summit have demonstrated that, though we have come a long way, we have much farther to go and this conversation is just the beginning.

We hope that our findings, as well as the questions and ideas they inspire, prove helpful to you in this work.



Learn more and stay connected!

The future of advocacy is coming...and NOVA is excited to help bring it to life! As a recognized leader in victim advocacy, education, and credentialing, NOVA is collaborating with visionary youth leaders to direct the conversation and course of action around youth engagement in victim services by launching the Youth Advocacy Leadership Center (YALC)!

We know that a future about youth advocacy starts with youth advocates. By working alongside youth leaders, NOVA aims to identify and inform strategies that invest in, engage, and support youth and youth-serving professionals in the field of victim advocacy. visit the [Youth Advocacy Leadership Center webpage](#) to learn more.



Connect with NOVA's Youth Engagement Team
Email youthleadership@trynova.org