

## Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum Program Overview

### **Program Description:**

At the state level, there is an obvious lack of self-advocates representing the first hand account of individuals living with a disability. As a result, the most powerful voice is lacking in settings where decisions are being made on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

The Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum believes that all youth with disabilities have the capacity to become leaders. However, there are limited opportunities for youth with disabilities to learn the skills to become community leaders through systems change advocacy while also networking with other self-advocates. Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum is a three-day residential program during which delegates attend sessions presented by leaders with disabilities. Topics address skills relevant to advocacy, independence, employment, and relationships. The Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum will adhere to standards and best practices set forth by the National Association of Youth Leadership Forums to ensure the highest quality experience for all delegates. The national standards dictate a balanced delegate population which is representative of the state's gender, disability, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The demographics of the staff and guest presenters will also follow the same standards. Every effort is made to support, encourage, and immerse delegates in a positive and empowered disability culture while attending the Youth Leadership Forum. The power and uniqueness of the Youth Leadership Forum lies with the recognition and celebration of the disability culture while empowering youth to become leaders as individuals and community members.

### **Goals:**

- Delegates will learn personal and systems change advocacy skills.
- Delegates perspective on disability culture and history will improve.

### **Objectives:**

*Student delegates identify their needs and supports*

Student delegates are introduced to assistive technology, resource, and individuals who can answer questions regarding services and supports

*Student delegates become leaders at YLF*

Through activities at YLF, student delegates improve their confidence and personal skills as well as team-work and communication skills.

*Student delegates take pride in disability culture*

Through discussions and small and large group activities, student delegates develop a sense of pride in themselves.

*Student delegates increase relationships, gain confidence in new situations*

Through discussion and small and large group activities involving collaboration and some negotiation, student delegates learn how to maintain positive relationships with others.

*Student delegates learn new skills*

Student delegates have the opportunity to discuss sensitive issues pertaining to health and human sexuality that they will face as they enter adulthood.

*Student delegates gain understanding of self and legislative advocacy*

Presentations and activities will increase student delegates understanding of advocacy both self and legislative.

\*Outcomes noted in this document are directly derived from the Oklahoma Youth Leadership Forum Outcomes report from 2020. The OKDDC YLF coordinator granted permission for use of this information. OKYLF has provided extensive and ongoing mentorship in the development of the LAYLF.