

YOUTH REPRESENT

**2023 – 2024
Report**

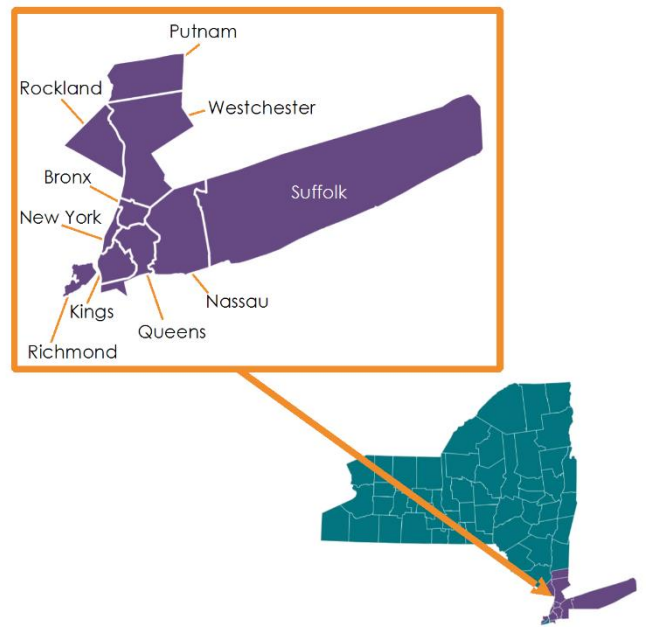
OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During the 12-month grant period, we successfully resolved 922 cases for 635 young individuals, surpassing our initial target. The 635 represents the total number of unique individuals we conducted intakes for during the grant period. Section A1 represents a breakdown of 922 “closed” cases, and the total number of individuals impacted due to those unique services that were closed cases is 2,985. This achievement not only reflects the dedication of our team at Youth Represent but also underscores the effectiveness of our approach.

Additionally, we reached a significant milestone in a major class action lawsuit, securing substantial financial compensation for New Yorkers affected by discrimination and implementing organizational reforms that will provide numerous individuals with opportunities for meaningful employment.

Moreover, we forged partnerships with 19 community organizations, providing legal services, dynamic 'Know Your Rights' workshops, and specialized technical support to build their capacity. This year has marked a pivotal point in our journey, and as we move forward with our strategic plan, we are filled with anticipation for the possibilities that lie ahead.

Target Population: Youth Represent is dedicated to serving primarily Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and youth of color within the five boroughs of New York City who have interacted with the criminal justice system and lack access to legal resources. Recognizing the latest research indicating brain development continues until age 25, we’ve expanded our services to include individuals up to 26 years old. This change also aligns with the practices of our partner organizations, which frequently include participants beyond the age of 24. Our clients, many of whom are engaged with community-



Service Area: New York City Metropolitan Area

Population Served: Low Income Youth

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
 Total Staff: 10.43 Lawyers: 6.3
 Paralegals: 2.26 Others: 1.87

based programs or city initiatives, often encounter legal challenges that intersect with various judicial systems, such as Family Courts, school disciplinary hearings, and housing court proceedings.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of our clients have no high school diploma (or equivalent), and approximately 90% are unemployed. Two-thirds (67%) come from single-parent homes. In our most recently completed fiscal year, 46% of our clients identified as Black, 25% as Latiné, 7% as multi-racial, 6% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% as White, 1% as American Indian, and 9% as other or unspecified. Their average age was 23. Nearly 20% were not U.S. citizens, and more than 20% lived in subsidized housing

Financial Benefits Realized by Target Populations: Youth Represent has achieved a landmark victory through strategic litigation, securing a monumental \$2,233,333.00 in settlement payments. This substantial sum was awarded directly to over 11,000 New Yorkers who faced unjust discrimination based on race and criminal history. Our efforts have not only rectified past wrongs but have also opened doors to employment opportunities previously closed to these individuals. Moreover, we've alleviated the financial burden on New Yorkers by saving them \$36,660 in costs and fees, and we've successfully reclaimed \$3,403 in back awards.

Increased Access to Justice: Although the right to legal counsel is guaranteed for direct criminal matters, Youth Represent provides criminal and civil legal services to individuals up to the age of 26 who have had interactions with the justice system and would not otherwise have access to an attorney. Our attorneys advocate for clients in various legal settings, including housing courts, school disciplinary hearings, and Family Court, thereby unlocking opportunities for employment, housing, education, and familial support—privileges that are often overlooked. Unique to New York, our lawyers holistically tackle all issues related to our young clients' involvement with the justice system, operating directly within the communities they reside and work. Our collaborative efforts with local organizations focus on workforce development, job training, and additional social services. We provide comprehensive legal representation, facilitate informative 'Know Your Rights' workshops, and offer in-depth professional training to organizational staff, enhancing their ability to support their clients effectively. Our methodology minimizes legal obstacles, fostering gainful employment and self-reliance, which in turn, elevates both individual and program success rates.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Case Example #1, Employment, “Isaiah”: Isaiah’s journey is a powerful testament to their resilience and larger pursuit of justice. As a young, gay Black man, he faced profound adversity when his openness about his identity led to exclusion and false accusations within the Army. This mistreatment culminated in his unjust discharge, leaving him frustrated, needing employment, and without anywhere to turn.

Determined to reclaim his life and passion for teaching, Isaiah encountered yet another obstacle: his military record erroneously branded him with a criminal conviction. Undeterred, he reached out to us for assistance. In response, we assembled a comprehensive advocacy packet to address the Intent to Deny Letter he received. Our coordinated effort included a detailed legal analysis challenging the validity of the conviction, a clinical assessment affirming Isaiah’s understanding of consent, and a multitude of support letters from a diverse network of allies.

Our unwavering commitment to Isaiah’s cause ultimately prevailed against the rigidity of OSPRA. Not only did he secure the necessary clearance to continue his vocational aspirations, but he also gained a robust set of advocacy documents to support future endeavors. Isaiah’s story is not just one of overcoming barriers; it is a beacon of hope, affirming the power of dedicated legal support and the strength of community solidarity.

2,985

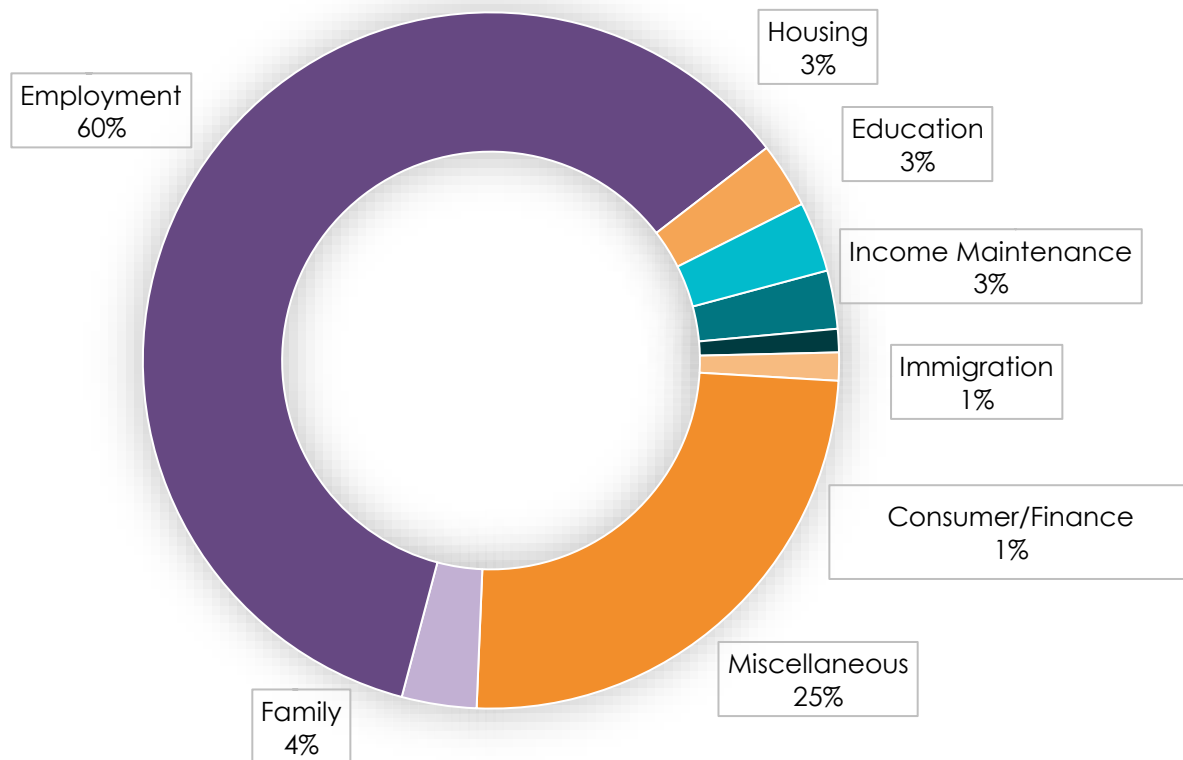
people
benefited
from

922

legal cases
closed

Case Example #2, Education, “Gabriella”: Our client Gabriella has overcome incredible obstacles in her young life. When she was a teenager in high school, she was kicked out by both her parents, because they were homophobic and refused to accept her sexuality and her gender presentation. Gabriella always wanted to be herself. Over the next years, she survived by sleeping on the street, in cars, with her sister, and in youth shelters like Covenant House. She was finally able to obtain permanent housing and a voucher for her own apartment.

CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



Gabriella attends BMCC and is eager to complete her education. Our team found her to be eager, driven, smart, and caring. However, BMCC tried to evaluate her eligibility for financial aid as a dependent student given her age.

We interviewed Gabriella, her sister, and her mentor, and collected objective evidence. We prepared a letter and a packet of evidence that argued that Gabriella should be deemed an independent student under the Higher Education Act.

We were eventually successful and Gabriella was deemed an independent student. This will enable her to afford to continue her studies and continue supporting herself.



OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

Know Your Rights workshops for youth and technical assistance for staff at community-based organizations are both integral components of our partnership model. Know Your Rights workshops educate young people on their legal rights and responsibilities, addressing critically sensitive situations such as interacting with the police; conducting a job search with a criminal history; responding to a school suspension; or facing exclusion from public housing. We partnered with The Door's Senior Youth Council to conduct Training of Trainer (TOT) workshops in order to develop and train youth to become trainers and leaders in peer education on legal issues that both directly and indirectly impact them and their communities.

YR's technical assistance meanwhile provides partner organizations with the tools necessary to prepare clients for questions about criminal backgrounds on job applications and in interviews. We teach staff how to identify and respond to the unique needs of court-involved youth, and we explain how various convictions or plea deals will appear on criminal background checks. We also highlight obstacles that can impede a young person's chance at success: e.g., licensing bars, housing evictions, family court issues, school suspensions, employment discrimination, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender nonconformity.

Our model pairs a single attorney with a community-partner organization. Our attorney goes on site at least once a year to deliver staff trainings. When possible, we also conduct regular workshops (which are contingent on the partner's intake schedule). Our goal was to reach 1400 participants through our workshops. We reached a total of 1453 participants through workshops (classified as Community Legal Education). We are proud to have reached our goal of workshops for the year and plan to continue providing these essential educational opportunities.

Following the launch of the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act (YJ&O) campaign, we spent the past year building a powerful youth-led coalition through a steady drumbeat of events, including. Our second advocacy day in May 2023 in Albany saw our youth committee joined by over 100 young people, service providers, youth justice advocates, public defender organizations, NY State Elected Officials, and civil rights organizations. Through these efforts, we were able to expand our list of campaign endorsements to over 50 organizations.

1,453

people
benefited
from

**Community
Legal
Education**

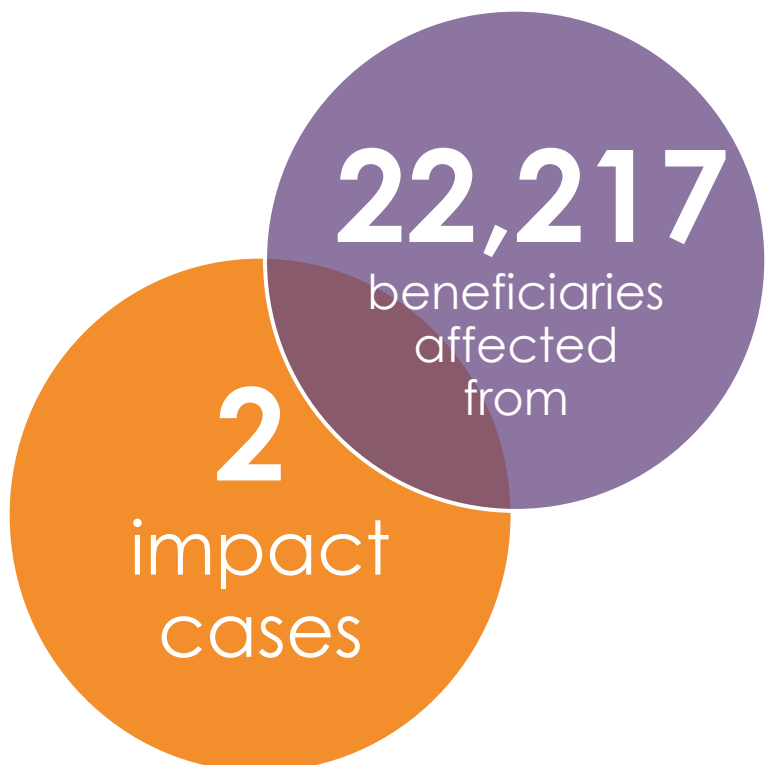
IMPACT CASES

Youth Represent is at the forefront of championing strategic litigation, both class and individual actions, aimed at reforming discriminatory employment practices based on criminal history and race. We have been instrumental in securing over \$8 million in settlements, offering redress to more than 22,217 individuals who faced unjust discrimination due to their involvement with the justice system. This not only supports those affected by illegal employment denial, but also opens doors to new employment opportunities.

Our legal victories include high-profile cases against notable entities such as Family Dollar, Macy's, Madison Square Garden, Next Source, New York Life, ShiftGig, Walmart, and Wonolo. These successes have not only resulted in financial settlements but also in crucial changes to corporate hiring policies.

Additionally, we have taken significant action in the Brooklyn Supreme Court, securing an approved settlement in a class action against Uber Eats. The proposed settlement in this case provides not just a monetary award of \$3.25 million but also requires pivotal changes in organizational practices, marking another step towards our goal of equitable employment for all. For Walmart, clients of Youth Represent applied for entry-level positions at Walmart stores in Pennsylvania and New Jersey separately. Each client faced similar experiences in their application process in that Walmart tendered each client a conditional offer.

After Walmart provided the clients conditional offers, Walmart conducted a background check using an outsourced company. When the background checks revealed our clients' respective histories of criminal legal system involvement, Walmart revoked their conditional offers and terminated them. This practice violated both Pennsylvania and New Jersey laws on employment discrimination based on criminal records. Youth Represent filed a class action lawsuit against Walmart on their behalf citing employment discrimination violations. For UberEats, when our clients applied to be delivery people and/or "drivers" for UberEats,



they were given a conditional offer contingent on UberEats conducting a background check. After the company conducted the background check, they revoked their conditional offer upon finding that our clients (and other applicants similarly situated) had documentary interactions with the criminal legal system. Youth Represent alleged that UberEats's process did not allow these applicants explain and contextualize their past criminal legal system involvement. In turn, Youth Represent brought a class action lawsuit against UberEats with the help of private co-counsel. The case settled in February 2024 for a little over \$3 million.

TECHNOLOGY

In the wake of the pandemic, we've embraced the digital revolution to meet our clients where they are most comfortable. Our comprehensive suite of digital communication tools—including phone calls, texts, emails, teleconferencing, a dedicated Chatbot, the innovative RAP App, and a Legal Hotline—ensures that legal assistance is just a click or call away.

Our Legal Hotline stands out as a beacon of immediate support, offering youth citywide the chance to receive a legal needs assessment without delay, regardless of their physical location.

Embracing technologies like DocuSign, we've streamlined the process of onboarding new clients and managing cases, enabling young people to sign legal documents remotely with ease. Similarly, our use of Mentimeter has transformed our 'Know Your Rights' workshops from traditional lectures to dynamic, interactive experiences. These workshops now captivate participants with engaging polls and quizzes, fostering a more active learning environment.

Behind the scenes, our legal staff's caseloads are meticulously managed through a customized Salesforce database. This tool allows for the detailed recording of work and advice, accessible both remotely and on-site at our community partners, as well as via a secure mobile app for our staff. This synergy of technology has not only allowed us to reach and assist a broader spectrum of youth in need but has also propelled the expansion of our services.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

We hired three new staff members over the course of 2023 and as a result needed to purchase additional computer supplies and software to be prepared for their onboarding. With support from the grant, we were able to provide our new staff attorney, paralegal and development

associate with essential technology supplies and software, including access to the following services: Buffer, Gratavid, Zoom, Docusign, 1Password, Calendly, Salesforce, Fund Ez, and Toggl. Additionally, we engaged Nadira Ramcharan, founder of NRNY Consulting, to provide technology management support and a “technology audit” to Youth Represent. A portion of the grant was used towards the expense of her consulting fee.

This is the first time that Youth Represent was able to engage with a specialist to support our expanded review of the status of our current technology, and determine where our technology strengths and weaknesses exist.

With the addition of Nadira to the team, who also supports our broader operational needs, we are continuing with assessing a broader technology needs assessment among our staff to better understand where additional resources are needed to improve our day-to-day operations. This initiative aligns with our strategic technology goals, ultimately allowing us to improve the overall delivery of our services to better meet the needs of our clients.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

Youth Represent proudly runs a Youth Reentry Clinic in partnership with Brooklyn Law School. Last year, we expanded our team by welcoming six summer legal interns, enhancing our capacity to serve young people. This year, we’ve deepened our engagement with the esteemed law firms Proskauer and Kirkland & Ellis. Their generous pro bono contributions have been invaluable, bolstering our organizational structure and providing critical support in strategic litigation cases for our clients.



8

attorneys volunteered **1,391** hours



8

law students volunteered **2,964** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

Partnerships with organizations and city agencies is a core tenant of our model. We have contracted fee-for-service partnerships with the following nonprofits and agencies to deliver workshops and staff trainings, and provide legal representation and advice to participants: 100 Suits for 100 Men, AHRC, CASES ROAR, Commonpoint Queens, Covenant House, Drive Change, Getting Out and Staying Out, Global Learning Collaborative, Humanities Preparatory Academy, Innovation Diploma Plus High School, Make The Road New York, Marsha's House, Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, New York City Department of Probation (All 5 Boroughs), Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center Inc, Streetwork Project Drop-in Center, The Door, Westhab, UnLocal, Year Up New York City, and Youth Justice Network. Each partnership is paired with a dedicated attorney and paralegal, offering on-site Know Your Rights (KYR) Workshops and individual legal services to their participants.

Additionally, our policy work is steeped in coalition-building practices as we have established a coalition of more than 50 organizations to support the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act (YJ&O), serve on the Steering Committee of Communities United for Police Reform, participate in a range of city and state level campaigns, and operate our own Youth Committee.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$804,903

City and County	\$128,140
IOLA Funding	\$135,000
Federal	\$142,910
Foundations	\$221,000
State Funding	\$40,546
Other	\$10,000

