

WHAT WORKS

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment or youth-guided organizations promote youth leadership and self-advocacy skills and opportunities to create positive change.



Youth leaders with and without disabilities from around the U.S. (posing in front of the White House) gathered in Washington, D.C., in January 2010 for the first National Youth Inclusion Summit, inspired by the film *Including Samuel*. These youth leaders created the “I am Norm” campaign during the weekend they spent together.

Many excellent local, regional, and national youth empowerment organizations exist in which youth with and without disabilities have opportunities to create positive change. Youth empowerment or youth guided organizations are instrumental in promoting youth leadership and self-advocacy skills around issues facing youth with disabilities.


Youth M.O.V.E. National, together with the U.S. government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, defines the term as follows:

“Youth Guided means that young people have the right to be empowered, educated, and given a

decision-making role in the care of their own lives as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all youth in the community, state and nation. This includes giving young people a sustainable voice and then listening to that voice... Youth guided organizations recognize that this process should be fun and worthwhile.”

I am Norm, Youth M.O.V.E. National, Kids As Self Advocates (KASA), and the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) are four youth empowerment organizations that are leading efforts to give youth with disabilities an equal and powerful voice. Their respective purposes and opportunities are presented on the following page.

RECOMMENDED YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Name	Purpose	Opportunities
<p>I am Norm www.iamnorm.org</p> 	<p>I am Norm is an initiative designed by young people to promote the acceptance, respect, and full inclusion of youth with disabilities in schools and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details numerous ways to take action in daily life, at school, in the community, and with friends • Free diversity activities for school and community groups • Online educational resources and tools • Online community for sharing stories and videos
<p>Youth M.O.V.E. (Motivating Others through Voices of Experience) National www.youthmovenational.org</p> 	<p>Youth M.O.V.E. National is a national youth led organization uniting the voices and causes of youth while raising awareness around youth issues (e.g. education, mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership • Regional chapters • Online community forums • Training tools, guides and other resources • Consultation to youth, families, and other adults
<p>KASA (Kids As Self Advocates) www.fvkasa.org</p> 	<p>KASA is a national, grassroots project created by youth with disabilities for youth. KASA believes youth can make choices and advocate for themselves if they have the information and support they need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership • Peer support and training • Resources teaching youth about their rights and how to advocate for themselves and others • Leadership positions on KASA's Task Force, Advisory Board, planning committees, web forums, and speakers bureau • Online community forums
<p>National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) www.nyln.org</p> 	<p>NYLN is a youth-led organization that works to build power among young people (ages 16 to 28) with disabilities, by making sure that youth with disabilities have the chance to set and reach their own goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership • Online Resource Center: youth-written documents, guides, and links • Leadership Training: webinars and in-person sessions • E-News: monthly email with scholarship information, events, etc. • E-Zine: members share articles and art about their experiences as disabled youth

SOURCES

- I Am Norm. www.iamnorm.org
- KASA (Kids As Self-Advocates). www.fvkasa.org
- National Youth Leadership Network. www.nyln.org
- Youth M.O.V.E. National. www.youthmovenational.org