



# DCF Nomination Form



## What is the Youth Excellence Project?

The Youth Excellence Project (YEP) is a volunteer-run group mentoring program sponsored by Living in Safe Alternatives, (L.I.S.A.), Inc. The program serves a small group of male youth (older than 12, younger than 15) who are committed to the CT Department of Children and Families (DCF) and who are living in foster care, congregate care, or an independent living facility. Our goals are threefold: (1) To reduce risk for developing problems associated with life stress and trauma; (2) To identify, acquire, and strengthen social support and personal resources; and (3) To help youth to develop into leaders within the community.



## What do we do?

Participating youths partake in monthly full-day or 1-2 night workshops or activities throughout the year, as well as a weeklong adventure trip in the Channel Islands National Park in Ventura California, which involves sea kayaking, hiking, snorkeling, and camping.

A specific focus is on preparing youth to become youth ambassadors against interpersonal violence. Youth learn about the effects of violence and explore ways to prevent violence and advocate for healthy relationships in their homes and within their communities. We partner with The CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the CT Children's Injury Prevention Center to provide relevant programming and to involve youth in community outreach centered on non-violence.



Older youth have the opportunity to return to YEP as a youth leader following the completion of an independent project focused on non-violence. Two youth are returning for 2015.

## How is YEP funded?

All funds go towards monthly activities and the weeklong California trip, as all adult leaders, including the director, are volunteers. Support from local foundations and fundraising activities partially funds our programming; however, although these funds cover the cost of the California trip (approximately \$1,200 per youth), it is necessary for us to request that DCF provide airfare for each youth. In 2014, airfare was approximately \$500.

## Who is eligible?

- Male youth ages 12 to 14
- DCF committed
- Currently residing in long-term foster care, congregate care, or an independent living facility
- No acute psychiatric problems (e.g., substance abuse, suicidal behavior, aggressive or high-risk behaviors) that would prevent the youth from participating in group activities or from out-of-state travel
- Permission from legal guardian (DCF) to participate in a long-distance adventure trip

## How are Youth Chosen?

Eligible youth will be selected carefully based on (a) evidence of the youth's interest and enthusiasm in the project, (b) the fit between the youth's needs and what the program has to offer, and (c) evidence that the structure of the program is appropriate given the youth's challenges.



COMPLETE NOMINATION FORM ON BACK



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INSTRUCTIONS: Please fill out the following information in full and return to Project Director, Damion J. Grasso, Ph.D. by attaching the form to an E-Mail to [dgrasso@uchc.edu](mailto:dgrasso@uchc.edu). You can also FAX to 860.679.1296. For additional information you may contact Dr. Grasso by E-Mail or by phone (860.301.7641). **Our orientation meeting is January 31<sup>st</sup> but we will continue to recruit until capacity.**

Today's Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

### DCF Information

Caseworker Name \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_ Ext. \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_ Ext. \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### Youth Information

Youth's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Race (circle): White/Caucasian Black/African American Asian Other: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Hispanic/Latino (circle): Yes No

Residence type (circle): Foster Home Relative Care Group Home Independent Living Other

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Contact / Caregiver Name \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_ Ext. \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Have you discussed the program with the youth? Describe the youth's expressed interest in the program.

How might this program serve the specific needs of this youth?

What challenges or barriers do you foresee regarding this youth's success in the program?

Describe the unique strengths this youth brings to bear and how these might add to the program.

We arrange transportation only when absolutely necessary for the youth to participate – since our resources are limited. Who is likely to provide transportation for this youth to meetings and activities?