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***Executive Summary***

Twenty-eight young people impacted by alcohol and drug addiction gathered at the New York University’s Silver School of Social Work on May 21, 2016 to attend the FOR-NY New York City Youth Recovery Forum. The purpose of the program was to learn from their experiences regarding a host of issues including access to information, services and supports in order to identify challenges young people are facing, develop ways to strengthen youth involvement in the treatment and recovery process, and examine the need for systems change.

***Goals***

* Listen and learn from young peoples’ experiences regarding access to information, services, and supports
* Gather input from young people to identify ways to strengthen youth involvement in the treatment and recovery process
* Provide education and training about recovery-empowering language and messaging
* Create interest in developing Youth Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) across New York City

***Participant Profile***

* 28 attendees (26 evaluation responses)
* 50% identify as Black or African American
* 38% identify as Hispanic / Latino
* 4.5 % identify as Asian
* 4.5 % identify as Multiracial
* 54.5% identify as White
* 13.6% identify Alaska Native
* 15% identify as female
* 81% identify as male
* 4% identify as gender neutral
* 50% were a young person in early stages of recovery
* 42.8% were young people who entered recovery as a younger person and now in sustained recovery
* 10.7% were young people with family member(s) currently addicted

***Borough Representation***

* 12 were from New York (Manhattan)
* 4 were from Queens
* 0 were from Richmond (Staten Island)
* 3 were from Kings (Brooklyn)
* 6 were from the Bronx
* 3 were from other areas, including Long Island

***Participant Evaluations***

* 92.6% reported being, at least, satisfied with the overall quality of the training
* 96.3% agreed the meeting was well organized
* 81.9% % believed the material presented would be useful in dealing with substance abuse
* 96.3% reported they would recommend the information they gained from the forum to a friend

***Resources requested***

* Young people identified their most significant needs:
	+ 19 out of 28 said they needed peer leadership and mentorship
	+ 17 out of 28 said they need sober youth events and “trips out of the hood”
	+ 16 out of 28 said they need access to better treatment and therapeutic counseling
	+ 16 out of 28 said they need access to life skills training, education and employment
* Young people identified trainings that would be helpful as:
	+ Vocational, internships and job trainings
	+ Education on building communication between them, their parents and siblings
	+ How they can become peer-to-peer navigators and peer coaches
* Additional needs identified were:
* Peer Recovery Coaching and other forms of support for alternatives to old life-styles
* Safe places to make sober connections and friends who are in recovery
* Ongoing therapeutic services for self-regulation and relapse prevention
* Many pathways to recovery for health and wellness including music and recreational activities

***Key Issues***

* The demographics of attendees were diverse, both racially and socio-economically. However, at least half of the attendees were still engaged in treatment. At some point in the future, it may be beneficial to have another youth forum in NYC with the focus specifically on youth in sustained long-term recovery.
* Young people expressed the need for:
	+ Peer-led and peer driven supports and services specific to youth that have boundaries
* Social alternatives to alcohol/drug-lifestyle that are affordable and attainable
* Opportunities to network and engage with each other in healthy ways

***Recurring Themes***

* Peers need to be in recovery as they define it and need to be able to relate to each other through lived experience
* Young people in treatment and early recovery need supports and services to help build and sustain their recovery
* Ongoing recovery wrap-around services are needed that include peers and peer-mentorship
* Vocational, Educational and life-style coaching delivered in non-judgment, respectful ways

***Recommendations***

* Increase access to community based recovery supports and services for young people:
	+ Recovery Community Organizations (RCO’s) / Youth Clubhouses in every borough
	+ Develop addiction training focused on youth recovery
* Train young people to support each other with addiction and sustaining recovery
	+ Youth Peer Recovery Coach / Advocates / Peer Navigators
* Provide advocacy training and development through RCO’s to address:
	+ Appropriate services and resources for youth; Peers speaking about themselves for themselves;
* Create a Youth Recovery Toolkit by FOR-NY