

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

# Commission on Youth at Risk

NATIONAL  
YOUTH AT RISK  
ROUNDTABLE SERIES  
TOOLKIT

For more information on Youth at Risk, please visit  
[www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk](http://www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk)



**NATIONAL YOUTH AT RISK ROUNDTABLE SERIES**  
***A National Service Project of the***  
***American Bar Association Commission on Youth at Risk***

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**THE PURPOSE**

- To raise awareness among the ABA’s 413,000 members regarding program and policy issues surrounding at-risk youth and the need to build capacity as we collaboratively address these concerns.
- To help “connect the dots” by facilitating the collective work of youth advocates, youth-serving organizations, and youth themselves, along with lawyers as their partners in reform.

**THE DESIRED OUTCOMES**

- To collect information on what is already being done for at-risk youth around the country and create an online clearinghouse;
- To exchange information about services, share programming ideas, and otherwise expand the overall network of at-risk youth advocates and those in the legal profession;
- To identify how lawyers can use their influence to improve public policy, court practices, education/awareness/prevention campaigns, and legal representation in our juvenile and criminal systems;
- To explore how lawyers can use their time and legal expertise to propose enhancements in government policy that help prevent teens from becoming delinquent or engaging in criminal acts.

**THE PROCESS**

Invitations are sent to leaders of national organizations and local programs that target at-risk populations, and to those in the legal, education and faith-based communities. During the 2 to 3 hour discussion, attendees exchange information, broaden their knowledge of services in their community, and make new contacts. State and/or local bar associations, local law firms and local juvenile courts should be solicited as partners. Attendees are asked to discuss the unmet needs of at-risk youth, focusing first on the local community and then on the national level. They also brainstorm about how lawyers can help meet these needs by developing policy, providing access to legal services, or otherwise focusing attention in a particular area of need.

**THE AGENDA**

The Roundtable Meeting organizer may choose to begin (or conclude) the meeting with light refreshments. Meetings may also be connected to larger events such as a conferences or trainings. A moderator summarizes the ABA Youth at Risk initiative, outlines the purpose of the Roundtable Meeting and facilitates introductions. The moderator also highlights particular national or local issues pertaining to at-risk youth, and asks participants to acknowledge their role in addressing these and related issues. Participants take 3 to 5 minutes each to introduce themselves and to highlight the work of their organizations and its impact on various constituencies within the at-risk youth population.

Next, the moderator leads a discussion on the unmet needs of at-risk youth in the community and across the nation. Attendees are invited to brainstorm about how lawyers can help meet these needs by developing policy, providing access to legal services, or otherwise focusing attention in a particular area of need and possible next steps. Participants are encouraged to determine next steps locally, such as holding follow-up meetings among community members, working with the state, local and specialty bars on policy development, reports on developing partnerships, and otherwise maintaining this new network.

**THE NEXT STEPS**

- Send thank you correspondence to all participants within one week.
- Forward meeting materials (agenda, handouts, participant contact information) for inclusion in the ABA’s database to:  
    Craig Johnson | ABA Division for Public Education | 321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60616 |  
    FAX 312.988.5720 | [ABAYouthatRisk@staff.abanet.org](mailto:ABAYouthatRisk@staff.abanet.org)
- Organizational information will be posted to the ABA web site, and will include live links.

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**Sample Letter of Invitation**

*This letter (sent via U.S. mail or via email) should be modified to include the pertinent details of your own Roundtable Meeting.*

Dear Judge Smith:

I am writing to invite you to a Roundtable Meeting on Youth at Risk. The Roundtable Meeting will take place at **[time]** on **[day, date]**. We will meet at **[location]**. For security purposes, please bring a photo I.D. for admission to the building. Moderating the Roundtable Meeting will be **[Name of moderator]**. **[Continental breakfast or lunch or light refreshments]** will be provided.

Roundtable Meetings on Youth at Risk bring together a diverse group of leaders that represent the legal profession, the juvenile justice system, the education community, youth services and faith-based organizations and many others, to talk about issues affecting local youth, to learn more about existing programs, and to identify ways that lawyers can support and help those "on the ground." We are aware of the work that you and your organization are involved in regarding at-risk youth and we hope you will join us to share information, exchange resources and broaden the network of professionals who are working to help the next generation.

The National Youth at Risk Roundtable Series is a service project of the American Bar Association Commission on Youth at Risk. The purpose of these meetings is to help "connect the dots" by facilitating the collective work of youth advocates, youth-serving organizations, and youth themselves, along with lawyers as their partners in reform on a national level. In the process, the Commission is gathering information and identifying programs that might be used as models for adoption nationwide. Ultimately, the ABA hopes to meet the following goals:

- *To collect information on what is already being done for at-risk youth around the country and create an online clearinghouse;*
- *To exchange information about services, share programming ideas, and otherwise expand the overall network of at-risk youth advocates and those in the legal profession;*
- *To identify how lawyers can use their influence to improve public policy, court practices, education/awareness/prevention campaigns, and legal representation in our juvenile and criminal systems;*
- *To explore how lawyers can use their time and legal expertise to propose enhancements in government policy that help prevent teens from becoming delinquent or engaging in criminal acts.*

Please contact me at **[phone and email address]** to RSVP by **[deadline]**. Meanwhile, to learn more about the ABA Youth at Risk initiative, please visit [www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk/](http://www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk/). We look forward to your positive reply. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**[Organizer]**

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**Reminder Email to Participants**

*Send 2- 5 days prior to event date*

Greeting to all Roundtable Meeting Participants:

Thank you for agreeing to attend the Roundtable Meeting on Youth at Risk. A list of participants who agreed to participate is attached. **[Name of person]** will serve as our moderator. We will begin with an informal lunch, followed by an overview of the ABA Youth at Risk Initiative and participant introductions. We will ask each of you to take five minutes to describe your program and/or other involvement with at-risk youth. Please feel free to bring handouts if they would be helpful.

The meeting will take place on **[date]**, from **[start time]** to **[end time]** at **[location]**. Please feel free to contact me by e-mail at **[email address]** or at **[phone number]** if you have questions or need additional information regarding Monday's proceedings.

We look forward to meeting each of you.

Regards,

**Organizer**

**Additional information to consider including in your reminder email:**

- **Parking information**
- **Directions to host location**
- **Building security instructions**

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Suggested List of Invitees

- After-school programs
- Boy Scouts of America (local chapter)
- Boys & Girls Clubs (local chapter)
- City or County Commission of Health and Human Services
- College / university faculty (law, public policy, social service degree programs)
- Faith-based organizations
- Fraternities
- Girl Scouts of America
- Juvenile court judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys
- Juvenile justice organizations
- Local bar association (city or county) and their Young Lawyers Division
- Military authorities
- (Educators and counselors who work with children of deployed, disabled, or transient parents)*
- Police and probation administrators
- Psychologists / psychiatrists who work with teens
- School system leaders (public, private, charter)
- Social workers
- Social service and/or advocacy organizations that serve women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and immigrants
- (e.g, Local chapters of League of United Latin American Citizens, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Council of La Raza, League of Women Voters, National Urban League, NAACP)*
- Sororities
- State bar association and their Young Lawyers Division
- Youth advocacy and social service organizations
- Youth courts (a.k.a teen courts or peer courts)
- Representatives that work with at-risk teens regarding the following issues:
- *Abuse*
  - *Addictions*
  - *Foster care and homeless youth*
  - *Mental health*
  - *Pregnancy*
  - *Probation*
  - *Sexual health and orientation*
  - *Status offenses*

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EVENT DAY

**Recommended Supplies**

- |  |                      |                  |
|--|----------------------|------------------|
| ▪ Tent cards with name<br>and organization | ▪ Pens               | ▪ Handouts       |
| ▪ Name badges                              | ▪ Notepads           | ▪ Business cards |
|  | ▪ Light refreshments |                  |

**Sample Agenda (2½ hours)**

**10 minutes**

**Welcome and introductions**

- Call meeting to order
- Moderator introduces her/himself and acknowledges dignitaries, event sponsors, and clarifies any general housekeeping rules (breaks, cell phones, respect for all meeting participants, etc.)
- Provide general overview of ABA Youth at Risk initiative
  - *About ABA President Karen Mathis and the Commission on Youth at Risk (members, liaisons, staff)*
  - *Summary of Hofstra University Planning Conference and subsequent recommendations*
  - *Overview of Commission initiatives (e.g., Girl Scouts partnership, policy recommendations, etc.)*
- Explain the National Roundtable Series on Youth at Risk, and outline general objectives (those of the Commission and/or those specifically outlined for your particular Roundtable Meeting)

**50 minutes**

**Participant introductions and program overviews**

- Participants around the table introduce themselves and the organization they represent, and discuss their role with at-risk teens
- Moderator encourages participants to collaborate, maintain the network, learn more about one another's work

**45 minutes**

**What are the issues and how is the community addressing them?**

- What are key issues pertaining to at-risk youth and how are participants involved in addressing these issues?
- Begin with local issues, then regional/state issues, then national concerns
- Begin to focus on status offenders (truancy, ungovernability, runaways), youth aging out of foster care, teens affected by abuse, youth who have already entered the juvenile justice system
- What programs (curricular and extracurricular) are available and how are they delivered?

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- *Awareness education, prevention, support, etc.*
- *Sexual, mental, and physical health*
- *Sports activities, law-related civic education programs, after-school programs, weekend and membership programs*
- What are the funding issues, if any?
  - *Federal and private grants, corporate and law firm sponsorships, donations*
- What institutional resources are helpful?
  - *U.S. Justice Department, Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention*
  - *National Center for Juvenile Justice*
  - *National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges*
  - *Youth court associations*
  - *National and local non-profit organizations*
  - *State / local bar associations (include activities among law students and young lawyers divisions)*

**45 minutes**

**How can lawyers help?**

- How can those in the legal profession help to make a difference? How can the ABA assist across its membership, through its communications, or through policy initiatives?
  - *Defining help (mentoring, sponsorships, advocacy, policy development, pro bono representation, community volunteerism)*
  - *Institutional help from courts, law firms, law schools, bar associations*
  - *Individual help from lawyers, law students, board members*
  - *Specific policy recommendations for ABA to develop*
  - *Successful models already in place*

**5 minutes**

**Final remarks, next steps**

- Solicit final thoughts from participants and challenge them to maintain the network
  - *Informally survey participant interest in meeting again in 6 to 12 months, or otherwise maintaining these new relationships*
  - *Summarize primary issues, best practices and other key points*
- Reminder about ABA / OJJDP partnership to host National Conference on Status Offenses, January 18-19, 2007 in Baltimore
  - *Details to follow as venue, agenda and keynote speakers are confirmed*
- Moderator thanks participants, sponsors, host and event organizer

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**PAST ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS**

**Chicago (February 2006)**

*Association of Corporate Counsel Chicago*  
*Catholic Charities*  
*Circuit Court of Cook County*  
*Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform*  
*International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*  
*Northwestern University*  
*Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law*  
*U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit*  
*YWCA Chicago*

**Atlanta (January 2006)**

*Alternative Life Paths*  
*Atlanta Bar Association*  
*Atlanta Women's Foundation*  
*Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention*  
*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*  
*Dept. of Juvenile Justice*  
*Fulton County Juvenile Ct.*  
*Gambrell & Stolz, LLP*  
*Georgia Association of Black Women Attorney (Sister-to-Sister Program)*  
*Georgia Bar Assn. Young Lawyers Division (Aspiring Youth Program)*  
*Georgia DHR-DFCS (Independent Living Program)*  
*Infinity Ins. Companies*  
*Juvenile Justice Fund*  
*Latin American Association*  
*New Schools @ Carver*  
*State Bar of Georgia*  
*State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division*  
*YLD Juvenile Law*

**Kansas City (March 2006)**

*Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault*  
*Niles Home for Children*  
*Synergy*  
*Guadalupe Center*  
*Alta Vista Charter School*  
*Move Up*  
*Genesis*  
*Operation Breakthrough*  
*ARC (mid-America Regional Council)*  
*Division of Youth Services*  
*The Hope Center*  
*Local Investment Commission*

**Honolulu (August 2006)**

*Attorney Generals Office Family Law Division*  
*Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu*  
*Children's Justice Centers of Hawai'i*  
*Children's Alliance of Hawai'i*  
*Children's Alliance of Hawai'i*  
*Prosecuting Attorney/Victim Witness Services*  
*E Makua Ana Youth Circle Program*

*Epic, Inc.*  
*Family Court, First Circuit, State of Hawai'i*  
*Girl Scouts of America, Hawai'i Chapter*  
*Girls Beyond Bars Program*  
*Girls Safe House (Ke Kama Pono) & Independent/transitional living skills program*  
*Hale Kipa and the Waikiki Health Center Outreach & Transitional Living Services*  
*Hawai'i Girls Court*  
*Hawai'i State Bar Association*  
*Hawai'i State Bar Association Young Lawyers*  
*Hawai'i Supreme Court*  
*Heart Gallery Hawai'i ("See Their Faces, Know Their Hearts")*  
*Judicial History Center*  
*Kailua, Hawai'i*  
*Le Jardin des Enfants*  
*Office of Youth Services, State of Hawai'i*  
*Prevention Programs & Independent/transitional living skills program*  
*The Judiciary – State of Hawai'i*  
*The Salvation Army – Family Intervention Services*  
*University of Hawai'i at Manoa*

**Philadelphia (September 2006)**

*3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals*  
*CHOICE*  
*Congreso de Latinos Unidos*  
*Dawn Staley Foundation*  
*Defender Association of Philadelphia*  
*Department of Human Services, City of Philadelphia*  
*District Attorney's Office – Juvenile Division*  
*Education Law Center*  
*Goldsmith Kahn Associates*  
*Juvenile Law Center*  
*Pennsylvania Bar Association*  
*Philadelphia Bar Association*  
*Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth*  
*Philadelphia Daily News*  
*Philadelphia Family Court, Court of Common Pleas*  
*Philadelphia Futures*  
*Philadelphia Police Athletic League*  
*Philadelphia Safe and Sound*  
*Philadelphia School District*  
*Philadelphia Youth Network*  
*Public/Private Ventures*  
*Support Center of Child Advocates*  
*Youth Health Empowerment Project*

**UPCOMING ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS**

<i>Phoenix, AZ</i>	<i>November 2006</i>
<i>Boston, MA</i>	<i>November 2006</i>
<i>Washington, DC</i>	<i>December 5, 2006</i>
<i>Miami, FL</i>	<i>February 2007</i>
<i>Dallas, TX</i>	<i>April 2007</i>
<i>San Francisco, CA</i>	<i>August 2007</i>

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** How long should the Roundtable Meeting be scheduled?

**A:** While times vary, Roundtable Meetings (including time for meals) should probably last no less than 90 minutes and no more than 3 ½ hours.

**Q:** How many participants should we target?

**A:** We encourage quality over quantity. The number of participants often varies by location and by the resources available in different communities. A meeting group in a major urban area may have as many as 40 participants, while a small city or town may include as few as 10. Focus on enhancing diversity of perspectives, what organizations can attend, and the variety of resources and perspectives they can bring to the table.

**Q:** Where should the Roundtable Meeting take place?

**A:** Roundtable Meetings on Youth at Risk have been held at law firms, bar association and foundation offices, and in court houses. The possibilities are endless. In the end, we suggest that the venue be centrally located and able to accommodate the number of guests invited.

**Q:** Who should lead the Roundtable Meeting?

**A:** Be sure to invite a seasoned moderator to facilitate the meeting. Bar association executives and judges often make great moderators. Whomever you choose, this person may or may not be an expert in the field, but should be a skilled leader who is comfortable facilitating discussions on often sensitive or hotly-debated issues pertaining to at-risk youth. This person should also feel comfortable sticking to the agenda or going with the direction of the meeting room. Remember, your invitation list includes executives, program directors, or other top leaders who are professionals and who want to work collaboratively.

**Q:** Should we invite teens to join the discussion?

**A:** Invitations to young people should be extended at the discretion of the organizers. It is important to include the voices of youth and to engage them in these dialogues. It is equally important that they feel comfortable sharing their perspectives in this kind of forum. We suggest that teen participation be limited. It should be facilitated in a way such that their experience is a positive one, and one that adds value to the conversation.

**Q:** Should there be handouts?

**A:** Encourage participants to bring enough handouts for the planned number of attendees. Handouts can include organization and/or program brochures, event announcements, research or annual reports. Handouts can be collected in advance and placed in a meeting folder, passed around the room during the meeting, or simply placed on a distribution table inside or outside the meeting room.

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**ABA Commission on Youth at Risk Fact Sheet**

**Challenge:** Many young people and their families face serious problems that greatly elevate their “risk.” Among these are severe abuse, chronic neglect, high conflict divorce and domestic violence within the family, poor and violent neighborhoods, unmet mental and physical health needs, learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, gangs, poor peer group choices and relationships and poor educational and employment options.

**Focus:** The Commission will examine these and other issues and work to enhance laws, judicial intervention strategies, policies, practices and programs to help prevent teens from becoming delinquent or engaging in criminal acts.

- Finding better ways to serve juvenile “status offenders”
- Meeting the needs of youth aging out of foster care
- Assuring meaningful participation by youth in court proceedings
- Enhancing access by teens (and their families) to “evidence-based” services focused on prevention and supporting assistance with mental health
- Improving support for teens living in chaotic and violent homes
- Improving how different legal and court interventions affect youth “crossing over from one systemic label to another

**2006 – 2007 Programs / Activities**

- January 18 – 19, 2007 | National Invitational Conference on Juvenile Status Offenses | Baltimore, MD  
“Policy and Law Reform for Families and Youth in Critical Need of Assistance”
- February 7 – 13, 2007 | ABA Mid-Year Meeting (Plenary Session and Curriculum Launch) | Miami, FL
- April 18-19, 2007 | ABA Day on Capitol Hill | Washington, DC
- May 1, 2007 | Law Day | Theme: “Liberty Under Law: Empowering Youth, Assuring Democracy” | Nationwide
- June 18-20, 2007 | Annual Conference of the Centers for Disease Control Public Health Law Program and the American Society for Law, Medicine & Ethics | Atlanta, Georgia
- August 9 – 15, 2007 | San Francisco, CA | ABA Annual Meeting (CLE / Presidential Showcase Presentation)
- ABA / Girl Scouts Training Program | “Take Charge! Violence Prevention, Conflict Resolution, & Law”
- National Youth at Risk Roundtable Series
- Policy initiatives
- Website: <http://www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk>

**ABA Entity Support**

ABA Presidents Office | ABA Chicago Headquarters | 312.988.5109 | <http://www.abanet.org/op/>

ABA Division for Public Education | ABA Chicago Headquarters | 312.988.5735 | [www.abanet.org/publiced/](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/)

ABA Center on Children & the Law | Washington, DC Office | 202/662-1720 | <http://www.abanet.org/child/>

**Commission Leadership**

Honorary Chair: U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe (Maine)  
Chair: Dwight L. Smith (Tulsa, OK)

Vice-Chair: Laura Farber (Pasadena, CA)  
Vice-Chair: Paula Frederick (Atlanta, GA)