

60+ Ways to Advocate for Teen Services

Listed below are over 50 ways you can be an advocate for teen services. Many of these activities can be incorporated into your regular work routine. Some will require time to initially establish, but then once going will meld into your typical work activities. Be sure to think about how your Teen Advisory Group (TAG) and/ or library friends group can assist you with many of the items that are listed. None of the activities below constitute lobbying.

Communicate

1. Set aside a couple of minutes to share an advocacy message at each teen-focused program
2. Set aside a couple of minutes at each library staff meeting to provide an update about teen services
3. Compile and utilize an email list of elected officials and policy makers
4. Compile and utilize an email list of teen services advocates
5. Collect and incorporate testimonials from teen patrons, parents, teachers, local business owners, etc. into advocacy messages and materials
6. Send out regular messages to library leaders, officials & policy makers about what's happening in teen services. As appropriate, include photos, stories, testimonials, event calendars, copies of press releases, etc.
7. Use social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to promote teen services activities and resources. Check out YALSA's short, free video about how to use Twitter: <http://bit.ly/GCTV3n>
8. Create a 30 second "elevator speech" about teen services to use any time the opportunity arises
9. Encourage your TAG to spread the word about teen programs and services in the schools, via Facebook, etc.
10. Host a community forum or open house to communicate and demonstrate what the library is doing for teens and how the community benefits

Discuss

11. Schedule periodical meetings with your library director to talk about teen services successes and challenges
12. Meet with key elected officials periodically, such as the County Commissioner, to update them on accomplishments and challenges relating to teen services. Bring your director and an advocate
13. Talk about the library's teen services program to everyone
14. Host a candidates' forum at the library – your TAG can help plan and/or emcee the event (be sure all candidates are invited and that the library does not take any position supporting or opposing any political candidate)

Educate

15. Post news and information about teen services activities in the library break room
16. Add officials and policy makers to your newsletter mailing list
17. Encourage elected officials and their staff to get and use a library card
18. Encourage officials and their staff to attend & observe library programs or services

19. Attend monthly meetings of key groups, such as city council, the school board and the Chamber of Commerce (staff can take turns attending meetings) and share news, information or data about teen services
20. Share white papers and national guidelines with library leaders, elected officials, policy makers, etc. www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines
21. Encourage teen patrons to write op-ed pieces on the value of their library
22. Visit and speak at library trustee and school faculty meetings about the library's teen programs and services
23. Create and distribute postcards with teen services stats to elected officials and policy makers
24. Create and distribute a brochure- e.g. "10 Ways the XYZ Library Helps Teens..."
25. Create a PowerPoint presentation to use at community events that demonstrates the value of teen services and the impact it has on the community
26. Ask for specific public speaking opportunities from Kiwanis, Rotary, Chamber, local service organizations, fraternal organizations, Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, PTA/PTO, religious groups, etc. to discuss how the library supports teens' educational and recreational needs
27. Write a column in local paper on something related to teen services: homework help tips, recommended reading for teens, etc.
28. Write and send press releases to local newspapers about teen programs and services (include photos when possible)
29. Create and distribute Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs about issues relating to teens and libraries, or use YALSA's at www.ala.org/yalsa/advocacy
30. Work with your TAG to produce & distribute a video that demonstrates the value of teen services
31. Implement a "Teen Services Librarian for a Day" event so a community member, policy maker or official can learn first-hand how libraries support teens
32. Create an annual report about what teen services has done during the year. Share it with local decision makers. The report can include things such as:
 - a. Number of materials circulated
 - b. Number of teens that attended programs
 - c. Number of programs offered
 - d. How many hours teens used computer services or homework help
 - e. Web hits and use
33. Print a summary of the annual report in the newspaper and on your web site

Share Expertise

34. Provide informal or formal training sessions for library coworkers about teen services basics. Adapt canned presentations and distribute handouts found at www.ala.org/yalsa/handouts
35. Assist a city agency and/or local youth serving organization with a grant proposal
36. Offer your research expertise and web searching to policy makers and elected officials
37. Let policy makers and elected officials know about the wealth of information you can provide them via databases and other library resources
38. Let policy makers and elected officials know that you can provide a range of information and services on topics relating to teens, such as online safety and adolescent literacy, including:

- a. Informational sessions
- b. Research/data
- c. Reports, fact sheets
- d. Annotated bibliographies
- e. Speakers
- f. Focus groups
- g. Talking points
- h. Personal stories
- i. Photos
- j. Onsite exhibitions or demos
- k. Library tours

Build Relationships

- 39. Interact regularly with all other library staff
- 40. Learn who the elected officials and policy makers are in your community
 - a. Place photos of elected officials where library staff will see them frequently so that when they enter the library the staff will recognize them and be sure to offer them excellent service and to demonstrate the library's key role in the community
- 41. Invite officials and policy makers to library events
- 42. Send thank you notes to officials and policy makers who attend events
- 43. Send birthday and/or holiday cards to officials and policy makers
- 44. Develop relationships with influencers and VIPs, such as families of City Councilpersons and then involve them in advocacy activities
- 45. Host an event periodically just for officials and policy makers
- 46. Establish a good working relationship with the local newspaper and other local media outlets
- 47. Provide training about advocacy to coworkers, volunteers, etc. or encourage them to take advantage of free training from places like the ALA Washington Office
- 48. Recruit a local "celebrity" library user to promote teen services
- 49. Host an appreciation event for policy makers, volunteers, etc.
- 50. Create an advisory board of local business and community leaders
- 51. Create a friends group (teens and/or adults)
- 52. Partner with other types of libraries in your community and join forces to advocate around common issues
- 53. Seek out mutually beneficial partnerships like afterschool groups, arts groups, literacy groups, etc.
- 54. Seek out business partners and recruit them to become advocates

Be Visible

- 55. Have a presence (exhibit booth, information table, speaker, etc.) at community functions such as fairs, parades, open houses, etc.
- 56. Belong to and participate in organizations in community

57. Participate in national events (National Library Week, National Library Legislative Day, Teen Read Week, etc.)
58. Create "I love my library" buttons & give incentives to patrons who get 'caught' wearing them
59. Wear library t-shirts, lapel pins, etc.
60. Encourage key groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce or School Board to meet at the library
61. Create a poster(s) that features local personalities who love the library
62. Highlight teen patron stories in a library display, in library publications and/or on the web site
63. Create PSAs or use ones provided by organizations like ALA & YALSA and share them with local radio and/or TV stations
64. Host a "What my library has done for me" contest & publish teens' winning essays, videos, etc.

For more teen services advocacy resources, visit www.ala.org/yalsa/advocacy