

Youth Services Network Meeting
September 14, 2026 – 9:15am
Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Jefferson County

1) Introductions/Welcome

Introductions and welcome were made.

2) Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

No edits or changes were suggested to the previous meeting minutes.

3) Guest Presenters

The Youth Alliance of Jefferson County – Heidi Williams

Heidi shared an overview of the Youth Alliance of Jefferson County and its school-based youth coalitions. The program is currently serving Belleville Henderson, LaFargeville, Watertown, and Jefferson Community College, a reduction from previous years due to the loss of funding. Jefferson Community College houses the Young Adult Coalition. Youth participants help educate their peers and the broader community about tobacco and vaping prevention and take part in youth-led awareness and advocacy activities.

Community School Liaison Program – Chelsea Suarez, CHJC

Chelsea presented on CHJC's Community School Liaison Program, which began in 2017. The free program works with Jefferson County school districts to support youth and families experiencing a mental health crisis. Liaisons collaborate with schools and families in school, home, and community settings, assist school personnel during a crisis, and help families connect with ongoing services and supports. For more information or immediate crisis intervention requested by school personnel, call 315-405-7444.

4) Program Updates/Announcements

Q Center – Is seeking volunteers in Watertown. Individuals interested in learning more may contact the Q Center at QCenter@ACRHealth.org or 315-785-8222.

YMCA – Is preparing to begin its Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), which gives youth ages 14–21 the opportunity to gain work experience through a six-week paid internship. Planning has also begun for the annual Festival of Trees celebration, and a few groups are still needed to adopt and decorate trees. For more information, contact Samantha Hamilton shamilton@nnyymca.org

Jefferson County Youth Bureau – Is preparing award announcements for the 2026–2027 Youth Program funding cycle. More than 25 applications were received, and available funding was not sufficient to support every program. Future applicants were reminded to carefully review all required documents and deadlines. Applicants who do not receive an email confirming that their

application was received should verify that it was submitted correctly or contact the Youth Bureau. The Youth Bureau is also developing the request for proposals for the community needs assessment facilitated by PIVOT, which helps identify the needs of youth and the community. They are also recruiting youth to join the Advisory Board so if you know of any youth that might be a good fit please contact Joe Wargo josephw@jeffersoncountyny.gov or Amy Zukas asw247@cornell.edu for more information.

Planned Parenthood – Is supporting the Hygiene Coalition's Trunk or Treat event and is accepting referrals for True North. The program connects transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming youth and adults in Northern New York with affirming, trauma-informed behavioral health services through telehealth. Services are provided in partnership with Prism Counseling & Advocacy and are available at no cost to participants.

JCC Liberty Partnerships Program – Is a dropout-prevention program offered through Jefferson Community College to students in the Watertown City School District. During the school year, youth receive academic supports and enrichment opportunities designed to help them succeed in school. During the summer, the program partners with the YMCA to provide youth internship opportunities.

ACCES-VR – Has begun working with youth for the new school year and continues to focus on helping students gain work-based learning experience and prepare for education, training, and employment after high school.

CCE Jefferson – School-based youth programs have begun for the new school year. The CARE program has expanded to the Fort Drum homeschool program and the Belleville Henderson, LaFargeville, and Sackets Harbor school districts. The Nutrition Program is preparing for SNAP-Ed funding to end on September 30, 2026. CCE Jefferson will continue providing nutrition education to the community through other funding sources, but at a reduced capacity.

5) Other – Meeting Planning and Discussion

Members were encouraged to continue sharing upcoming Youth Services Network meeting dates with others who work with youth and families in Jefferson County. Individuals who are unable to attend meetings because of scheduling or time constraints may still be added to the email list to receive meeting minutes and shared information about opportunities for youth and families throughout the county.

We still have one spot open for a presenter for the Nov 16th meeting if you or anyone you know is interested in sharing their programming with the group, please have them reach out to Amy Zukas (asw247@cornell.edu).

6) Remaining 2026 Meeting Date – Planned Parenthood, 9:15am

- November 16, 2026