

Youth Advisory Council Impact Report

Leadership, advocacy, and postsecondary success —
told through the voices of Overtown's young leaders.

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Founding of the Youth Advisory Council

YOUTH VOICES. YOUTH LEADERSHIP. YOUTH IMPACT.

The Overtown Children & Youth Coalition's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was established with a vision to ensure that youth voices are not only heard but actively help shape programs, initiatives, and decisions impacting young people throughout the Overtown community.

Under the leadership of **Shekinah Rogers**, YAC Lead, the inaugural cohort consisted of six dedicated youth leaders who were identified and encouraged by OCYC partners committed to youth development and civic engagement. Through a collaborative recruitment effort, community partners helped identify young people with the passion, potential, and commitment to serve as representatives of their peers and advocates for positive change.



The founding cohort included:

- 1 youth representative from OYC
- 3 youth representatives from TML
- 2 youth representatives from Booker T. Washington High School

The formation of YAC represents the collective investment of OCYC and its partners in developing the next generation of community leaders. By working together to recruit, mentor, and empower youth, our partners helped lay the foundation for a council that continues to elevate youth voice, strengthen leadership skills, and create meaningful opportunities for young people to influence the future of their community.

Today, the impact of YAC continues to grow, but its success began with these six founding members and the dedicated partners who believed in the power of youth leadership from the very beginning.



Mission & Purpose

WHERE YOUTH VOICES INSPIRE COMMUNITY CHANGE

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a youth-led leadership body that serves as the official voice of young people within the Overtown Children & Youth Coalition (OCYC). Ages 14-24. Who either live, attend school or receive programming in the Overtown Community. The council provides youth with meaningful opportunities to influence decisions, contribute and volunteer in community initiatives, develop leadership skills, and advocate for issues affecting children, youth, and families. The purpose of the YAC is to ensure that youth perspectives are included in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs, policies, events, and initiatives of the OCYC Coalition at large that impact their lives and communities. Through engagement, advocacy, service, and leadership development, YAC members become active partners in creating positive change throughout Overtown and beyond.

What the Council stands for

Youth Voice

We believe young people deserve meaningful opportunities to express their opinions, share ideas, and influence decisions.

Leadership

We develop confident leaders who inspire, collaborate, and create positive change.

Respect

We value diversity, inclusion, empathy, and mutual respect in all interactions.

Service

We are committed to giving back and improving our community through action and volunteerism.

Integrity

We act honestly, ethically, responsibly, and with accountability.

Collaboration

We work together with peers, organizations, schools, families, and community partners to achieve common goals.

Excellence

We strive for continuous learning, growth, and achievement in everything we do.

Seven values,
one standard.



What it asks — and what it gives back

MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

- Attend meetings twice monthly.
- Actively participate in discussions and projects.
- Represent OCYC positively.
- Support fellow members.
- Complete assigned responsibilities.
- Uphold council values and standards.
- Serve as ambassadors for youth throughout the community.

OPPORTUNITIES TO

- Build résumés and portfolios.
- Earn volunteer service hours.
- Connect with mentors and professionals.
- Advance leadership development skills.
- Advocate for issues facing the Overtown community.
- Participate in conferences and leadership trainings.

EXPERIENCE MEMBERS GAIN

Leadership • Public Speaking • Teamwork • Communication • Advocacy • Networking • Event Planning • Problem Solving • Critical Thinking • Conflict Resolution • Community Organizing • Professional Development



Where youth voice meets collective impact

The OCYC Youth Advisory Council gives Overtown's young people a formal seat at the table — advising the coalition, shaping programming, and representing OCYC in the community.

2025–2026 was the year of a revitalized council: a small, committed cohort that moved from participation to leadership.



Advise

Youth shape OCYC priorities and programming



Represent

Youth staff and speak at community events



Advance

Youth build skills for college and career



The year at a glance



100%

graduated high school



100%

grew in self-awareness
& goal-setting



75%

earned scholarships
or grants



75%

plan to continue
on the Council

Every graduating member is enrolling in college.



Members are heading to the University of Miami, Miami Dade College, and Southeastern University — carrying honors including Cum Laude recognition, the Superintendent Diploma of Distinction, Scholar Designation, and Merit Designation.

Leadership development and civic engagement



Voice at the table

Members brought youth perspective into coalition conversations and surfaced the priorities that matter most.



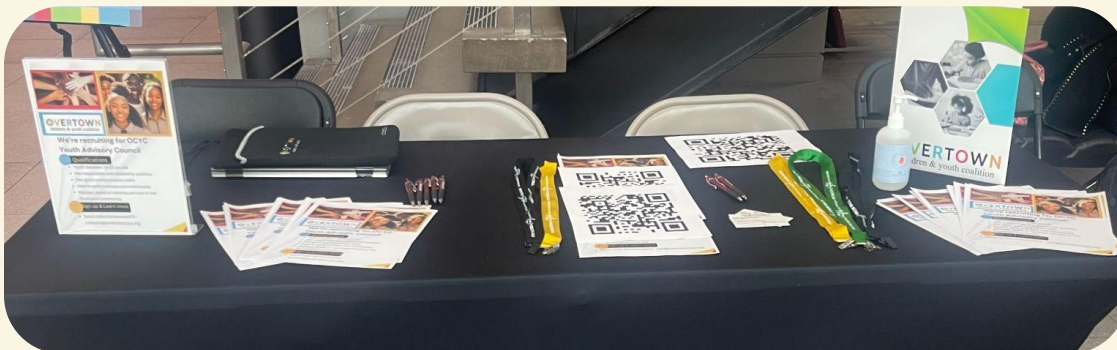
Advocacy in practice

75% of members reported that YAC helped them advocate for social issues they care about — from education access to community investment.



Community knowledge

75% gained deeper knowledge of Overtown — its history, its assets, and the systems that shape opportunity.



From participants to leaders

Across the year, members moved from attending programming to running it — introducing speakers, recruiting peers, and representing OCYC where decisions about Overtown's youth get made.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Power of Self-Awareness and Self-Actualization

The first-ever YAC Professional Development Session — facilitated by Delvin Rogers at the OYC & FLHAT Hospitality Expo — gave members a framework for understanding their own strengths, motivations, and goals.



4 of 4 grew in self-awareness and goal-setting

3 of 4 built professional networks and relationships

2 of 4 learned to tailor a resume effectively

Showing up for Overtown, in Overtown

YAC members were OCYC's most persuasive recruiters. By staffing tables, promoting programming, and talking to peers at coalition and community events, they expanded awareness of what the Council is and who it's for.

Event staffing

Members staffed and promoted OCYC at community events, becoming the face of the coalition for other young people.

Peer recruitment

Direct outreach expanded awareness of YAC opportunities and built the pipeline for next year's cohort.

Coalition participation

Members joined coalition activities and community initiatives alongside partner organizations.



A 100% graduation rate — and a plan for every graduate

ALL

members graduated high school in 2026 — and all four are enrolling in college.



GRADUATING SCHOOLS

William H. Turner Technical Arts High School
Young Women's Preparatory Academy
Miami Northwestern Senior High School

Honors earned

➡ Cum Laude recognition

➡ Superintendent Diploma of Distinction

➡ Scholar Designation

➡ Merit Designation

Where they're headed

2

University of Miami

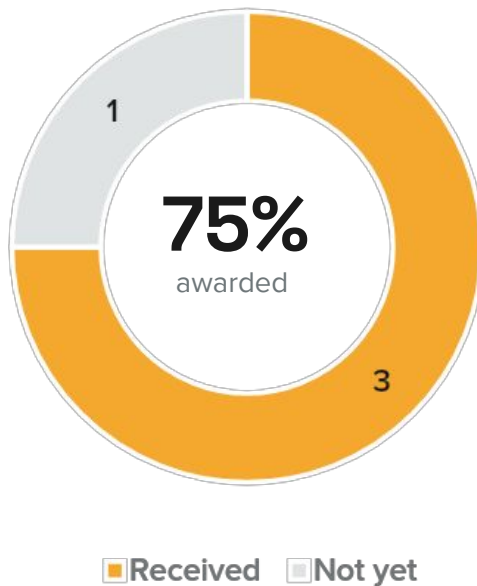
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Miami Dade College

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Southeastern University

Paying for what comes next



Three of the four graduates received scholarship or grant funding.

Awards secured by members

 University of Miami scholarships

 Bright Futures funding

 Pell Grants

 Foundation scholarships

 Community-based awards

Members also reported growing skill in seeking out and applying for scholarships — 2 of 4 credited YAC with teaching them how.

What members say they gained

Identify the skills and experiences you have gained while being a part of the OCYC Youth Advisory Council.



of respondents

4 of 4

members became more self-aware and goal-oriented — the single highest-rated outcome of the year.



Every skill on this list was reported by at least two members — evidence that the Council delivers broad, not narrow, development.

In their own words

“

It has opened many doors for me and I have made a lot of new connections.

— YAC Member, 2025–2026

“

YAC has helped me better understand my goals and motivated me to continue working toward a successful future.

— YAC Member, 2025–2026

“

Open to so many opportunities and can even help change the worlds of the children in the Overtown community.

— YAC Member, 2025–2026



They're staying — and the Council is growing

75%

of members want to continue serving on the Council — the fourth asked for more information. No member said no.

Retention is the clearest signal a youth program can send. Going into 2026–2027, OCYC will build on a cohort that wants to stay — deepening what they've started and widening the door for the next group.

Priorities for 2026–2027

- 01 Retention & engagement**
Keep returning members active and deepen their leadership roles.
- 02 Leadership & workforce development**
Expand paid, credentialed, and hands-on career pathways.
- 03 College, career & entrepreneurship exposure**
Increase access to campuses, employers, and founders.
- 04 Youth-led initiatives**
Fund and support projects designed by youth, for Overtown.





Thank you.

To the young leaders of the Youth Advisory Council — and to the partners, families, and staff who made this year possible — thank you for showing Overtown what its youth can do.

Ruth-Ann Bennett

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THE YEAR IN FOUR NUMBERS



4 of 4

graduated high school



4 of 4

grew in self-awareness



3 of 4

earned scholarships or grants



3 of 4

are returning to the Council

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