

# New Mexico Youth Peer-to-Peer Helper Program

The New Mexico Youth Peer-to-Peer Helper (YP2PH) program is driven by the premise that when young people have problems, they **most often turn to friends whom they trust for help**, and that every school has an informal “helping network.” Youth selected to be Peer Helpers are trained to develop the following skills:



**Effective ways to help and support** their friends and peers



Positive ways to **take care of themselves** and be cognizant of their own physical and mental health



Ways to contribute to **creating healthy, safe, and supportive school environments**

**40%** of students say that they **FIRST** try to get help from a friend when they have a personal problem <sup>1</sup>

## Why is this work important?

Between 2011-2021, rates of New Mexico youth reporting feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and those seriously considering suicide have increased.<sup>2</sup> Amid an urgent need for youth mental health support, school-based peer-to-peer support programs not only complement existing services but also serve as part of a larger strategy to promote youth wellbeing by uplifting prevention, learning, and centering youth experience.

### In Their Own Words: Peer Helper

“Personally this program saved me from my mental health getting really bad. I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment to be part of something that is bigger than me. **I get joy from knowing there are things I can do to help.** Being a part of WAVE [YP2PH program] has allowed me this.”

### Top 5 Concerns of Youth<sup>1</sup>

- 1) **Depression** (55%)
- 2) **Stress** (44%)
- 3) **Drugs/alcohol** (43%)
- 4) **Achievements in school** (41%)
- 5) **Bullying** (31%)



### Positive Youth Development:

- Asset-based
- Place-based
- Holistic and developmentally appropriate
- Informed by youth
- Supportive of ALL children
- Inclusive of broad stakeholder engagement



NMDOH OSAH funded **26 YP2PH** programs with a total of **463 Peer Helpers** in the 2022-2023 school year

### For more information:

Tessa Medina-Lucero  
[Tessa.Medina-Lucero@doh.nm.gov](mailto:Tessa.Medina-Lucero@doh.nm.gov)

Call, text,  
or chat  
988

**988** SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE



**988** LÍNEA DE  
PREVENCIÓN DEL  
SUICIDIO Y CRISIS

If you or someone you love is experiencing any kind of emotional crisis, mental health, or substance use concern, the NM Suicide & Crisis lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

<sup>1</sup> Findings from the 2022-2023 YP2PH Selection Survey, representing 3100 students from 23 schools

<sup>2</sup> New Mexico Youth, Risk, & Resiliency Survey Connections. (2023). *Summary of 10-year trends in selected risk behaviors, 2011-2021* [Fact sheet]. New Mexico Department of Health. <https://youthrisk.org/publications/2021-connections-factsheet-summary-of-trends/>

# YP2PH Program Impacts

## Uplifting Youth Leadership

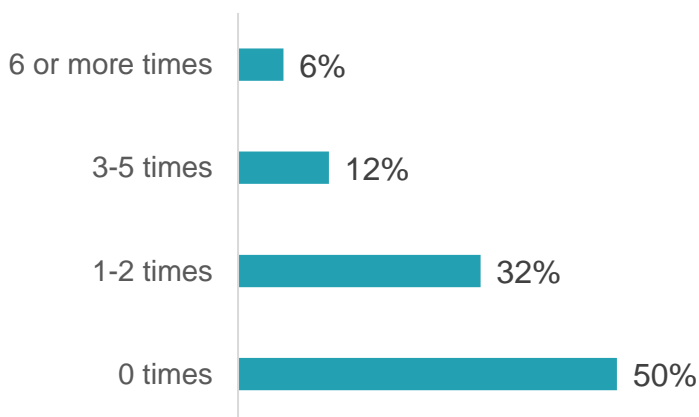
YP2PH encourages youth experience and leadership to be centered in decision-making and planning processes for group activities. The program seeks to cultivate adult-youth partnerships, and Peer Helpers' sense of confidence, leadership, and responsibility.

"For me, the program has taught me how **to be a leader and share my ideas**...I hope that others as well in this group can learn to develop leadership skills and communication skills for their future as they will be our future leaders."  
-Peer Helper

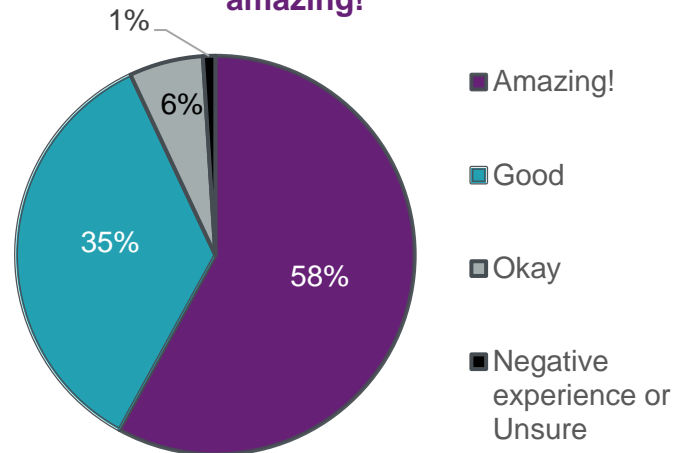
## Strengthening Helping Skills

- **89%** of Peer Helpers felt prepared to help friends and classmates with the YP2PH trainings and skills they learned
- **87%** of Peer Helpers reached out with concern to a peer at least once this year
- **79%** of Peer Helpers referred their peers to resources for help at least once

**Over half of Peer Helpers supported a peer who was considering suicide to get help from an adult**



Peer Helpers' experience in the program is **amazing!**



## Creating Community and Support Systems

YP2PH programs give youth a safe space to make and maintain relationships with adults and their peers.

- **90%** of Peer Helpers said they felt emotionally safe with their group
- **86%** of Peer Helpers said they bonded with adult sponsor(s)

As Peer Helpers and adult sponsors build trusting relationships within the YP2PH group, their work together in turn creates community and a wider support system.

**81% of Principals agreed:**

- Peer Helpers have a positive effect on their school community by reaching out and helping peers
- Peer Helper service-learning and health promotion projects have helped to create a more caring, accepting, and healthy school environment

"Out of my six years in this group, I have learned many important things and seen the **wave of positivity** it has created. As a senior, this organization is perhaps one of the things I will miss the most." - Peer Helper