



# Youth Caregivers: The Overlooked Secondary Patient

## Who Are Youth Caregivers?

Youth caregivers are children and adolescents who assist in caring for a family member with:

- Chronic illness
- Disability
- Mental health conditions
- Substance use disorders
- Aging-related needs

They may provide:

- Emotional support
- Medication reminders or personal care assistance
- Translation or advocacy at appointments
- Supervision of siblings or adults

## Why This Matters in Healthcare

Youth caregivers are often invisible in clinical settings, yet may be:

- Present at medical appointments
- Managing or supporting care plans
- Experiencing stress, anxiety, or fatigue
- Balancing caregiving with school responsibilities

Without recognition, these youth are at higher risk for:

- Anxiety and depression
- Emotional burnout
- Social withdrawal
- Academic disruption
- Delayed developmental needs
- Long-term health consequences

## What Providers May Notice

Healthcare providers may observe:

- A child or teen speaking on behalf of a parent
- Missed appointments or inconsistent follow-up
- Signs of fatigue, stress, or anxiety
- Youth demonstrating advanced caregiving knowledge




## The COYE Approach

Caregivers Outreach, established in 2006, is a Bronx-based nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing caregiver education, training, and systems coordination. COYE represents its youth empowerment division.

COYE bridges education, healthcare, and community systems by:

- Providing structured identification tools
- Offering information & assistance
- Delivering light-touch case management and care coordination
- Facilitating peer support groups
- Training professionals to recognize caregiving burden in youth

## Contact Us:

 (718) 379-3159

 [contact@coyen.org](mailto:contact@coyen.org)

 [www.coyeny.org](http://www.coyeny.org)



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## Continued



### Brief Case Examples (Clinical Context)

A 15-year-old accompanies her mother to multiple medical appointments and answers most clinical questions. She manages her mother's medication reminders and cares for a younger sibling after school.

A 13-year-old attends appointments with her mother and 6 year old brother who has a developmental disability. She assists with communication, supervision, and daily care at home and expresses that she help out with her brother."

These youth would be identified as youth caregivers in need of support, not simply involved family members.

### How COYE Supports Healthcare Providers

COYE offers:

- Awareness and training for healthcare providers
- Framework to support identification in clinical settings
- Resource linkage for families
- Community-based tiered interventions

### Opportunity for Partnership

Healthcare providers can:

- Help identify youth caregivers early
- Provide tailored referrals based on caregiving context
- Integrate caregiver awareness into care planning
- Refer youth and families to COYE for community linkage
- Partner with COYE in training and awareness initiatives



[Click Here](#) to schedule a **15-minute introduction or request a training for your team.**