



Substack Writing Guide

The [Youth Rights and Safety Hub \(YRSH\)](#) is a non-political, non-partisan communications resource focused on issues related to youth justice, youth rights, and youth safety in Maryland. We seek to educate—not advocate—by sharing relevant resources, data debriefs, and perspectives that correct false narratives about young people in our state.

YRSH hosts a [Substack](https://yrsh.substack.com/) (<https://yrsh.substack.com/>) where we publish notifications, updates, and short essays of interest to our readers. We present an array of perspectives and expertise and welcome contributions from YRSH members and others who share our vision, based on decades of data and research, that real community safety includes providing children with food security, housing stability, high quality public schools, and protecting them from neglect, abuse, and violence, as well as from unconstitutional policing and the dangers associated with unnecessary contact with the adult and juvenile legal systems.

Because YRSH is non-political and non-partisan, we do not publish endorsements of candidates or pending legislation.

Our Audience: Decision-makers and the general public—and also the media who spread narratives about young people in our state.

The following guidelines can help you think about and draft a submission:

- 1) **Submission Types** - Our Substack is open to a range of different styles, provided it is useful, educational, and engaging. Even though much of our published work to date focuses on data, we happily publish qualitative material as well—including personal essays. For more information, or to discuss your ideas for a Substack submission, contact Alice Wilkerson at alice@advancemaryland.org.
 - a) YRSH also accepts creative writing such as poetry and short stories from youth authors.
- 2) **Acceptable Topics** - The YRSH brand is broad: Youth Rights and Safety. This may include, among other things, education and schools, child welfare, the youth justice system, economic conditions, and legal rights of children and parents.

- 3) To inquire whether a possible submission would be appropriate for the YRSH Substack, contact Alice Wilkerson at alice@advancemaryland.org. You may also email her a short description of your planned submission.
- 4) Submission lengths - Writers are encouraged to keep their submissions close to standard op-ed lengths (500-700 words). In some cases, published submission may go longer.
- 5) Bylines - While not all YRSH postings are attributed to individual authors, we are happy to credit our guest authors. We invite authors to include links to bios and/or their organization's website so readers can learn more about their work.
- 6) YRSH Style - Our primary goal is to shift the false narratives that lead to unnecessarily harsh policies affecting young people and youth in our state. Consequently, we try to adhere to the following basic style guidelines:
 - a) Avoid stigmatizing language (e.g., "delinquents" "offenders" "felons" "inmates" ...
 - b) Don't repeat opposition talking points in order to make your case. Alice can provide assistance with this.
 - c) Only use the term "juvenile" when it is included as an official part of a name, e.g. juvenile court, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. We do not use "juvenile" to refer to minors. Alternatives include kids, children, teenagers, young people, youth, etc...
 - d) Refrain from accusations, blaming, and shaming. We want to educate our readers and engage them in thinking more deeply about the topic. Personal or direct attacks can detract from the core message.