



COLORADO YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

ADVISOR MANUAL

WHY YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?

In Colorado, an informed and participating electorate, which shares a common value system, is crucial for building strong communities. Young people need to understand that they will have an effect on their communities, their state, and their country, through their actions. Youth in Government (YIG) strives to give youth both the tools and the character values, to empower them to solve problems within the established system of government. Participants in the Model Legislature are provided an arena to test their beliefs, to share their frustrations, to examine their ethics, and broaden their knowledge. Emphasizing the four core values of the YMCA – Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility – the Youth in Government Program works to produce young adults who will accept the challenge of leading their generation into the new millennium.

WHAT IS YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?

The Colorado YMCA Model Legislature is a statewide youth educational program involving over 150 high school freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, in a "hands on" experience. Since its inception 64 years ago, the program has used a variety of activities to build, encourage, and strengthen those life assets and character traits that will help high school youth become involved, responsible adults who are decent and respected citizens. The tool used is a high quality experiential and educational simulation based upon Colorado's State government. The program is very comprehensive, and its impact on the youth participants is dramatic.

The Model Legislature teaches the values of democracy by creating citizen leaders from a cross section of the State's high school population, providing them with the opportunity to experience government first hand and to learn how to solve community problems through the democratic process. The program also helps develop an attitude of self help and self confidence for their personal futures.

HOW THE MODEL LEGISLATURE WORKS

The program begins at the beginning of each school year when schools begin to assemble their delegations. Students begin to think about and discuss issues facing Colorado, as well as ways to implement their solutions through the legislative and judicial processes. During a three-month period, the teen delegates write bills, prepare briefs, select governmental positions to role play, attend a pre-legislative conference (in October), and run for various elected offices. The program reaches its peak in Denver at the State Capitol with the convening of the three-day Model Legislature each November. There, "real" government moves over and the teen delegates "take over", using the historic halls, chambers, and offices of our State Capitol.

THE PARTNERSHIP THAT WORKS

Youth in Government is a joint effort between your high school and the statewide Youth in Government office. Working together, we strive to offer each delegate a quality learning and social experience that will enhance their high school years.

Each delegation must have one "Lead Advisor" for their group. This individual will be the main point of contact for the state office and will be responsible for providing leadership and direction for the delegation at all levels of the program.

EXPECTATIONS OF ADVISORS

- Conduct a program that is run in accordance with the rules and expectations of the state office.
- Having a basic understanding of state judicial and legislative processes is helpful.
- Be a positive role model to delegates and an effective representative of the program.
- Be organized, attentive to detail, and have good follow through skills.
- Ensure that the YIG program and YMCA policies are adhered to at all times.
- Actively support the YIG program goals and objectives.
- Be a source of unbiased, objective information, as requested by delegates.
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ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure that the YIG Code of Conduct is understood and agreed to by all delegates and parents. Each advisor also commits to this code.
- Attend advisor meetings and assist with general conference duties (Please note: while it is highly recommend, it is NOT required that advisors attend either the pre-legislative session or the general assembly.)
- Tasks may include recruiting, training, and supervising students to form a delegation.
- Act as a liaison between the YMCA and the YIG participants at your school.
- Communicate with parents regarding opportunities, events, and fees in regards to the program.
- Establish your students' criteria for participation in the program within the guidelines set forth by the state office (for instance, some advisors give their students extra credit for participation, etc.).
- Act as a resource base and help students identify other sources of information or knowledge.
- Receive, read, and understand all program bulletins and assure all deadlines are met.
- Relay all communications regarding the program to the individual delegates.
- Facilitate leadership opportunities within your delegation. While this is a student run program, it is important to know the limits and abilities of your students and set them up for success. Please make sure they have all of the skills they need in order to lead effectively.
- Facilitate the creation of a strong team within your delegation.
- Work with delegates to develop a process for bill development and selection. Ensure that appropriate bill formats are followed.

- Organize transportation to and from each conference.
- Enforce the dress code at the pre-legislative and general assembly conferences.
- Schools are responsible for the immediate removal of any delegate expelled by the Youth in Government Program. The state office expects each school to initially be prepared to cover any financial consequences involved with sending a delegate home with the understanding that these costs will ultimately be borne by the parents/guardian of the expelled child.

DEADLINES

There are several deadlines over the course of a YIG year, and it is important to understand the ramifications of missing those deadlines:

- If your students' conference registration forms are not in on time, they may not be allowed to participate.
- If your students fail to submit their delegation legislation (bills) on time, they may not make it into the Bill Book.
- If any of your candidate's applications for office are not submitted on time, the candidate will be disqualified and barred from running or applying for an office.

The strict adherence to the deadlines is not meant to be a punishment to students that fail to meet them. The rules are in place, because so much work is predicated on the receipt of the paperwork and any delay is both unfair to those who met the deadline and unfair to those whose work depends upon it.

DELEGATION SIZE

In the course of the YIG program year, you may encounter questions or statements expressed about delegation size:

- What's the right size?
- Why do some schools have 6 and some have 40?
- We'll only be powerful if we are a large delegation.
- The large delegations dominate in the elections.
- Etc.

Delegation sizes have varied over the years depending upon a number of factors: advisor retention, continuity of branch staff and support, and the experiences the returning delegates relate to new recruits. The issue of what is the right size for a delegation has been debated for years without any consensus achieved. In reality, that is because the focus has been in the wrong place. The focus should not be on the size of the delegation, but rather on the experience of the delegates. That is really all that matters. Advisors should base the size of their delegation on their ability to facilitate a quality experience for their delegates.