



2024 Youth in Government  
PROGRAM HANDBOOK

# 2024 PROGRAM HANDBOOK

## Table of Contents

PROGRAM INFORMATION.....	3
Mission Statement	
Program History	
Objectives	
Contact Information	
Program Overview	
Important Dates	
70 <sup>th</sup> Session Major Officers	
Delegate Role Descriptions	
Sample Program Schedule	
ADVISOR MANUAL.....	8
Why Youth in Government?	
What is Youth in Government?	
How Model Legislature Works	
The Partnership That Works	
Expectations of Advisors	
Advisor Responsibilities	
Deadlines	
Delegation size	
PROGRAM POLICIES.....	12
Program Policies	
Responsibilities & Expectations	
Code of Conduct	
Dress Code	

# PROGRAM INFORMATION

## YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that help build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

## PROGRAM HISTORY

Nationwide, YMCA Youth in Government has been working since 1936 to help teenagers understand and become engaged with the political arena. The program has been in operation in Colorado since 1948. While the Colorado program has had its ups and downs with participation numbers spiking at around 500 a decade ago, the program is gaining ground demonstrating a demand for the program in Colorado. It is our mission now to make the program available for any student who may be interested.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

- Educate high school students on governmental organization and structure through participation in some of its processes.
- Increase understanding and appreciation of the legislative processes through participating in committees, debating on the floor of the House and Senate, and receiving leadership training from those resource persons who are members of the various state departments.
- Expand high school students' interest in and knowledge of the current problems of the state of Colorado.
- Contribute to the awareness of the effect of personal interest and activity on governmental operations.
- See the importance and significance of high school students in the betterment of their community.
- Know the governmental agencies that exist to perform various services.
- Increase the ability of high school student participants to organize ideas clearly and concisely and to present them persuasively.
- Provide additional opportunities to develop the skill of public speaking.
- Foster relationships that make it possible to better understand others.
- Help develop the ability to take victory with humility and defeat without discouragement.

- Stimulate the knack for learning from an opponent.
- Inspire the use of the YMCA's core values - caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility - as the fundamentals in the evaluation of discussions, decisions, or acts.
  - ✓ CARING – Youth in Government provides a *caring* atmosphere that supports and challenges students' beliefs and provides a platform for their voices to be heard by other teens, adults, and elected officials.
  - ✓ HONESTY – Delegates are asked to conduct research into current topics and write model legislation (bills). Intellectual *honesty* and a strong sense of academic ethics are critical to the YIG process of research and debate.
  - ✓ RESPECT – YIG delegates will be presented with arguments and positions that are, at times, contrary to their own feelings and beliefs. Teens learn to confront those ideas head on in a *respectful* manner without the need for personal attacks on the presenter.
  - ✓ RESPONSIBILITY – Delegates are expected to take *responsibility* for their actions during the program, including adhering to the code of conduct and the dress code, and arriving promptly for all activities.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Colorado Youth in Government State Director

**Celeste Medina** at [cemedina@denverymca.org](mailto:cemedina@denverymca.org)

## PROGRAM EVENTS OVERVIEW

Colorado Youth in Government is a statewide youth educational program involving high school students in a three month "hands-on" learning experience. Since its inception, the program has used a variety of activities to build, encourage, and strengthen those life assets and character traits that will help students become involved, responsible adults and decent, respected citizens. Participants are required to draft bills and conduct necessary research to consider pressing issues effectively as a collective body. They will then spend three days in a State Government simulation to debate the bills of their peers based on how it addresses the issue, the funding it requires, and several other facets. Through this interactive experience, they come to understand exactly how they can and should make their voices heard.

Youth in Government is the nation's premier program for students seeking to learn more about the society they live in and of which they will someday lead. By getting students involved in politics from a young age, Youth in Government instills a sense of civic duty and political awareness that is critical to the prosperity of the state, the nation and future generations.

The program is open to *all* interested Colorado high school students. Schools, local YMCA's and other organizations can form one or more delegations by recruiting teenagers or through teen outreach programs. Clubs typically meet year-round to discuss state and local issues and improve their skills for the annual General Assembly.

The program is designed to give students the opportunity to participate directly in the major aspects of state government. Students can run for office to become elected youth officials, assess constitutionality as a justice or lawyer, debate legislation as a member of the Senate or House, or work as a reporter with

the print and broadcast media. Participants attend a pre-legislative session (Usually Sunday before Conference) where they elect youth officials and attend several professional seminars about bill writing, parliamentary procedure and further opportunities for youth in today's politics. The program reaches its peak in Downtown Denver by convening for the three-day model legislature and court in November. There, "real" government "moves over" and the teen delegates "take over,".

#### 2024 PRE-LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Students begin campaigning for officer positions, and work with professionals in the field. They will also review the procedures for the conference. This is an opportunity for youth to speak with their fellow delegates, begin lobbying for their bills, learn the Supreme Court case, and campaign for officer positions. You won't want to miss it!

### IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Friday, October 11th, 2024

Registration Deadline for 2024 Model Assembly

Tuesday, October 22nd, 2024, 11:59 PM

All Bills are due by submitting the form linked below:

[Bill Submission Form](#)

<https://airtable.com/appxhJmHBUCdqm9hV/shrpkWMheGy1kEsRA>

#### **November 24, 2024**

Sunday, 6:00-9:30 pm

2024 Pre-Leg Training Session

Renaissance Hotel

#### **November 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> 2024**

8:00am-5:00pm

2024 Model Assembly

At Lindsey Flanigan Court House

#### **November 26<sup>th</sup>**

5:30pm-9:30pm

Youth Governors Ball

Renaissance Hotel

### 2024 YOUTH OFFICERS

Governor: Qynton Saylor

Lt. Governor: Maelin Rennemeyer

Editor in chief: Avery Graff

Speaker of the House: Elijah Fauth

President of the Senate: Sterling Smith

Attorney General: Raelynn Pickup

Chief Justice: Abby Garza

Head Lobbyist: Robert Cerimele

## DESCRIPTION OF DELEGATE ROLES

Each delegate may write a bill to be submitted to the Bill Book. Anyone may speak in committee and may have a vote if they are present for the entire debate.

### Representative/Senator

Legislators who will debate in committees using the rules of parliamentary procedure will then move to the whole House or Senate.

### Media

The media are responsible for publishing the daily paper for the General Assembly. They will also be able to post to social media pages to spread the word of Youth in Government. There are opportunities for photography, videography, content creation, column writing, and more.

### Lobbyist

Lobbyists will work to support legislation in committees and on the floor of the House and Senate. They may debate in committee and assist legislators in the whole House and Senate. This is a good position for delegates who need speech practice in a smaller setting.

### Attorney

Attorneys will argue a mock state Appellate court case on the first day. They will then take a role in arguing the constitutionality of bills as legislators and lobbyists bring their constitutional challenges to them.

### Justice

Justices will decide the case after they have heard arguments from attorneys. They will decide on a bill's constitutionality as well throughout the General Assembly.

### Page

Pages are generally younger or new delegates who want to experience YIG with less responsibility. Pages run information throughout the between committees, etc.

## SAMPLE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

### Monday

8:30 – 9:30 AM	Announcements and General Assembly Speaker
9:30 – 11:45 AM	Committee Sessions
11:45 – 12:45 AM	Lunch on own
12:45– 1:15 PM	Announcements in House Chambers Speaker: TBD
1:15 – 2:30 PM	Committee Sessions
2:30 – 4:45 PM	House and Senate Convene
4:45 PM	Adjourn

## WHY YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?

In Colorado, an informed and participating electorate, which shares a common value system, is crucial for building strong communities. Youth 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 100 high school freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, in a "hands on" experience. Delegations are formed from school clubs or local YMCAs throughout Colorado. These clubs can work to raise money for program fees, recruit students, raise awareness of local and state issues and discuss the process of bill writing and parliamentary procedure.

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 firsthand 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 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 September), and run for various elected offices. The program reaches its peak in November in Denver at the State Capitol with the convening of the three-day model legislature and court. 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.
- Have a basic understanding of state judicial and legislative process.
- 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.

## 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.
- Assist with general conference duties
- 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 regarding 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 and help students identify other sources of information or knowledge.
- Receive, read, and understand all program bulletins and ensure 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 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 the conference and, if needed, arrange hotel rooms.
- 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 student's 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.

## DELEGATIONS SIZE

During the YIG program year, you may encounter questions or statements expressed about the 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 several 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 consensus. In reality, 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.

## PROGRAM POLICIES

The following are the guidelines and policies for the Colorado YMCA Youth in Government program:

### ADULT LEADERSHIP POLICY

All phases of the Youth General Assembly include adult responsibilities. To ensure adequate supervision and leadership for student delegates, adult leaders function in the following capacities:

- As advisors and facilitators assisting students;
- As sources of unbiased, objective information, as requested by delegates; and
- As a responsible adult acting on behalf of the student delegates, parents, the local YMCA or high school, and the statewide organization of YMCA Youth in Government.

All adult advisors and program volunteers are expected to maintain appropriate relationships with their students. Personal relationships with individual students are strictly prohibited.

### DRUG, ALCOHOL & TOBACCO POLICY

The YMCA commitment to a healthy spirit, mind and body requires consistent enforcement of the Youth in Government drug, alcohol & tobacco policy as follows:

- There will be no tolerance of drug, alcohol or tobacco use in any form during Youth in Government events and activities.
- Failure to comply with this policy could result in immediate expulsion from the program. Delegates may be sent home at their own expense.

## LEARNING POLICY

Strong differences of opinion exist among student delegates in the YMCA Youth General Assembly and can be reflected in their statements and their proposed legislation. We believe these differences are essential to the learning experience of student participants. However, the ideas and issues brought up for consideration by the student delegates are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the YMCA Youth in Government as an organization.

## YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT EXPECTATIONS

- Youth General Assembly is available to all students in grades 7-12 without regard to race, creed, gender, or national origin.
- Student delegates select their own legislative issues.
- Student delegates are trained and encouraged to objectively consider all points of view when researching and drafting their legislative bills.
- Student delegates are expected to author their own work, i.e., bills, newspaper articles, or other written materials.
- Student delegates are encouraged to seek adult counsel in researching and drafting their work so it, as closely as possible, resembles actual legislation. Adult counsel can include delegation advisors, parents, teachers, and specialists in the field of research, legislators, lobbyists, attorneys, and other professionals.
- Youth officers are selected by their peers at the statewide General Assembly.
- Every effort is made to ensure delegations accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of the communities they represent.
- All program materials and fees will be received on time by the deadlines set forth. Only delegations that have met this obligation will receive Bill Books and other appropriate program materials.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of the Colorado YMCA YIG is to develop a dedication to the values of democracy and an awareness for the need of our youth's participation and leadership in the democratic process. Participants in this program are especially privileged, because they can use the historic legislative chambers and offices in the State Capitol Building, the Supreme Court Chambers, and other facilities.

A high level of positive conduct is expected of all participants that requires self-control, individual decision-making, responsibility, and adherence to a code that is appropriate for each conference experience. The Code of Conduct shall be observed by both youth and adults. There is no double standard. The following Code of Conduct has been established for the YIG Program.

The Colorado YMCA Youth in Government program promotes a trust-based Code of Conduct, based on the foundation that all delegates and advisors agree to conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. Adults should make every attempt to help each participant achieve his/her full potential during the Model Assembly Session.

The Code of Conduct and Capitol Facility Expectations should be carefully reviewed prior to attending the Model Assembly Session. Advisors are always welcome to enforce a stricter standard than the Code of Conduct dictates, but the State Youth in Government Staff will only enforce the standards outlined in the Code of Conduct and facility expectation documents.

Registration for the Youth in Government Program implies personal acceptance of the Code of Conduct as follows:

1. Each delegate shall always conduct him/herself in an orderly manner during the program.
2. It is the responsibility of each participant to attend **all** scheduled sessions and activities and remain in their assigned areas during these sessions.
3. Each delegate will respect the property of others and that of the conference facilities and State Capitol. The future of our program's use of the Capitol facilities and other buildings is contingent upon respectful treatment of these places. Buildings and equipment **MUST** be kept in the same (or better) condition than when they were found. Do not disturb or remove any equipment, desk, fixtures, etc. Each delegate is liable for the willful destruction of private or public property.
4. Chemical use is prohibited! This includes drinking alcohol and/or use of illegal drugs. Use or possession of alcohol or non-prescription drugs is strictly prohibited. Smoking is **not** permitted in any facility used by the program.
5. Strict adherence to the dress code is required during all sessions.
6. For security purposes, participants **MUST** always wear their name tags when on Capitol grounds and in other buildings used during the General Assembly.
7. Elevators are reserved for the use of Capitol staff and actual representatives. Youth in Government participants are asked to use the stairs except for those students with a disability or injury.
8. Participants must remain in the areas of the Capitol set aside for the program and should use only the public restrooms found in the basement and cafeteria.
9. There is to be **NO** food or beverage of any kind (except water) allowed in any chamber, program area, or committee room. Food is only allowed in the basement cafeteria.
- 10.** Everyone is expected to conform to all rules and regulations for the conference. Participants who violate the Code of Conduct are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of participation in the program and being sent home at their own expense.

## YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT DRESS CODE

All participants (delegates and advisors) are to maintain a professional and business-like appearance by dressing in business and professional attire during scheduled events. Business attire is required at Youth in Government. The key is to dress as a professional who expects to be taken seriously.

*When selecting an outfit, ask yourself "Would I wear this to a job interview if I really wanted to be hired?" If the answer is no, then you should probably search the closet again.*

Appropriate Attire for Meetings and Assemblies

Men

Women

*Ensemble Options:*

1. Suit, dress shirt, tie, dress shoes and socks.
2. Sports coat, slacks, dress shirt, tie, dress shoes and socks.
3. Dress shirt, vest or cardigan, slacks, tie, dress shoes and socks.
4. Dress shirt, slacks, tie, dress shoes and socks.

*Guidelines:*

- No hats of any kind inside a building.
- Avoid trendy suits or outlandish ties.
- Keep your shirt tails tucked in.
- Keep your hair styled so that it will not fall into your face.
- No trendy hair colors.
- No piercings other than post-style or tiny hoop earrings.

*Ensemble Options:*

1. Business style suit and closed-toe dress shoes.
2. Dress, and closed-toe dress shoes.
3. Blouse, skirt, with or without a vest or cardigan, and closed-toe dress shoes (closed-toe shoes only)
4. Business style pant suit and closed-toe dress shoes.

*Guidelines:*

- No hats of any kind inside a building.
- Keep hair styled so that it will not fall into your face.
- Dresses and skirts should be **no more** than 3 inches above the knee.
- No sleeveless or spaghetti straps.
- No bare-midriff outfits.
- No big jewelry, no bangle bracelets, and piercings other than post-style or tiny hoop earrings.
- No sandals (except for Governors Ball) or flip-flops.
- No heels that are so high that they cause difficulty walking or standing.
- Make-up should be professional, not over-done.