



**WASHINGTON STATE
YOUTH & GOVERNMENT**

TODAY'S YOUTH TOMORROW'S LEADERS



**YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT
Parent/Guardian Handbook**



Welcome Youth & Government Parents/Guardians,

Thank you for choosing the YMCA Youth & Government program for your teen. There are countless teen leadership programs across the country, but the YMCA Youth & Government program is distinctly different.

Our program focuses on the four goals of YMCA teen leadership programs: leadership development, personal growth, service to others, and social development. This program is also framed around our four core values of Honesty, Respect, Caring and Responsibility.

Washington State Youth & Government has been a longtime standing, non-partisan, civic engagement program for teens, giving them hands on experience to the inner workings of our state government by participating in a model state legislature.

Each year hundreds of teens, in grades 8-12, participate on a local level to gain knowledge on how democracy works by learning how ideas become bills and bills become law, parliamentary procedure, debate and persuasion skills, and the art of compromise/communication.

By using our four core values as teaching tools, our delegation meetings and district events help prepare the teens in their roles as they embark on their adventure to our state capitol.

Honesty – Intellectual honesty and a strong sense of academic ethics are critical to the Y&G process of research and debate. Tell the truth, speak for yourself, speak out against injustice, mean what you say-say what you mean.

Respect – Youth & Government delegates will encounter arguments and positions that are at times contrary to their own personal beliefs or feelings. Learn to confront these ideas head on in a respectful manner without the need for personal attack on other delegates. Listen to all opinions, treat others with respect and take care of areas that we are guests in.

Caring – Avoid putdowns, choose to see the positive, help someone in need. At times you will be supported and at times be challenged on your beliefs and will be provided a platform to have your voice heard. Care for other delegates by doing the same. Listen to what they have to say.

Responsibility – Youth & Government only works when each member contributes to the goals for the program. It is the responsibility of every delegate to measure their actions and decisions against the standards of the YMCA Core Values. Do the right thing, clean up after yourself, and take responsibility for your own learning and actions.

Youth and Government Equity Statement: The Y actively promotes a culture free from bias and injustice. We are dedicated to removing institutional and systemic barriers that result in oppression and racism. We will be accountable to marginalized communities for creating equitable and sustainable environments where social justice is woven into every facet of our programs, and by caring for our communities in a culturally versatile and respectful manner.

Thank you again for choosing the YMCA Youth & Government program.

Don Brevik

Youth and Government/Teen Leadership Director

Washington State Youth and Government

We are excited that your teen will be a part of a national movement of young motivated and passionate people who are trying to make a difference. Since 1947, the Washington State YMCA Youth and Government program has been providing a platform for like-minded young people to embark in a non-partisan, civic engagement opportunity.

Vision Statement

New generations of ethical and informed, public-minded citizens

Mission Statement

Teach democratic values and skills to youth through hands-on experiences

Specific Program Goals:

- To foster the development of citizen responsibility
- To develop social competence, problem-solving ability, and communication skills
- To encourage self-reliance and a sense of purpose for youth
- To stimulate careful deliberation of social issues and their possible resolutions
- To create opportunities to hear and respect varying viewpoints
- To inspire young people to be responsible & act with integrity
- To apply ethical values in making public policy
- To teach the YMCA core values of Honesty, Caring, Respect, and Responsibility.

Motto

"Democracy must be learned by each generation."

Throughout the year, students will spend time in a local delegation learning the basics of our state government. They will practice public speaking skills and learn parliamentary procedures, research and draft legislation, learn the importance of opening and closing remarks and have the opportunity to take on various roles of the state government.

Our delegation meetings prepare delegates for their participation in district events, held traditionally in the winter, where they share their ideas with others from our district and possibly run for a statewide leadership positions.

The culmination of the program will occur May 3-6, 2023. It is at this time that students from around the state take on the roles of Representatives, Senators, Lobbyists, or Reporters and do their part in reporting on, debating and passing legislation that is important to them. In addition to these roles, experienced participants also have the opportunity to take on leadership roles such as Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House and Secretary of State.



Historical Review of Youth Legislature

1947-2022

The very first YMCA Youth Legislature was held in New York State in 1936. In 1947, under the leadership of a prominent attorney named Frank S. Bayley, Jr., the Pacific Northwest Area Council of YMCAs sent two young YMCA branch executives, Dick MacMorran and Vern Emery, to observe the New Jersey program. They reported back that the program was well suited for Washington's YMCA youth work and that they would like to start chapters in their YMCA's based in Seattle. That fall, Bayley and the Pacific Northwest Area Council founded the Washington YMCA Youth Legislature and formed a committee to organize the first legislative session for youth in the spring of 1948. John M. McClelland, Jr., a newspaper publisher from Longview, served on the 1948 Youth & Government Statewide Committee. He was joined by other prominent business and government leaders in the state to provide the policy and financial leadership to launch the program.



Details of those early years are sketchy, as very few historical documents remain. However, the first YMCA Youth Legislature occurred April 16-17, 1948 at the State Capitol. There were 21 Senate bills and 54 House bills submitted by 150 high school students from 70 Hi-Y and Tri-Hi-Y YMCA youth clubs. Senators and Representatives were elected by the Hi-Y and Tri-Hi-Y clubs in the local communities. Dr. George Gallup assisted students in conducting polls on local, state and national issues as a means of generating ideas for bills. Bill topics have never been censored by the program committee. Instead, the time honored application of democracy itself determines what legislation will be recorded for posterity for the years to come.

The first Youth Governor was Walter Becker from Spokane. Several of the bills discussed at that first legislature proposed lowering the voting age to eighteen. Others would authorize the use of school buses to take students to extracurricular activities after school hours and one proposed changing the state constitution to make education the first claim on the revenues of the general fund – all things that have become current laws in Washington State.

This past session in May 2022, we were able to hold an in person event after being virtual the previous year. Youth Governor Terra Pilch-Bisson from the Mill Creek Delegation, led over 250 students into the 75th year of the Youth & Government program in Washington State. As we move forward into the 76th Youth Legislature, Youth Governor Elect Landon Hulser from the Franklin Pierce Delegation will look forward to leading over 300+ delegates across our state, May 3-6, 2023.

There are many reasons why YMCA Youth & Government has remained so successful over the past 76 years. Foremost has to be a deep and abiding belief in the importance of democracy to our nation and the realization that come to participants by actually doing it, that each individual in society is responsible for helping to find solutions to problems and for taking part in a democratic way of life.

Program Basics

Any student enrolled in grades 8-12 in the state of Washington is eligible to participate in YMCA Youth Legislature. Students must be affiliated with a YMCA, high school or home school Youth Legislature delegation.



Objectives:

- Learn about state government and democracy in a fun way
- To become familiar with the 3 types of legislation
- To become familiar with the various roles of state government and take on one of those roles during the 76th Youth Legislature
- Build self-confidence through public speaking
- Develop strong leadership skills
- Communicate effectively
- Adhere to our YMCA Core Values (Responsibility, Honesty, Respect, and Caring) while supporting our fellow delegates

Expectations:

- That teens attend their delegation meetings on a regular basis
- That teens scheduled district events
- That ALL teens write a minimum of one piece of legislation or co-sponsor a bill
- That teens abide by the Code of Conduct & Dress Code outlined in the YMCA Youth Legislature Rules
- That teens represent their delegation in a positive manner during all delegation meetings, district/state events and at the 76th Youth Legislature
- That all required paperwork be turned in by the deadlines

Fees:

Fees for the Youth and Government program can be broken down into monthly payments or paid all at once and covers the following:

- State registration/participation fees
- Hotel stay/YAG materials
- Breakfast and dinner while in Olympia
- Transportation to/back Olympia for the 76th Youth Legislature
- All District 6 materials/events
- Please note that scholarship funds available, through the Y. Please contact Don Brevik for details.

Communication: Delegation advisors communicate directly with teens (at meetings and through email) about upcoming events and deadlines. It is expected that delegates inform parents of events, payment reminders and important program information. Permission slips will be provided for any events that take place outside the delegation meeting location and will include all event details i.e. date/time, location, items to bring etc. Please check in with them periodically for any information.

District Lines and Events

Washington State Youth and Government is divided into 6 districts and your teen is a part of District 6 which includes delegations within Pierce and Kitsap Counties. Each district has a district coordinator whose responsibilities include contacting and promoting the program to interested Y's, schools or individual delegates. To provide support to local delegations if needed and host district events.

District 1: Snohomish/Skagit/Whatcom Counties

District 2: King County

District 3: Coast, Peninsula & South Western WA

District 4: Eastern Washington

District 5: Spokane County

District 6: Pierce and Kitsap Counties



In District 6 we will hold two events and in addition the YMCA Youth and Government State Office will be hosting Delegation Connection events/trainings where delegations across the state can connect with each other to help build comradery and friendships. Please see delegation calendar for dates.

Delegation & District Expectations

It is expected that each delegate and advisor, not only adhere to the YMCA Youth and Government's Code of Conduct during state, district and delegation sponsored events, but they also hold themselves to a higher standard within their delegation.

Because of the diverse makeup of all delegates and advisors, their backgrounds, experiences, and political views, it is expected that each person will be treated with respect. As a delegation, we will work on the building of a cohesive group that focuses on the YMCA core values of **Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, and Caring** of each person.

Teens within the delegation and outside our delegation may have differing political viewpoints that span the spectrum. Our program is non-partisan based, which assists in challenging, clarifying, and enhancing overall debate of the issues.

Any actions or behaviors that do not uphold our core values or build up our delegation as a whole will not be tolerated. All delegates and advisors are made aware of our **SAD-TV** rules early on in the program. No Sex, Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, Violence/Malicious Behavior. Those choosing to break any of these rules during YMCA district or state events will be removed from the program.

- **Sex includes**, but not limited to: any physical sexual behavior between individuals, sexual explicit comments/innuendos, and/or sharing of any sexual images.
- **Alcohol includes**, but not limited to: purchasing, consuming or distributing any alcoholic beverage.
- **Drugs includes**, but not limited to: purchasing, distribution, or use of any illegal substance or prescription drug not prescribed to the intended user.
- **Tobacco includes**, but not limited to: purchasing, distribution or use of any tobacco/vape products.
- **Violence/Malicious Behavior includes**, but not limited to: any physical contact that causes injury to others or self, any threat of physical injury to others or self, any intentional bullying, name calling or ostracizing of any delegate/advisor.

Delegate Dress & Code of Conduct

Program Ground Rules

No alcohol. No drugs. No sexual activity. No tobacco products. No offensive language, dress, or behavior. No violent behavior or weapons. Any violation of this code of conduct may result in immediate expulsion from the program, and the violator may be sent home at their expense.

Conduct Expectations at Youth & Government Events

Delegates, Volunteers and Advisors will...

- Abide by all YMCA, school and/or sponsoring organization policies and procedures.
- Exhibit the core values of the YMCA- honesty, caring, respect and responsibility.
- Respect all food and drink restrictions on the capital campus and agree to dispose of any trash appropriately inside and outside of the facility.
- Be professionally dressed while in session and maintain decorum standards of the capital campus and YMCA Youth and Government.
- Use technology and social media in ways that promote the core values of the YMCA before, during and after conference.
- Attend all scheduled activities and events.
- Maintain curfew and appropriate behavior in hotel.
- Report any problems or concerns immediately to an advisor or Youth & Government staff.
- Follow YMCA, delegation, school and/or sponsoring organization transportation policies which may include students voluntarily turning in keys to advisors or YMCA staff during YAG events.
- Be courteous and respectful of YMCA, capital and legislative staff and elected officials.

Dress Code

Delegates are expected to uphold a professional appearance, similar to rules upheld by members of the State House of Representatives and Senate during all committee and floor sessions while in Olympia. Delegates should wear professional clothing that would be deemed appropriate for a legislator or business professional. If delegates are unsure if what you are going to wear is acceptable, ask an advisor prior to arrival.

The dress code below is a guideline to help your delegates/advisors choose appropriate/business professional clothing for Olympia. Conversations will be had with delegates in choosing clothing that they would normally wear on a daily basis if they were in a professional work environment and not clothing that they would not wear on a daily basis if they were in a professional work environment.

Acceptable Attire: business suits, slacks (belt) with a sweater or sweater vest, slacks (belt) with a dress jacket, sport coat or blazer, collared shirt with neckties and dress shoes. Think of what should be worn for a professional job interview. Modest blouses/shirt with a sleeve and dresses/skirts must be knee-length. Open-toed shoes should not be worn, except with tights. In lieu of a blouse, collared shirts with neckties may also be worn under a suit jacket, sport coat, blazer or sweater vest.

Unacceptable Clothing: sweats, t-shirts, denim, skirts or dresses not to the knee, leggings/yoga pants, shorts, miniskirts, sleeveless or tops not covered by sweater or jacket, sneakers, hats, casual shoes, inappropriate or revealing clothing; visible undergarments, midriffs, or cleavage.

Questions? Contact:

Don Brevik / 253-460-8822 / dbrevik@ymcapkc.org