

Montana YMCA Youth & Government Program

Program Overview

2006 Edition

“Democracy must be learned by each generation.”

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Youth and Government Overview

What is YMCA Youth and Government?

Based on the motto “democracy must be learned by each generation,” the Montana YMCA Youth and Government is a state version of a nationwide program, the purpose of which is to provide a

comprehensive model legislative, executive, and judicial program to prepare students for responsibilities as citizens by promoting understanding of Montana’s state government.

Benefits of Youth & Government

An opportunity for Students...

- To meet with diverse young people from across Montana, working together to accomplish common goals.
- To become well-informed citizens who understand current issues and Montana State Government.
- To develop citizenship skills to meet the needs of a democratic society.
- To develop leadership skills to become the public servants of tomorrow.
- To enhance self-esteem
- To discover how to make a positive difference.
- To stimulate tolerance and respect toward other's rights and points of view.
- To accept both victory and defeat with graciousness.
- To apply moral and ethical values in making decisions.
- To accept the YMCA Challenge to demonstrate the positive values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

... for Schools:

- Students strengthen writing, speaking, research, critical observation, and analytical thinking skills across the curriculum.
- The program creates a social and emotional environment that enhances cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, positive behavior, and service leadership.
- Students witness and model positive peer leadership skills.
- Youth and Government enriches and reinforces school curricula with a realistic, hands-on experience.

... for Communities:

- Participants learn how to become responsible, active, and involved adult citizens.
- Participants develop an ethic of public service, leadership, and an understanding of Montana Government, making an outstanding investment for the future of our communities and our state.

Activities

The Montana YMCA Youth and Government Program offers the following program areas:

Youth Legislature:

Members of the House, Senate, and First Year program progress through the steps of the legislative process to act upon the bills they have written. Participants introduce their bills, testify in legislative committee hearings, debate on the floor, and ultimately send successful legislation to the Youth Governor for a signature or a veto.

Model Supreme Court:

Attorneys argue appeals cases based on the briefs they prepared ahead of time. Based on these arguments, Justices decide issues of Montana Law.

Lobbyist Program:

Lobbyists work to influence legislation by informal persuasion, providing information to legislators and helping form coalitions of similarly minded individuals. Selected Lobbyists become members of the Governor's Cabinet and lobby for Executive Branch issues.

Press Corps:

Reporters cover the events of the Helena session, putting out a daily newspaper and a voter's guide for all participants.

First Year Program:

First year program participants act as pages, running errands for other delegates, they help run the primary election, and they participate

in the Ingalls Senate and Hathaway House, which gives them a brief introduction to the Legislature.

Local Activities:

Participants work in clubs in their local communities throughout the year. They study the political party system, practice parliamentary and legal procedure, discuss current social and economic issues, campaign for office and write legislative bills, legal briefs or lobbyist papers.

The Helena Session:

The culmination for the program is the Montana Youth Legislature and Model Supreme Court held for three and a half days each spring in Helena. Students convene in a model session in the historic State Capitol using the actual House, Senate, and the old (or new) Supreme Court Chambers.

Participants publish a daily newspaper, lobby for special issues, form a Governor's Cabinet, and work as pages. Delegates also participate in caucuses, campaign for ballot issues and the following year's statewide offices, and enjoy the formal Governor's banquet and ball.

National Opportunities:

Selected individuals go on to attend events such as the YMCA Conference on National Affairs (CONA) and National YMCA Youth Governor's Conference.

Youth and Government Program History

Nationally, the YMCA Youth and Government Program began in New York State in 1936. Montana's program was organized in 1970, with our first Youth Legislature held in the spring of 1971. From 75 students in 1971, the program now serves over 300-400 young people. Montana also held a Youth "Con-Con" in 1972, corresponding with the real 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention.

Program Organization and Staff

Montana YMCA Youth and Government is one of 40 states with a YMCA Youth and Government Program, and organized under the auspices of the Helena Family YMCA. Many individuals are involved in the running of Youth and Government including a State Director, school advisors, chaperones, volunteer program staff, YMCA Coordinators and parents.

Mission Statement:

"The Helena Family YMCA is a non-profit organization dedicated to building self-esteem and enriching spirit, mind, and body for persons of all ages and economic levels."

Getting Started

Anyone in Montana and Northern Wyoming enrolled in grades 9-12 may form a delegation in accordance with the program's guidelines:

- Delegations must have an adult advisor (over age 21)
- Delegations must be sponsored by a school, home school group, YMCA, or other civic organization.
- Delegations are allowed at least one Senator and one Representative, regardless of size (unless all participants are freshmen or younger).
- All delegations of five or more members must also bring at least one lobbyist and one page. (Delegations of fewer than five members are exempt from this mandate.)
- Meetings should be held at least twice a month, beginning no later than January of each year.
- Advisors need to be prepared to help organize meetings, assist with recruitment of delegates, monitor student preparation, and see to it that information is distributed to students and that the delegation and its students meet all deadlines.

How do delegates prepare?

The preparations needed to participate are outlined in detail in this manual. In summary:

- All participants participate in regular meetings in their community to learn about state government, current issues pertinent to Montana, debating skills, rules of procedure, and other topics chosen by the local delegation.
- Legislators (Senators, Representatives, First Year Program) write or co-write a bill. (See Youth Legislature section of manual for details)
- Attorneys write a legal brief based on the case and position assigned to them. They also prepare oral arguments. (See Model Supreme Court section of manual for details)
- Lobbyists write a one-page position paper. (See Lobbyist manual for details)
- Committee Chairs, Newspaper Editor, Cabinet members and Justices are chosen by application.
- Reporters are asked to prepare one news article per delegation in advance of the session.
- Some participants may also choose to run for elected office, prepare a ballot initiative, or create a third party. (See Parties and Elections manual for details)
- Most delegations are assigned an appointed office and need to choose one or more people who will fill that position.
- Delegations should try to obtain school credit for their Youth and Government activities. English and Social Studies classes are particularly well suited for offering credit for the writing, research and public speaking required of participants.

Session Logistics

- **Travel:** Each delegation is responsible for its own transportation. Groups need to be aware that travel on a Sunday is necessary, as well as daily transportation to the Capitol and other activities.
- **Meals:** Sunday evening pizza and Tuesday evening banquet are included in the registration fee. All other meals are the responsibility of the participants. A café is located at the Capitol.
- **Lodging:** We obtain use of the National Guard barracks at Fort Harrison where participants can lodge for a very small charge. They are heated, have bunk beds and bathrooms. Students need only bring sleeping bags, pillows, towels, clothes hangers and personal items. If delegations want to stay in local motels, they may do so.
- **Chaperones:** Chaperones over the age of 21 are required, 1 for every 12 participants. Chaperones are expected to assist with students or program activities during the day as well as supervising their delegation after hours.

Position Descriptions

First Year Students:

First year program members are usually freshmen with no prior experience. These students split their time, acting as pages who run errands for the delegates and adult staff and taking part in a scaled-down version of the model legislature. The first year program is a great way to learn the ropes as it exposes students to all aspects of the program.

Reporter:

Members of the press corps are students with an interest in journalism. A daily newspaper is produced and a staff of 12-20 reporters, artists, and editors is needed to put it together. Reporters are asked to submit one news article per delegation in advance of the session.

Newspaper Editor:

This is a position filled by a Junior or Senior upon application. One or two people are appointed to run the newspaper each year. Interested reporters apply for the job in February. The Editor oversees all aspects of the daily session newspaper and reporters. An adult advisor assists the press corps.

Lobbyist:

Lobbyists are students with an interest in swaying the opinions of others. Each Lobbyist chooses an area of interest, writes a one page “position paper” on his or her chosen topic, tracks bills that are pertinent to the topic and tries to influence legislators. *Lobbyists and First Year Program members are the **only** participants allowed to move into a Legislative seat if a Legislative member of their delegation cannot attend.*

Cabinet:

Each year a set number of Governor’s Cabinet members are selected upon application to the Youth Governor, who makes final choices. *Cabinet applicants must be people who have signed up to be lobbyists.*

Model Supreme Court Positions

Attorney:

Teams of two attorneys argue an appellate case before the Model Supreme Court. Attorneys are assigned a case for which they write a legal brief that forms the core of the oral argument they present to the Court.

Justice:

Several students are selected by application to serve as Model Supreme Court Justices. Interested individuals must apply for these positions in February. A Chief Justice is elected each year to serve in the following year's session.

Youth Legislature

The State Office allocates seats based on delegation size. "Bonus seats" are granted to delegations whose students have earned writing awards during the prior conference. Each delegation decides for itself how to choose which members get to be legislators.

Representatives are members of the Youth Legislature House of Representatives. These are usually participants with at least one year prior attendance at Youth and Government, but sometimes they are first year participants who are Juniors or Seniors. Each Representative writes or co-writes a bill, debates it in committee and on the floor, participates in all legislative meetings, and debates other issues before the body.

Senators are members of the Youth Legislature Senate. These students are the "top of the heap." They are usually Seniors, and rarely first year students unless from a first year delegation. Each Senator writes or co-writes a bill. They carry out the same duties and meet the same requirements as Representatives.

First Year Program members belong to the Youth Legislature First Year House or Senate. Participants are usually Freshmen and Sophomores, but Juniors attending for the first time may also choose this option if they do not want to or cannot participate in the regular House or Senate. As in the other chambers, each "First Year Rep" writes or co-writes a bill, debates it in committee and on the floor, participates in all legislative meetings, and debates other issues before the body. *Lobbyists and First Year Reps are the **only** participants allowed to move into a Legislative seat if a Legislative member of their delegation cannot attend.*

Committee Chairs are House, First Year students, or Senate members, usually with at one year's prior experience as a legislator. Participants must apply and be appointed to these positions in February. *(In most cases, we attempt to give every delegation at least one committee chair or vice chair, if they have at least one qualified applicant.)* All committee chairs are required to travel to a training session on a Sunday afternoon.

Officers

Elected Officers:

Youth Governor, Chief Justice, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate are elected each year to serve in the following year's session.

Appointed Leadership Positions:

The following positions are selected by competitive statewide application:

Supreme Court Associate Justices
 Speaker Pro-Tem or the House
 President Pro-Tem of the Senate
 First Year Program Pro-Tem(s)
 Committee Chairs
 Cabinet Members
 Newspaper Editor
 Clerk of the House
 Secretary of the Senate

Participants interested in applying for appointed leadership positions will be evaluated in part on the following criteria:

1. Age—older students get preference when all other factors are equal.
2. Prior experience at Youth and Government.
3. Advisor recommendation (Advisors are asked to rank students within their delegation if more than one student applies for the same position).

4. Prior experience in other relevant organizations or activities.
5. Quality of Application Essay. The essay counts for a large portion of an applicant's score, so care should be taken.

Appointed Officers:

Other offices are allotted to various delegations, rotated so that delegations get different positions each year. Each delegation selects their officer however they see fit.

Appointed offices include:

Governor's Chief of Staff
 First Year Program Clerk(s)
 Marshall of the Supreme Court
 Clerks of the Supreme Court (2)
 House Sergeant at Arms/Chaplain
 Senate Sergeant at Arms/Chaplain
 First Year Program Sergeant at Arms/Chaplain
 Assistant Secretary of State
 Assistant Clerk of the House
 Assistant Clerk(s) of the First Year Program
 Assistant Secretary of the Senate

Other than the Pro Tempore positions, appointed officers do not debate or vote on bills.

Suggested Position Assignments

The following guidelines are not requirements, but rather are suggestions for how to best place students in suitable positions. *Advisors are welcome to depart from these guidelines as needed to best meet the needs or abilities of individual students.*

<i>Freshmen</i>	Pages, Reporters, First Year Reps, Lobbyists
<i>Sophomores</i>	Reporters, First Year Senators, Lobbyists, Attorneys
<i>Juniors</i>	Reporters, Representatives, Senators, Lobbyists, Attorneys
<i>Seniors</i>	Reporters, Representatives, Senators, Lobbyists, Attorneys

Prioritizing Position Assignments

The following guidelines may help advisors decide which students to assign to a given position based on a combination of age and experience. *Advisors are welcome to depart from these guidelines as needed to best meet the needs or abilities of individual students.*

1. Seniors with previous Youth and Government experience
2. Juniors with previous Youth and Government experience
3. Seniors attending for the first time
4. Juniors attending for the first time
5. Sophomores with previous Youth and Government experience
6. Freshmen with previous Youth and Government experience*
7. Sophomores attending for the first time
8. Freshmen attending for the first time

* A very few pre-high school students are allowed to serve as pages on a case-by-case basis. Advisors knowing mature eighth grade students with an interest in the program may recommend that these students be allowed to attend. Eighth graders would be pages in the program rather than members of the first year program.

Code of Conduct *updated Spring, 2005*

The intent of the Montana YMCA Youth and Government Code of Conduct is to explain personal behavior for participants and advisors consistent with the purpose and objectives of the Youth and Government Program.

The items within this code are designed to protect participants and safeguard the integrity of the program for current and future generations.

It is understood that advisors of local Youth and Government delegations are responsible for the

conduct and welfare of their members at all local, regional and statewide functions.

All advisors may exercise disciplinary authority over *any* participant at regional and statewide functions if needed.

Participants and advisors are encouraged to support one another in upholding the code and avoiding infractions. Everyone will be asked to affirm their commitment to uphold this code.

The Code of Conduct

1. Participants and advisors shall conduct themselves in an orderly and responsible manner at all times. Each person will participate productively on an intellectual, social, and emotional level showing respect for him or herself, others, the democratic process, the mission of the YMCA, all participating delegations, and the Youth and Government Program.
2. Harassment or intimidation through words, gestures, body language, or other menacing behavior will not be tolerated at any Youth and Government function.
3. No individual shall engage in personal attacks, verbal or otherwise, nor use profanity or other offensive language, even while responding to views with which they do not agree.
4. Participants and advisors will attend all sessions and activities unless specific arrangements are made for exceptional reasons. No participant shall leave without approval of his/her advisor and notification of the State Director.
5. Transportation of participants is the responsibility of advisors, parents, or legal guardians. Participants who live outside the Helena area may not use personal automobiles without the express written permission of their delegation advisor and their parent or legal guardian.
6. Each participant is legally and financially liable for removal, defacement, or damage of public or private property including the property of other participants, advisors, staff, schools, the Capitol, businesses, and lodging facilities.
7. Historic preservation of the State Capitol is of utmost importance. Continued use of the Capitol depends upon its proper treatment.
Therefore:
 - a) Behavior with the potential to damage the furnishings or equipment of the Capitol is not allowed.
 - b) Materials and property in the Capitol must not be relocated, removed or tampered with in any manner.
 - c) Food and drink at the Capitol may only be consumed in specifically designated areas of the building.
 - d) Smoking is not allowed anywhere in the building.
 - e) Materials are not to be taped, tacked or otherwise attached to walls, desks, or any other surface of the Capitol except in specifically designated areas.
 - f) Participants and advisors are to show the utmost respect to all individuals visiting or working at the Capitol and the Capitol Complex.
8. Identification badges must be worn by all participants and advisors during all functions. No one will be admitted to any function without a name tag.
9. Possession or use of tobacco, alcohol, controlled substances or weapons is not permitted 24 hours a day during all days of the

- Montana YMCA Youth and Government Session and related programs.
10. Non-participants are not permitted at any activity without the express consent of the State Program staff.
 11. Keeping with the model nature of the program, materials from “real” political campaigns outside the Youth and Government program are not to be worn, displayed or distributed during the program. This rule only affects issues or candidates that are going to appear on real ballots.
 12. Outside guests at lodging facilities are not permitted without the express consent of the delegation advisor and the participant’s parent or legal guardian.
 13. Participants shall not leave lodging facilities without permission from their advisors.
 14. Participants and advisors lodging at Fort Harrison are required to follow all regulations set by Fort Harrison management.
 15. Curfews and additional rules for participants while they occupy lodging facilities will be set and enforced by delegation advisors.
 16. This code serves as a *minimum* standard for behavior. If there is a conflict between school/delegation rules and this code, participants and advisors are to observe the stricter set of rules.

Consequences

This code is enforced with a series of potential consequences for infractions, depending on the nature and severity of the offense. In ascending order, they include:

- A. Discussion of infraction with adult advisors or staff
- B. Suspension from specific activities
- C. Specialized consequence at discretion of Staff or Advisor
- D. Loss of position or privileges
- E. Call to parents, legal guardian or school officials
- F. Expulsion from program/Send home (at own expense)
- G. Contact with law enforcement

Enforcement Guidelines

Code violations should be handled as follows:

1. Code infractions by individuals within a delegation should be handled by the delegation’s advisor whenever possible.
2. Code infractions by individuals outside a delegation should first be brought to the attention of that delegation’s advisor(s) before the state program staff.
3. Code infractions may be brought to the state director when they are not, cannot, or should not be handled within a delegation by its own advisors.
4. If 911 is called, the state program staff must be notified *immediately after* the call is made.

YMCA Mission and Character Development

Mission Statement:

“The Helena Family YMCA is a non-profit organization dedicated to building self-esteem and enriching spirit, mind, and body for persons of all ages and economic levels.”

Character Development is an important part of the mission and values of the YMCA. The YMCA challenge to Youth and Government participants is to accept and demonstrate the positive values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility.

Here are some examples of how these values are lived:

Caring:

- To love others
- To be sensitive to the well-being of others
- To help others

Honesty:

- To tell the truth
- To act in such a way to be worthy of trust
- To have integrity; making sure your actions match your values

Respect:

- To treat others as you would have them treat you
- To value the worth of every person, including you

Responsibility:

- To do what you ought to do
- To be accountable for your behavior and obligations

Dress Code

Attire reflects individual personal attitude and the quality, purpose and dignity of the program.

- The dress code applies to advisors as well as participants. Advisors are expected to enforce the dress code within their own delegations.
- Clothing at all events should be clean and in good repair, free of visible holes or ragged edges. Shoelaces must be tied.
- Costumes are not allowed. Judicial robes may be worn by appropriate members of the court program.
- Individuals may wear small buttons, badges, ribbons or other insignia related to Youth and Government activities. However, content must reflect the letter and spirit of the Youth and Government Code of Conduct.
- Exceptions to this policy may be considered by the state office on a case by case basis

SPECIFICALLY:

- Professional attire is expected at the State Capitol. Casual clothes are not appropriate, including shorts, jeans, printed T-Shirts, and items with visible holes or ragged edges.
 - Suits or jackets are encouraged, but not mandatory.
 - All men/boys should wear collared shirts tucked in and long pants. Ties are encouraged.
 - All women/girls should wear either skirts or pants with appropriate top, dresses, or pantsuits.
- Casual dress (khaki pants, walking shorts, t-shirts without printing, sandals) is acceptable on the first day when there are outdoor activities planned.
- Casual wear (shorts, jeans, tennis shoes, swimming suits) is acceptable during Y-Night.
- Semi-formal or professional attire is appropriate at the Governor's Banquet.

Recommended Schedule for Montana YMCA Youth and Government Clubs

Typical Deadlines

November 1:

Returning schools turn in Intent to Participate cards
(September-February: New School Sign up period)

January 5 (approx.): All schools submit preliminary estimates for seat allocation

February 1:

Request for Supreme Court cases due
“Early Bird” Third Party Platforms Due

February 15: Major Deadline Day. The following items are due:

Registration forms with preregistration fee
Committee Chair Applications
Supreme Court Justice Applications
Governor’s Cabinet Applications
Newspaper Editor Applications

March 1:

Bills due
Lobbyist papers due
All Third Party platforms due

March 15:

Legal Briefs due
Bill rewrites due

April 1:

Justices Bench Memoranda due
Brief rewrites due

April 15:

Reporter’s delegation articles due

Last Sunday of April (even years) OR Second Sunday in May (odd years):

Registration in Helena, State Capitol

May 15:

CONA Applications and proposal topics due

June 1:

Remaining CONA fees due with final draft of proposals

Delegation Organizational Guidelines

October-November:

- Obtain necessary support of school administration, school board and other important parties.
- Obtain any formal approvals required by local school policy.
- Get school absences approved for students in accordance with local school policy.
- Get Youth and Government dates placed on school schedule to minimize potential time conflicts (this could be done in the spring in many cases!)
- Investigate transportation needs and reserve a bus and driver if needed.
- Strategize fund raising needs and goals; begin process of securing necessary funding.
- Inform State Office of Intent to Participate

December:

- Organize meeting of interested participants to fire up interest in the program, gauge likely size of delegation, plan additional recruitment if needed.
- Estimate number of participants for State Office.
- Choose student leadership for club.

January:

- Regular club meetings begin. We recommend a minimum of two meetings in January.
- Investigate current issues relevant to Youth and Government.
- Do preliminary assignment of positions (House, Senate, Press, etc.) based on allocation estimates from state office.
- Begin research for bills, briefs, lobbyist papers, etc.
- **Court cases mailed to club advisors.**

February:

- **Student applications with preregistration fee due Feb. 15 – Remember, students make out the check to YOUR organization – You mail only ONE check with your registrations.**
- Committee Chair Applications Due.
- Newspaper Editor Applications Due.
- Supreme Court Justice Applications due.
- Bills, briefs and lobbyist papers written, revised and polished.
- We recommend 2-3 meetings in February, more if needed.

March:

- **Bills, lobbyist papers and platforms due March 1.**
- **Attorney Briefs due March 15.**
- Bill rewrites must be completed and to state office on March 15.
- Brief rewrites must be completed and to state office by April 1.
- Weekly meetings recommended to practice debating bills, have guest speakers, etc.

April:

- **Billbook released April 1.** Copies mailed to club advisors.
- Deadline for rewritten briefs April 1.
- **Reporters draft and submit one article for session paper by April 15.**
- Officer, Committee Chair and Court Justice regional training sessions.
- Possible regional Attorneys' workshop.

Montana YMCA Youth and Government Program:

Last week of April even years; first week of May in odd years.

May:

- **CONA applications**, preregistration fees and proposal topics **due May 15.**
- Remember to thank local volunteers and sponsors who helped the club go to Y & G!

June:

- CONA proposals and remaining fees due approximately June 1.
- National Youth Governor's Conference, Washington, DC.
- Youth Conference on National Affairs (CONA), Black Mountain, North Carolina.

*Typical Helena Session Schedule for
Montana YMCA Youth and Government Program*

Always check current printed schedule for actual times.

Sunday:

Registration: Capitol Rotunda
Pizza Feed
Orientation Workshops
Committee Organization meetings
Official Welcome
Program day approximately 3 pm to 9 pm

Monday:

Swearing-In Ceremony
Keynote Address
Youth Governor's "State of the State"
Address
Chief Justice's "State of the Judiciary"
Address
First round committee hearings
Model Supreme Court arguments
First Legislative Floor Sessions
Primary Election
Program day approximately 8 am to 6 pm

YMCA Night *approximately 7 pm to 11 pm*
—swimming, movies, basketball, soccer,
weight room access, etc.

Tuesday:

Floor Sessions
Model Supreme Court Arguments
Transmittal Deadline for most bills
Second round committee hearings
Program day approximately 8 am to 6 pm

Governor's Banquet and Dance *7 pm to
midnight*
General Election at Banquet

Wednesday:

Announcement of Election Results
Final Floor Sessions
Final Court Arguments
Showcase Oral Arguments
Awards Ceremony
Closing Ceremonies
Program day approximately 10 am to 2 pm