

WASHINGTON STATE YMCA YOUTH & GOVERNMENT



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**74 Years of Teaching
Democracy to the Next Generation**



PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome Youth & Government Parents,

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 longstanding, 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 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 – All delegates are asked to research current events, take a stand on the issue, and write a piece of legislation. Intellectual honesty and a strong sense of academic ethics are critical to the Y&G process of research and debate.

Respect – Youth & Government delegates will encounter arguments and positions that are at times contrary to their own personal beliefs or feelings. Teens learn to confront these ideas head on in a respectful manner without the need for personal attack on other delegates.

Caring – Teens become members of a delegation that supports and at times will challenge their beliefs and will provide a platform for their voices to be heard by other delegates, adult advisors and elected officials. Our caring adult role models are there to provide guidance, support, structure and boundaries.

Responsibility – A Youth & Government delegation only works as a cohesive unit when each member contributes to the goals for the program. Delegates are taught and are expected to act with a servant leader's heart. It is the responsibility of every delegate and advisor to measure their actions and decisions against the standards of servant leadership.

In this handbook you will find basic information about the program as well as some details regarding your teen's experience. Please feel free to contact me at 425 357 3034 or nmartin@ymca-snoco.org if you have any further questions.

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

Nolan Martin,
Youth and Teen Director

Washington State YMCA Youth & Government

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 provide training and experience through active participation in the three branches of government: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial
- 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"

Historical Review of Youth Legislature 1947-2020

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 in Washington 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.

The 73rd session of the Washington Youth Legislature brought 200 students together virtually for the first ever Virtual Youth Legislative Session in 2020. Multiple pieces of legislation were passed by delegates and supported by Youth Governor Madeline Ellis from the Whatcom Delegation. Legislation ranged in scope from gun control to legalization of drugs. This year Youth Governor has yet to be elected but will lead students into the 74th year of the Youth & Government program in Washington.

There are many reasons why YMCA Youth & Government has remained so successful over the past 74 years. Foremost has to be a deep and abiding belief in the importance of democracy to our nation and the

realization that comes 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.

Participation in YMCA Youth & Government

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. International students and/or exchange students may visit and participate in YMCA Youth & Government in any of the roles open to delegates in their grade level.

Each student in YMCA Youth Legislature must meet the minimum requirements stated below to be eligible to attend the YMCA Youth Legislature Session in Olympia:

1. Attend at least one district event.
2. Be a member in good standing with the student's local delegation.
3. Have on file with the State Office the original signed Medical Release and Code of Conduct and Dress Contract.
4. Pay all state, district and delegation fees in a timely manner. (See delegation calendar for payment dates)
5. Submit all written materials/paperwork required by the YMCA, State Office or district coordinator to home corps advisor and REGY (i.e. registration forms, legislative bills, press, lobbyist materials) by the due dates. (See delegation calendar for details)

Each delegation is responsible for maintaining a ratio of at least one adult advisor to every ten students (1:10) during all local, district and statewide Youth Legislature events. At least 50% of a delegation's adult advisors must be 21 years of age or older by the time the session begins. All advisors who do not meet the 21 years of age requirement or who have not been out of the program for at least two years must be approved by the State Office.

Student Leadership

The YMCA Youth Legislative Session is intended to be a student-run activity. All participants should take responsibility for the smooth and effective operation of the session.

The student leadership, elected and appointed, has the major responsibility for the session. Those students who assume leadership positions will be expected to take that responsibility seriously, train for, and perform the duties of their chosen office. They must be familiar with the requirements of the role and be willing to take on ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES of that role.

All elected and appointed student leaders (with the exception of the Major Office Candidates, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, Fair Elections Commissioners, and Assistant Reading Clerks) **MUST** attend the virtual spring leadership training weekend in April. (See delegation calendar for dates)

Students running for office must be made aware of the additional responsibilities and time commitments that come with a leadership position. These responsibilities may include, but are not limited to: attending Leadership Training, attending Program Committee Meetings and attending other program events throughout the year.

Replacement of District Elected Officers (including Major Office Candidates):

Elected student officers who, for any reason, are unable to fulfill their responsibilities will be replaced by the person who received the next highest number of votes at their District Event.

Replacement of Major Officers:

Elected Major Officers who are not able to fulfill their year-long term will be replaced by the candidate who received the next highest amount of votes during the previous year's statewide election.

DELEGATE Code of Conduct and Dress

Program Purpose

The purpose of the Washington YMCA Youth Legislature Program is to develop dedication to the values of democracy and an awareness of the need for participation and leadership in society. The YMCA believes strongly in the development of character through the principles of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. It is expected every delegate and advisor abide by this contract. Your cooperation is mandatory, and will help ensure continuation of the privilege of using the State Capitol, and other facilities utilized during the program.

Program Ground Rules

- No Alcohol
- No Drugs
- No Sexual activity (including but not limited to certain types of dancing)
- No Weapons
- No Smoking or use of other type of tobacco products
- No Violent or malicious behavior

*Failure to comply with any of the above standards may result in your expulsion from the program and your dismissal from the premises. Transportation will be arranged at your own expense.

ADVISOR Code of Conduct

Conduct at Youth & Government Activities

1. A physical ratio of 1 chaperone to 10 students should be maintained at all times.
2. Advisors/Chaperones are to read and understand the "Advisor Responsibilities" section of the Youth Legislature Handbook.
3. Advisors are responsible for ensuring their delegates abide by the code of conduct and dress at all times.
4. Advisors/Chaperones are expected to attend all event activities and meetings – students should not be in attendance at ANY portion of an event without a chaperone.
5. Relationships between delegates and chaperones are prohibited.
6. Advisors/Chaperones will adhere to the Youth Legislature Dress Code.

District Events

The Washington State YMCA Youth & Government program is offered to teens across our state. Teens are part of either a YMCA delegation, public school delegation or home school delegation. To better assist advisors in their role, the state has been divided into 7 districts. Each district has a volunteer District Coordinator who works with local delegations throughout the year.

The delegations from the YMCA of Snohomish County are located in District 1 which covers the North West corner of Washington. District events are designed to create a sense of community, give delegates additional information/training in their area of interest, hold elections for allocated leadership positions and to assist in preparing our district delegates for the Youth Legislature experience. Please refer to our delegation calendar for specific dates and locations of events.

Delegation Basics

The YMCA Youth & Government program is open to teens in grades 8-12. The YMCA of Snohomish County currently has 1 Virtual delegation that encompasses all branches and School Districts in Snohomish County. Meetings occur Monday from 4pm-5:30pm and Wednesdays from 5pm-6:30pm using the Zoom platform.

During our delegation meetings the teens can expect to learn the following:

- Improved public speaking/debate skills
- The art of compromise and the importance of teamwork
- Debate current issues facing our state, nation and globe
- Meet other teens from our district and around the state
- The difference between the 3 types of legislation they may write
- Where to look for bill ideas
- How to write a piece of legislation
- How a bill becomes a law
- Proper parliamentary procedures
- The various roles they can take on during Youth Legislature

Teens within our delegations may have differing political viewpoints that span the spectrum. Our delegation is non-partisan based, which assists in challenging, clarifying, and enhancing overall debate of the issues. Students are taught to separate ideas from proponents when debating and respect those differing viewpoints while still holding theirs. Many controversial topics do come up during debate; as long as students are seriously and respectfully discussing these ideas we do not censor bill topics.

Communication: Delegation advisors communicate directly with teens (at meetings and through app based communication systems) about upcoming events and deadlines. It is expected that delegates inform parents of events, payment reminders and important program information.

Delegation Expectations

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

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 programming will be removed from the program.

Sex includes, but is not limited to: any physical sexual behavior between individuals, sexual explicit comments/innuendos, and/or sharing of any sexual images.

Alcohol includes, but is not limited to: purchasing, consuming or distributing any alcoholic beverage.

Drugs include, but are not limited to: purchasing, distribution, or use of any illegal substance or prescription drug not prescribed to the intended user.

Tobacco includes, but is not limited to: purchasing, distribution or use of any tobacco product.

Violence/Malicious Behavior includes, but is 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.

Delegation Fees

There are **two** program fees Youth and Government: Delegation and State. State Conference fees are \$200 and cover State Office Staffing and Materials. The YMCA of Snohomish County program fee is \$100. Delegation program fees include district fees, delegation materials, and staff costs.

Financial assistance is available. Please ask Nolan for details.

Fee Schedule

Delegation program registration and fees are due by December 18th. State program registration and fees due February 21st.

The payments are scheduled according to payment due dates from the Youth & Government state office and our district. Once the program has begun, any fees paid are non-refundable. Please note that a **written** cancellation notice with participant and parent/guardian signature is required to officially cancel if participant is under the age of 18 years old.

Fundraising Opportunity

Individual and group fundraising opportunities are available. Staff will support and manage any youth led fundraising opportunities. Fundraising project selection will be up to the youth to determine. If a fundraiser is undertaken, all youth will be expected to participate.

Important Dates

October 19 th	YMCA of Snohomish County Registration Opens
November 2 nd	First Meeting of the Year
December 18 th	YMCA of Snohomish County Registration Closes/Fee Due
February 1 st	State Office Registration Opens
February 28 th	State Office Registration/Fee Due
May 5-8	YMCA Youth Legislative Session
May 14 th	End of Program

Program Contact information:

Nolan Martin Youth and Teen Program Director P 425-357-3034 E nmartin@ymca-snoco.org