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Youth And Government Manual
Massachusetts YMCA Youth And Government



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MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT MANUAL

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Frequently Asked Questions

State Assembly Dates:	Sunday, April 2nd –Tuesday, April 4th						
Location:	Wyndham Beacon Hill Hotel, Boston MA						
Webpage:	https://www.ymcayag.org/ma/						
Registration:	Submit registration, bills, and payment. Due March 15th, 2022.						
Fees:	<table><tr><td>Students (4 to a room)</td><td>\$360.00</td></tr><tr><td>Adults (Shared Room with one other adult)</td><td>\$360.00</td></tr><tr><td>Private Room, Adult or Student</td><td>\$650.00</td></tr></table>	Students (4 to a room)	\$360.00	Adults (Shared Room with one other adult)	\$360.00	Private Room, Adult or Student	\$650.00
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Private Room, Adult or Student	\$650.00						
Meals:	Dinner will be provided on Sunday and Monday. A variety of cafes, restaurants and other options will be available for breakfast and lunch, or students may bring food.						
Forms:	Student Registration Form Adult Registration Form Bill Submission Form						
Financial Aid	The YMCA is happy to offer individual need-based assistance to ensure that all students have the chance to participate. Students can apply at: Financial Aid						

Massachusetts YMCA Youth And Government

Massachusetts Youth And Government (YAG) is a three-day experiential learning conference in which students participate directly in a simulation of the State's democratic process. Acting as Senators and Representatives, students write, debate, and vote on legislation that affects them. Officers elected by students serve as Governor, Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, and are appointed to other conference leadership positions. During the entire process students are supported by YMCA professionals, teachers, advisors, alumni, parents, and volunteers. YAG offers students the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of issues, develop critical thinking skills, and articulate their beliefs while engaging constructively with those who hold like and opposing views.

Youth And Government is a national government and politics program that promotes civic literacy as well as community service.

Legislation first proposed in Youth And Government now is seen in more than three hundred actual laws in states throughout the country, including those that:

- Require signal lights at railroad crossings
- Reclaim strip mined land
- Hold 18 year olds responsible for contracts they sign
- Create the white line on the side of the road
- Establish "right turn on red"
- Established Special Education
- Provide for driver's education
- Promote campaign finance reform
- Provide for medical malpractice reform.
- Ratification of the 29th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States granting the vote to 18 year olds.

Youth And Government Use of the Capitol Building

The privilege to use the Capitol Building and its rooms as part of the program is one we are excited to offer as part of our program, but it is never guaranteed. Due to the variety of safety protocols, travel considerations, and other potential issues, the Capitol trip may be canceled at any point and the conference will continue at the hotel. This is never our goal, but it must be stated as it is a possibility.

Sample YMCA Youth And Government Schedule (Subject to change)

Sunday, April 2 nd	Meeting	Location
4:00 p.m.	Registration and Check-in Opens	
6:00 p.m.	Opening Session and Dinner (All Delegates and Adults)	Main Ballroom
6:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Committee Meetings (Delegates and Dockets will be pre-assigned)	
9:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.	Closing Session & Social Time	Main Ballroom
10:00pm	Evening Delegation Check-In	
10:30 p.m.	Curfew (Students in Rooms)	
Monday, April 3rd		
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast	
8:45 a.m.	Opening Session	Main Ballroom
9:00 a.m. -9:30 a.m.	Travel to Capitol(0.5 mile walk, transportation can be arranged as needed)	
9:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m	House and Senate Chambers Begin	
11:30 a.m - 1:30 p.m	Lunch and Tours	
1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m	House and Senate Chambers Resume	
4:30pm	Return to Hotel(0.5 mile walk, transportation can be arranged as needed)	
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Dinner	
7:00 p.m.	Delegation Caucus	
7:15 p.m. – 9:15 p.m.	Evening Recreation (Movie, Games, etc...)	
	Movie	
	Karaoke	
	Games and Crafts	
	Quiet Room	
9:15 p.m.	Closing Session	
10:00pm	Evening Delegation Check-In	
10:30 p.m.	Curfew (Students in Rooms)	
Tuesday, April 4th		
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Final Business	
10:00 a.m.	Closing Session	
11:30a.m.	Departure	

How do we get started?

The YMCA Youth And Government Program is designed to allow students in 9th-12th grade to gain a basic understanding of their State Legislature. We design the process with the goal of being accessible for all students and maximizing the efforts and time of all adults involved. Every group is different, and the Y staff will work with you to help create a plan that works for you specifically, but the entire process falls into three basic steps. Each group has to identify the students, help them write their bills, then prepare them for the conference.

You can easily have a successful with group with 3 basic steps, each of which can be its own meeting. However, you can continue to add benefit and value to the experience by expanding or having more as you see fit.

- **Step 1: Choose Your Group**
- **Step 2: Write Your Bills**
- **Step 3: Prepare Your Team**
-

For all of these meetings we have scripts and materials we are happy to share with you, but Y staff are trained and ready to come help lead these meetings if you would prefer.

Interest Meeting

Once you have decided who to offer the chance to, many groups will have a meeting where they explain the program and encourage these students to participate. A Y staff member is always happy to help with these meetings by being present to speak at them, and/or by helping prepare for them.

Bill Writing Workshop

Much like the Interest meeting, this is a chance for the students to go through a process that teaches them how to write a Bill from start to finish. Y Staff are happy to come and conduct these meetings, and you can schedule them any time.

Parliamentary Procedure & Debate Training

Once the Bills and Registration are submitted, you can turn your focus to preparing for the specifics of the conference. This includes Parliamentary Procedure, Speech Writing, and Public Speaking. This training helps students through the process of each of these three and prepares them for debate at the actual conference.

Step 1: Choosing Your Group

Every group requires an adult leader, and our term for this person is the Advisor. If you are reading this, then you are likely the Advisor or considering it. Thank you. Our Advisors are the reason this program exists, and every year hundreds of students have their lives improved because of people like you.

Picking the Group

Every Advisor needs to find a group of students that they are willing to bring on this experience, and trust to be mature enough to handle the opportunity. How you select these students is up to you and your school. All 9th-12th graders are eligible on our end, but there are many examples of methods schools use. Identifying the students is also very important to the program's success. There is not an ideal student to recruit for YAG. However, we have found that those who are interested in public policy, mock trial, government, debating, law, media, journalism, and current events, or students who just like to get to know people are a great place to start. Many schools open the process to all who are interested, some teachers choose to teach the program as an elective class, others use the program only for their Student Council or gifted programs. Often groups in their first year will hand pick a few students as a trial.

Group Size

There is no specific size that a group must be. Groups as large as 150 and as small as 1 have had great success in our programs. Travel to and from the conference, as well as the free adult for every 15 students are important considerations when deciding the size of the group. The most important thing is that the Advisor is comfortable with the group individually and as a whole.

Interest Meeting

Once you have decided who to offer the chance to, many groups will have a meeting where they explain the program and encourage these students to participate. A Y staff member is always happy to help with these meetings by being present to speak at them, and/or by helping prepare for them.

Intent Form

The Intent to Participate Form reserves space for your delegation at the conference. This number is your best guess of how many students and adults you expect to bring to the conference. We do not need individual names at this time, and you may change this number as circumstances change. [Reserve Space for Your Group](#)

Research Challenge

At the end of an interest meeting, or once the students are identified, they must then be given the challenge to start deciding what they might want to write a bill about. They should be encouraged to bring some ideas to the next meeting, where they will decide who their partners are and what they are going to write about. Resources at [the Advisor Resource Center](#) will help students with this process.

Step 2: Writing Your Bills

Once you have identified which students will be participating and given them the chance to do some research, it is time for the Bill Writing Process. Writing and presenting a bill is one of the most important portions of this process. Every student should be a part of helping to draft and prepare the team presenting each bill. There are several materials and worksheets available for students thinking about writing a bill at this link: [Bill Writing Guide](#)

Bill Author Teams

Students may write bills individually or in teams. Students do NOT have to write a bill.

The legislation the students present is not expected to be tedious or lengthy. While many ideas discussed first by the Youth Legislature have gone on to become law, the first priority is familiarizing your students with their rights and duties as citizens, and the importance of healthy and respectful debate on public issues. This program builds students confidence by showing them how important their voice can be, and how other young people care about their communities.

Bill Ideas

Students should write about things they care about and consult adults they know about what ideas to write about. A great resource for finding out more about the current laws is <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws> where you can search all current Massachusetts laws.

Practice Debates

You can have practice debates among your students on each other's bills, teaching about the importance of perspective, and allowing students to realize and anticipate arguments both for and against their idea so they are better prepared.

Bill Submission

Bills are due with your Registration on March 15th

Bill Presentation

Once the bill is written students will need to prepare for their presentation of the bill for debate at the conference. Debate for each bill follows the same process. Authors will be able to speak at the beginning and end of debate on their bill, and will have a total of 4 minutes to divide between their opening and summation speeches. Between these speeches there will be a 2-minute period where delegates may ask the Authors technical, fact based questions. That will be followed by alternating speeches in favor and opposed to the bill. Debate will close with the Author's summation, then the bills will be voted upon.

Step 3: Preparing Your Team

Once your Bills have been submitted, your group can turn its focus to preparing for the debate aspect of the conference. At the conference every bill will be presented, and when students are not presenting their own bill they will be debating those presented by others. This is to be done in a respectful and sincere manner, but it is also a chance for students to understand the power of their voice and their right to speak up on important issues. In order to prepare for this process, students need to practice and understand the Parliamentary Procedure that will be used, the purpose and goals of Debate, and how to give an effective speech.

Additionally, success at the conference is not solely based on a student's participation in debate but all portions of the conference. Thus students should learn about the Conference Bill Book, how to read the Conference Schedule, and that it is important for them to seek to interact with students from other schools during the social time as well.

Parliamentary Procedure & Debate

During the debate process students must follow Parliamentary Procedure, which includes getting recognized to speak, addressing the chair, and a few other small details. A more detailed explanation is available in our Debate Guidelines handout, and YMCA staff is happy to share or perform our Parliamentary Procedure and Debate workshop with your students. These materials are available at [the Advisor Resource Center](#)

Bill Book

The Bill Book is each student's guide to the Conference. Upon Arrival each person will receive a bill book that contains the Conference Schedule, Maps of each location, a copy of every bill to be presented, and any other relevant info. Students should always have these unless told otherwise.

Student Roles

Representatives & Senators

All students who participate will be serving as a Senator or Representative. This role will be assigned by the conference based on logistical need. Some students will also have the chance to serve in additional specialized roles.

Specialized Roles

Bill Author

Select students will be chosen from each group to prepare and present a piece of legislation.

Candidate

Any 10th or 11th grader may be nominated to run for office. They need to be confident, responsible, and a good leader. They will give a speech in front of the General Assembly and must be willing to serve throughout the year, including attending the conference the following year as a 9th grade student. For more info, see the Candidates & Elections section on the next page.

Committee Chair

Each Delegation may appoint one student, preferably an 12th grader, to serve as a Committee Chair. This person will chair or co-chair a committee. They need to be confident, responsible, and a good leader. They will receive special training during the practice session on the first night as well as preparatory materials before the conference.

Candidates & Elections

The Massachusetts Youth And Government Program is a student led experience, and Officers are selected for the following year through an election. There can be only one candidate per delegation, and they are all in the same election. The Three top vote getters will be selected as Governor, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate and will serve a one-year term.

- One Candidate in 10th or 11th Grade from each group may run for Office.
- All Candidates must submit the [Candidate Commitment Form](#) signed by the Candidate, his or her guardian, and his or her Student Y Advisor.
- All Candidates and Officers must be in good standing with their school administration.
- Campaigns may not hand out any items nor bring or create any items to use to promote the candidate. Social Media and Internet posts are also not allowed.
- Campaigns will only use in person-interactions and the speeches the students give to promote their candidate.
- Each candidate will run on an issue-based platform wherein he or she will explain his or her views on state issues to voters. Platforms will be based around three issues:
 - An issue that affects the candidate's community service interests
 - An issue that affects the candidate's local community
 - An issue that affects the commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole
- Each Candidate for office will have two minutes to give his or her speech on the final morning. At least one minute of the speech must be dedicated to the Candidate's platform(s). The remaining time may be used as the Candidate sees fit.
- Candidate speeches may *not* include use of props, including people as props (i.e. audience participation).
- All speeches must be pre-approved by YMCA Staff at the opening meeting.
- In debate, only Candidates may identify themselves as such. When addressing the chair, a Candidate may identify himself or herself by saying, "John Doe, Candidate from X School, Sir or Madame Chair," however, another member of said delegation would be out of order in saying, "Ambassador Joe Smith, representing X School, home of Candidate John Doe, Sir or Madame Chair."
- Failure by a Candidate or his/her delegation to conduct a campaign in an appropriate manner will result in the Candidate being removed from the ballot.
- Additional campaign restrictions may be drawn up according to the wishes of the host site of the conference.

Failure to comply with Candidate Guidelines will result in:

- A warning will be given following the first offense.
- If second offense occurs, the Candidate's school will lose voting privileges for the office for which the Candidate is running, and the Candidate may be disqualified at the discretion of the Massachusetts YMCA YAG Director.

Awards & Recognitions

The Massachusetts YMCA Youth And Government program presents awards on the final morning of the conference in an effort to recognize and reward the achievements of our delegates and Advisors. Awards are decided upon through Advisor and Volunteer nominations and Y-Staff observations.

Outstanding Bills

Awarded to the authors of the most innovative, well-researched, and thought-provoking bills based on advisor nominations and student ranking.

Outstanding Speakers

Awarded to the top delegates most frequently nominated by advisors and Y-staff based on their presence and performance while in committees and Chambers as well as behavior exemplifying the four core values.

Outstanding Delegates

Awarded to the top delegates most frequently nominated by advisors and Y-staff based on their presence and performance while in committees and Chambers as well as behavior exemplifying the four core values.

Advisors

Massachusetts YMCA Youth And Government could not function without our outstanding Advisors. They function as coaches, mentors, and teachers to the members of their delegation and are essential to the smooth functioning of the conference. They inspire and motivate, while allowing their students to take on leadership roles. Advisors are responsible for registration and supervision at conferences, but more importantly, Massachusetts YMCA Advisors change teens' lives every day.

Prior to Conference

- The Intent to Participate Form reserves space for your delegation at the conference. This number is your best guess of how many students and adults you expect to bring to the conference. We do not need individual names at this time, and you may change this number as circumstances change. Groups may attend without submission, but space is not guaranteed. [Reserve Space for Your Group](#)

At Conference Meetings

New Advisor Orientation

- This meeting is mandatory for first-time advisors.
- Overview: We will tell you where we need you to be when – the Y-Staff depends on advisors to help run the conference.
- Expectations: We will explain what we need from you at various times to make the conference run smoothly.
- Contact: We will need a reachable cell phone number from at least one advisor in each delegation.

All Advisor Meeting

- Pairing first time advisors with experienced mentor.
- Explanation of any conference changes.
- All students will be supervised in the New Delegate Orientation

At Conference Responsibilities

- Make sure participants are adhering to the conference schedule at all times.
- Help control undertone during meetings from all participants, not just members of your delegation.
- Enforce dress code for your participants.
- Ensure participants know which bus to ride to and from the Statehouse.
- May confiscate cell phones being used by participants during meetings. Phones will be turned over to Y-Staff to be picked up by the participant's advisor after that meeting or by the participants at the end of the conference.
- Serve during free time as dance monitors, hall patrol, etc.
- Please know where your participants are at all times, follow the dress code, respect delegates and other advisors.
- Please refrain from using computers, phones, headphones, etc or talking loudly while participants are in sessions.
- Advisors set the tone for all participants at the conference.

Student Incidents and Exceptions

Arriving Late

- Y-Staff must be informed of late arrivals at check-in and again upon arrival of the participant.

Leaving Early (for sickness or other reason)

- Participants must clear travel plans with advisor and Y-Staff.
- Parent/Guardian must check participant out face-to-face with advisor and Y-Staff, and provide valid photo ID.

Behavioral Incidents

If state or federal law is broken, Y-Staff will notify parent/guardian and law enforcement and participant will be sent home. If code of conduct rule is violated, advisors and/or Y-Staff may take disciplinary actions at their discretion, including, but not limited to:

- Calls to parent/guardian
- Incident report filled out, signed
- Participant sent home
- School policies implemented