

Youth Advocate Program 2027

Frequently Asked Questions

The Youth Advocate Program is a four-month civic engagement and advocacy training program that gives students the opportunity to share their Y story with policymakers in Washington, D.C. Youth Advocates will learn about the history and mission of the YMCA, what effective advocacy looks like, and how to illustrate the impact of the Y by sharing their Y story with Members of Congress.

APPLICATIONS

Who should apply to the Youth Advocate Program?

- High school students interested in gaining practical advocacy experience should consider applying. Freshman, sophomores, and juniors will be prioritized so that insights from the conference can be shared with peers and Y program leaders.

Why is there a new requirement to have at least two years of cumulative experience with the YMCA?

- We added this requirement to help ensure participants have enough exposure to YMCA programs, activities, or membership to share meaningful insights and experiences about the impact of the Y. We understand that every YMCA journey is different, and applicants may meet this requirement through a combination of experiences such as camp, sports, afterschool programs, membership, leadership programs, or other opportunities offered by the Y.

Can I use AI to support the writing of my application?

- No, the use of generative AI tools is prohibited for this application because their use inhibits our ability to truly learn and understand you as a candidate. This applies to all stages of the process (brainstorming, researching, polishing, outlining, and writing). We want to hear your answers in your voice.

Can I submit letters of recommendation along with my application?

- No, additional materials outside of the application will not be considered.

When will student selections be made?

- Students will be notified of their acceptance into the program by October 30, 2026. Students will be notified if they were not accepted by November 15, 2026.

If I am not selected, can I receive feedback on my application?

- No, unfortunately due to the volume of applications, we cannot provide feedback on your application. However, if you are not selected, we encourage you to reapply next year!

Do applicants who are 18 years old still need to provide parent/guardian information?

- Yes, applicants who are 18 years old still need to provide parent/guardian information. We will use this information to provide any important updates or in the event of an emergency.

How can I apply to the Youth Advocate Program?

- You can submit your application online at: <https://www.ymcayag.org/yap/>. The deadline to apply is September 30, 2026.

What parental/guardian consent is required to participate in the program?

- Once students have been selected to participate in the program, parents or guardians will have to register their children and submit parental consent waivers and other required forms.

TRAVEL AND LOGISTICS

What costs or fees are associated with participation?

- Thanks to philanthropic support, conference registration, travel, accommodations, and onsite meals will be covered by Y-USA. Students will only be responsible for meals on travel days and small metro costs (\$10-\$15).

Do I need to travel to and from Washington, DC with a parent or Y chaperone?

- No, students will travel individually to Washington, DC by plane, train, or car. Students will be paired with a chaperone immediately upon arrival at the airport or train station and will remain with a chaperone for the entirety of the program until their departure.

Do I need to book my own travel?

- Students will book their travel through Y-USA's travel agency. All travel costs will be covered by Y-USA. Students will receive further instructions on how to book their travel after being accepted to the program.

While in DC, will I have down time to visit with family or friends in the area?

- No, students will not be permitted to visit relatives or friends in the area during their time in DC. Our program is an excellent learning opportunity for students and prioritizes time spent with other Youth Advocates and Y leaders.

Will I be sharing a hotel room?

- Yes, students will share a room with one or two other participants of the same sex. Students will be matched with participants from other states and may not change rooms.

PROGRAM CONTENT

When are the training sessions?

- Virtual trainings will take place on Sundays from 4:00-5:00pm ET on 11/15, 12/13, 1/24, and 2/21. The in-person conference is from February 28-March 3, 2027.

What happens if I miss a training session?

- Attendance is mandatory for every training session, but we do understand that emergencies or unexpected situations arise. However, if students miss more than two webinars and/or do not complete two or more assignments, they will be removed from the program.

What will I be doing while in Washington, DC?

- You can expect a mix of programming during National Advocacy Days, including learning sessions with other adults on navigating DC politics, telling your story, the Y's policy priorities, and more. There is also student-specific programming that includes tours of historical sites and fun activities!

What are YMCA of the USA's federal policy priorities?

- The Y advocates for policy solutions that address critical issues in our three areas of focus: youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. You can learn more about our federal policy priorities at <https://www.ymca.org/get-involved/advocate>

Will I meet with Members of Congress?

- We intend for students to meet with their Member of Congress while accompanied by their alliance or local Y. Unfortunately, Members' schedules may change at the last minute, causing some students to meet with staff members instead. However, we will ensure each student has several meetings on Capitol Hill to share their Y story.

What will I talk about with my Member of Congress?

- Students will be sharing their Y story and connect them with the Y's legislative priorities. We must also remain bipartisan and require that students put aside party affiliation to advance priorities important to the Y.

Will I be responsible for scheduling my own meetings on Capitol Hill?

- No, please do not schedule any meetings with your Members of Congress. All meeting requests will be coordinated by your alliance and shared with you.