

# **COLORADO YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAM**

## **2007 ADVISOR MANUAL**

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>LETTER FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>WHY YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WHAT IS YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HOW THE MODEL LEGISLATURE WORKS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>THE PARTNERSHIP THAT WORKS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EXPECTATIONS OF ADVISORS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DEADLINES</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DELEGATION SIZE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CODE OF CONDUCT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DRESS CODE</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2007 CALENDAR</b>	<b>9</b>



## COLORADO YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

*Colorado Youth in Government State Office:  
27151 East Lakeview Dr. Aurora, CO 80016  
720-870-2221*

[www.coloradoyig.org](http://www.coloradoyig.org)

August 1, 2007

Dear Advisor,

I would like to acquaint you with a fantastic civics education program that is run by the YMCA's of Colorado. Youth and Government takes place every fall with the program culminating in a three day model legislature at the State Capitol.

Students take on the roles of governor, senators, representatives, lobbyists, and others during the three day assembly. Each student is required to submit at least one original bill to debate during committee sessions and on the floor of the House and Senate. Through this process, students participating in the program gain knowledge of governmental organization as well as legislative process and structure.

Last year, notable politicians such as, Former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm, Colorado Secretary of State Gigi Dennis, and Colorado Attorney General John Suthers, all took time out of their busy schedules to speak to and interact with our participants.

Youth in Government is truly a fantastic experience for all involved. Please read through the following information in this advisor manual and feel free to contact me at 720-870-2221 or email [karmitage@denverymca.org](mailto:karmitage@denverymca.org). Also, our website is [www.coloradoyig.org](http://www.coloradoyig.org).

We would be honored if your high school and its students were among the participants for our 2007 program.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Armitage  
Youth in Government Program Director

## **WHY YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?**

In Colorado, an informed and participating electorate, which shares a common value system, is crucial for building strong communities. Young people need to understand that they can have an effect on their communities, their state, and their country, through their actions. Youth in Government strives to give youth both the tools and the character values, which will empower them to solve problems within the established system of government. Participants in the Model Legislature are provided an arena to test their beliefs, to share their frustrations, to examine their ethics, and broaden their knowledge. Emphasizing the four core values of the YMCA – Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility – the Youth in Government Program works to produce young adults that will accept the challenge of leading their generation into the new millennium.

## **WHAT IS YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT?**

The Colorado YMCA Model Legislature is a statewide youth educational program involving over 150 high school freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, in a "hands on" experience. Since its inception 64 years ago, the program has used a variety of activities to build, encourage, and strengthen those life assets and character traits that will help high school youth become involved, responsible adults who are decent and respected citizens. The tool used is a high quality experiential and educational simulation based upon Colorado's State government. The program is very comprehensive, and its impact on the youth participants is dramatic.

The Model Legislature teaches the values of democracy by creating citizen leaders from a cross section of the State's high school population, providing them with the opportunity to experience government first hand and to learn how to solve community problems through the democratic process. The program also helps develop within these youth an attitude of self help and self confidence for their personal futures.

## **HOW THE MODEL LEGISLATURE WORKS**

The program begins at the beginning of each school year when schools begin to assemble their delegations. Students begin to think about and discuss issues facing Colorado, as well as ways to implement their solutions through the legislative and judicial processes. During a three-month period, the teen delegates write bills, prepare briefs, select governmental positions to role play, attend a pre-legislative conference (in October), and run for various elected offices. The program reaches its peak in Denver at the State Capitol with the convening of the three-day Model Legislature each November (typically the three days preceding Thanksgiving). There, "real" government moves over and the teen delegates "take over", using the historic halls, chambers, and offices of our State Capitol.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM**

- To aid high school students to gain knowledge of governmental organization and structure through participation in some of its processes.
- To increase understanding and appreciation of the legislative processes through participating in committees, debating on the floor of the House and Senate, and receiving leadership training from those resource persons who are members of the various state departments.
- To expand high school student's interest in and knowledge of the current problems of the state of Colorado.
- To contribute to an awareness of the effect of personal interest and activity on governmental operations.
- To see the importance and significance of high school students in the betterment of their community.
- To know the governmental agencies that exists to perform various services.
- To increase the ability of high school student participants to organize ideas clearly and concisely and to present them persuasively.
- To provide additional opportunities to develop the skill of public speaking.
- To foster relationships that makes it possible to better understand others.
- To help develop the ability to take victory with humility and defeat without discouragement.
- To stimulate the knack of learning from an opponent.
- To inspire the use of the YMCA's core values - caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility - as the fundamentals in the evaluation of discussions, decisions, or acts.
  - ✓ CARING – Youth in Government provides a *caring* atmosphere that supports and at times challenges students' beliefs and provides a platform for their voices to be heard by other teens, adults, and elected officials.
  - ✓ HONESTY – Delegates are asked to conduct research into current topics and write model legislation (bills). Intellectual *honesty* and a strong sense of academic ethics are critical to the YIG process of research and debate.
  - ✓ RESPECT – YIG delegates will be presented with arguments and positions that are at times contrary to their own feelings and beliefs. Teens learn to confront those ideas head on in a *respectful* manner without the need for personal attacks on the presenter.
  - ✓ RESPONSIBILITY – Delegates are expected to take responsibility for their actions during the program, including adhering to the code of conduct and the dress code, and arriving promptly for all activities.

## **THE PARTNERSHIP THAT WORKS**

Youth in Government is a joint effort between your high school and the statewide Youth in Government office. Working together, we strive to offer each delegate a quality learning and social experience that will enhance their high school years.

Each delegation must have one “Lead Advisor” for their group. This individual will be the main point of contact for the state office and be responsible for providing leadership and direction for the delegation at all levels of the program.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF ADVISORS**

- Conduct a program that is run in accordance with the rules and expectations of the state office.
- Having a basic understanding of state judicial and legislative processes is helpful.
- Be a positive role model to delegates and an effective representative of the program.
- Be organized, attentive to detail, and have good follow through skills.
- Ensure that the YIG program and YMCA policies are adhered to at all times.
- Actively support the YIG program goals and objectives.
- Be a source of unbiased, objective information, as requested by delegates.

## **ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Ensure that the YIG Code of Conduct is understood and agreed to by all delegates and parents. Each advisor also commits to this code.
- Attend advisor meetings and assist with general conference duties (Please note: while it is highly recommend, it is NOT required that advisors attend either the pre-legislative session or the general assembly.)
- Tasks may include recruiting, training, and supervising students to form a delegation.
- Act as a liaison between the YMCA and the YIG participants at your school.
- Communicate with parents regarding opportunities, events, and fees in regards to the program.
- Establish your students’ criteria for participation in the program within the guidelines set forth by the state office (for instance, some advisors give their students extra credit for participation, etc.).
- Act as a resource base and help students identify other sources of information or knowledge.

- Receive, read, and understand all program bulletins and assure all deadlines are met.
- Relay all communications regarding the program to the individual delegates.
- Facilitate leadership opportunities within your delegation. While this is a student run program, it is important to know the limits and abilities of your students and set them up for success. Please make sure they have all of the skills they need in order to lead effectively.
- Facilitate the creation of a strong team within your delegation.
- Work with delegates to develop a process for bill development and selection. Ensure that appropriate bill formats are followed.
- Organize transportation to and from each conference.
- Enforce the dress code at the pre-legislative and general assembly conferences.
- Schools are responsible for the immediate removal of any delegate expelled by the Youth in Government Program. The state office expects each school to initially be prepared to cover any financial consequences involved with sending a delegate home with the understanding that these costs will ultimately be borne by the parents/guardian of the expelled child.

## **DEADLINES**

There are several deadlines over the course of a YIG year, and it is important to understand the ramifications of missing those deadlines:

- If your students' conference registration forms are not in on time, they may not be allowed to participate.
- If your students fail to submit their delegation legislation (bills) on time, they may not make it into the Bill Book.
- If any of your candidate's applications for office are not submitted on time, the candidate will be disqualified and barred from running or applying for an office.

The strict adherence to the deadlines is not meant to be a punishment to students that fail to meet them. The rules are in place because so much work is predicated on the receipt of the paperwork and any delay is both unfair to those who met the deadline and unfair to those whose work depends upon it.

## **DELEGATION SIZE (WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?)**

In the course of the YIG program year, you may encounter questions or statements expressed about delegation size:

- What's the right size?
- Why do some schools have 6 and some have 40?

- We'll only be powerful if we are a large delegation.
- The large delegations dominate in the elections.
- Etc.

Delegation sizes have varied over the years, depending upon a number of factors, including advisor retention, continuity of branch staff and support, and the experiences the returning delegates relate to new recruits. The issue of what is the right size for a delegation has been debated for years without any consensus achieved. In reality, that is because the focus has been in the wrong place. The focus should not be on the size of the delegation, but rather on the experience of the delegates. That is really all that matters. Advisors should base the size of their delegation on their ability to facilitate a quality experience for their delegates.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of the Colorado YMCA YIG is to develop within our youth a dedication to the values of democracy and an awareness of the need for their participation and leadership in the democratic process. Participants in this program are especially privileged because they are allowed to use the historic legislative chambers and offices in the State Capitol Building, the Supreme Court Chambers, and other facilities.

A high level of positive conduct is expected of all participants that requires self-control, individual decision-making, responsibility, and adherence to a code that is appropriate for each conference experience. The Code of Conduct shall be observed by both youth and adults. There is no double standard. With this in mind, the following Code of Conduct has been established for the YIG Program.

The Colorado YMCA Youth in Government program promotes a trust-based Code of Conduct, based on the foundation that all delegates and advisors agree to conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. Adults should make every attempt to help each participant achieve his/her full potential during the Model Assembly Session.

The Code of Conduct and Capitol Facility Expectations should be carefully reviewed prior to attending the Model Assembly Session. Advisors are always welcome to enforce a stricter standard than the Code of Conduct dictates but the State Youth in Government Staff will only enforce the standards outlined in the Code of Conduct and facility expectation documents.

Registration for the Youth in Government Program implies personal acceptance of the Code of Conduct as follows:

1. Each delegate shall conduct him/herself in an orderly manner at all times during the program.
2. It is the responsibility of each participant to attend **all** scheduled sessions and activities and remain in their assigned areas during these sessions.

3. Each delegate will respect the property of others and that of the conference facilities and State Capitol. The future of our program's use of the Capitol facilities and other buildings is contingent on proper treatment of these places. Buildings and equipment **MUST** be kept in the same (or better) condition than when they were found. Do not disturb or remove any equipment, desk, fixtures, etc. Each delegate is liable for the willful destruction of private or public property.
4. **Chemical use is prohibited!** This includes drinking alcohol and/or use of illegal drugs. Use or possession of alcohol or non-prescription drugs is forbidden. Smoking is **not** permitted in any facility used by the program.
5. Strict adherence to the dress code is required during all sessions.
6. For security purposes, participants **MUST** wear their name tags at all times when on Capitol grounds and in other buildings used during the General Assembly.
7. Elevators are reserved for the use of Capitol staff and actual representatives. Youth in Government participants are asked to use the stairs with the exception of those students with a disability or injury.
8. Participants must remain in the areas of the capitol set aside for the program and should use only the public restrooms found in the basement and cafeteria.
9. There is to be **NO** food or beverage of any kind (except water) allowed in any chamber, program area, or committee room. The only place that food is allowed in the Capitol is in the basement cafeteria.
10. Each individual is expected to conform to all rules and regulations for the conference. Participants who violate the Code of Conduct are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of participation in the program and **being sent home at their own expense.**

## **DRESS CODE**

All participants (delegates and advisors) are to maintain a professional and business-like appearance by dressing in business and professional attire during scheduled events and other such hours as designated by the program schedule.

*When selecting an outfit, ask yourself "Would I wear this to a job interview if I really wanted to be hired?" Obviously, if the answer is no, then you should probably search the closet again.*

Business attire is required at Youth in Government because delegates are attempting to model themselves after government officials in the political arena. Business attire will generally project a sense of professionalism that is expected and accepted not only in the

political arena, but also in the business world. The key is to dress as a professional who expects to be taken seriously.

## **Appropriate Attire for Meetings and Assemblies**

### **Men**

#### ***Ensemble Options:***

1. Suit, dress shirt, tie, dress shoes and socks
2. Sports coat, slacks, dress shirt, tie, dress shoes and socks
3. Dress shirt, vest or cardigan, slacks, tie, dress shoes and socks
4. Dress shirt, slacks, tie, dress shoes and socks

#### ***Guidelines:***

- No hats of any kind inside a building
- Avoid trendy suits or outlandish ties
- Keep your shirt tails tucked in
- Keep your hair styled so that it won't fall into your face
- No trendy hair colors
- Piercings other than post style or tiny hoop earrings are discouraged

### **Women**

#### ***Ensemble Options:***

1. Business style suit, and closed-toe dress shoes
2. Dress, and closed-toe dress shoes
3. Blouse, skirt, with or without a vest or cardigan, and closed-toe dress shoes (closed toe shoes only)
4. Business style pants suit, and closed-toe dress shoes

#### ***Guidelines:***

- No hats of any kind inside a building
- Keep hair styled so that it won't fall into your face
- Dresses and skirts should be ***no more*** than 3 inches above the knee
- No sleeveless or spaghetti straps
- No bare-midriff outfits
- No big jewelry, no bangle bracelets, and piercings other than post style or tiny hoop earrings are discouraged
- No sandals (except for Governor's Banquet) or flip-flops
- No gaudy nail polish colors
- No trendy hair colors
- No heels that are so high that they cause difficulty walking or standing
- Make-up should be professional, not over-done.

### **Never Appropriate for Any Person at Anytime!**

- Tank tops of any kind
- Any clothing with inappropriate language or imagery
- Any transparent or slightly see-through clothing
- Tube tops
- Miniskirts (i.e., shorter than 3 inches above the top of the knee)
- Any top that bares any part of the stomach

## **2007 DATES AND DEADLINES**

**\*\*\*All participant registration forms and fees are due at the Schlessman YMCA on Saturday, October 13th, 2007\*\*\***

**Saturday, September 29th, 2007**

Candidates Meeting at Schlessman YMCA - 9:00 a.m. (nomination forms due - must have 20 signatures)

**Saturday, October 13th, 2007**

All Participant Registration Forms and Fees due at the Schlessman YMCA - 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday, October 28th, 2007**

Pre-legislative Session (All Participants) at Aurora Municipal Center – 1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

**Thursday, November 8th, 2007**

All Bills are due in Final format at Schlessman YMCA - 5:00 p.m.

Email your bills to: [YouthInGovernment@denverymca.org](mailto:YouthInGovernment@denverymca.org)

**November 19th-21st**

General Assembly at State Capitol - Begins 8:30 a.m. on November 19<sup>th</sup>

**NEW!!! - Tuesday November 20<sup>th</sup> 5:30PM – Advisors' Dinner**

Students will be attending social event Tuesday evening at Downtown YMCA. YMCA Advisors will take over overseeing the students, while all regular advisors go out to dinner courtesy of the program!

**QUESTIONS?**

**Contact:**

YMCA of Metropolitan Denver  
Colorado Youth in Government  
Kimberly Armitage, State Director  
Teahl Bader, Program Coordinator  
(720) 870-2221  
[karmitage@denverymca.org](mailto:karmitage@denverymca.org)  
[YouthInGovernment@denverymca.org](mailto:YouthInGovernment@denverymca.org)

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