

TEENS & GOVERNMENT PARENT HANDBOOK



LOS ANGELES YMCA Teens & Government Parent Information

Greetings Parents and Delegates,

Thank you for your interest in YMCA Teens & Government!

It won't be long until we are signing on, voting, and improving Los Angeles for all inhabitants. Below you will find some important details. As always let us know if you have questions or comments. It is important to note that due to Covid-19, citywide conferences and trainings will all be virtual this year.

WHY TEENS & GOVERNMENT?

In Los Angeles, an informed and participating electorate, which shares a common value system, is crucial for building strong communities. Teens need to understand that they can have an effect on their communities, their cities, and their country, through their actions. YMCA Teens & Government strives to give teens both the tools and the values, which will empower them to solve problems within the established system of government. Participants in YMCA Teens & Government are provided an arena to test their beliefs, to share their frustrations, to examine their ethics, and broaden their knowledge.

WHAT IS TEENS & GOVERNMENT?

The Los Angeles YMCA's Teens & Government program is a citywide teen educational program involving more than 1,000 high school students, in a six-month "hands on" experience. Since its inception, the program has used a variety of activities to build, encourage, and strengthen the character traits that will help high school youth become involved, responsible adults who are respected citizens. The tool used is a high-quality experiential and educational simulation based upon Los Angeles' city government. The program is very comprehensive, and its impact on the youth participants is dramatic.

Los Angeles YMCA's Teens & Government teaches the values of democracy by creating citizen leaders from a cross-section of the City'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 PROGRAM WORKS

The program begins in the fall as young people and 300 volunteers at 30 locations throughout the city, meet as individual delegations to discuss issues facing Los Angeles as well as ways to implement their solutions through the legislative and judicial processes. During a six-month period, the teen delegates write measures and proposals, prepare briefs, and select governmental positions to role-play, and run for various elected offices. Delegates will meet weekly with their local group (delegation) to practice debate, public speaking, discuss current events, and decide what is important to their community. Delegates will also get the opportunity to participate in one of the following areas citywide:

- City Council (legislative committees)
- Superior Court (Appellate, Civil, Criminal)
- Board of Supervisors - Budget
- Mayor's Investigative Task Force

- School Board
- Media
- Mayor's Office (lobbyist)
- City Controller and Clerk (legislative analysts, elections, and legislative dockets)
- Los Angeles National Assembly
- Los Angeles City Charter Convention

WHEN ARE THE LOCAL MEETINGS?

Local Meetings will happen week nights generally sometime between 5pm and 8pm. Each local group sets its own meeting parameters and it is important to check with your local branch to find out when local delegation meetings are taking places.

WHEN ARE THE CITYWIDE MEETINGS?

Most of the program areas will have important hearings or meetings on the following dates:

- Saturday November 14, Role Exposure Session
- Saturday, December 12, Session 1, organizational meeting in program areas
- Saturday, January 16, Session 2
- Saturday, February 13, Session 3
- Saturday, March 13, Closing Joint Convention, Final Session, Election of Youth Mayor

It is important to note that some there will be time in between sessions that delegates meet with their program areas for committee or small group work.

HOW ADULTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM

DELEGATION ADVISORS

Delegation Advisors provide leadership to their own local youth delegations in preparing them for their participation in the program. They may attend virtual meetings/conferences. When we resume in-person conferences, they also accompany their delegation to the various conferences, providing direct supervision to their delegation.

VOLUNTEER STAFF

Each year the Los Angeles YMCA recruits' volunteers to serve as "staff" to the different program areas. Over 150 volunteers from throughout the state plan and conduct activities, advise teen delegates on their roles, and in general assist the Director in the operation of the different program areas (i.e. Court, Legislature, Media, Lobbyists, etc.) The volunteer staff includes teachers, college students, attorneys, business executives, YMCA professionals, media experts, and elected officials and their staff.