



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

INDIANA YMCA YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT DEMOCRACY MUST BE TAUGHT TO EVERY GENERATION

Indiana YMCA Youth and Government or “INYaG” is a year-long experiential learning civic engagement program that uses mock government as a vehicle for teaching Hoosier 7th through 12th graders about democracy. The program develops young men and women who will be better citizens now by being both knowledgeable and active in determining the future of our democracy.

HISTORY

During 1936, the director of the New York State’s Albany YMCA established the first YMCA Youth and Government program. Built on the motto, “Democracy must be learned by each generation,” the national Youth and Government movement evolved to engage youth in experiential learning of government processes, generally through mock legislative, executive and judicial proceedings. Capitalizing on heavy volunteer support from individuals and organizations like the American Bar Association has been critical to the program’s expansion, as separate statewide programs currently operate in every state and the District of Columbia, serving approximately 50,000 high school students.

The Indiana YMCA Youth and Government program began in 1965 under the coordination of the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis (YOGI). After inactivity between 1979 and 1994, the program was reinvigorated under the leadership of several Indiana YMCAs. During 2001, INYaG coordination transitioned back to the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis.

In order to capitalize on the statewide focus of the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs (Alliance) and its state-level role in public policy advocacy, INYaG was officially adopted as a program of the Alliance during 2013. Through the Alliance, INYaG is led by a team of dedicated youth and adult volunteers from around the State.

MISSION & GOALS

Throughout its transitions, INYaG has retained its mission of developing personal growth and encouraging life-long, responsible citizenship by providing experiential learning for young people and providing public forums to recognize the abilities and capabilities of youth. INYaG programs have sought to develop and promote an understanding of local, state, national, and international concerns; research, study and debate on public issues; exploration of careers in public service; interaction with adult and youth leaders involved in decision-making processes; an understanding of political systems and the forums they provide for the effective and peaceful resolution of issues and concerns; appreciation for the diversity of viewpoints on public issues and a concurrent respect for ideas, beliefs and the positions of others; and demonstration of citizenship responsibilities and leadership roles essential to the health of participatory democracy.

OBJECTIVES

In striving to develop young men and women who will be better citizens by being both knowledgeable and active in determining the future of our democracy, INYaG:

- Ensures that participants have a basic understanding of democracy in Indiana, including government offices and elected/appointed officials who hold them
- Provides training and experiences in understanding the legislative process
- Develops critical thinking and analytical abilities
- Provides active participation in the legislative process
- Develops interpersonal communication skills
- Provides awareness of social issues and their possible solutions
- Provides opportunities to listen to and develop respect for varying viewpoints
- Encourages active participation in political and public affairs

Activities:

- 1) Leadership training
- 2) Workshops covering topics like Public Speaking, Critical Writing, Cultural Competency, etc.
- 3) Community activism, civic engagement, and applying political leverage
- 4) Academic enhancement through the development of research, reading, and writing skills
- 5) National trainings and conferences for interested students

HOW IT WORKS

Through INYaG, an increasing number of students and adult leaders spend part of each academic year meeting in local community- and school-based delegations to discuss and debate issues that affect Indiana citizens and to propose relevant legislation. Upon completing the relevant curricula and assignments related to their particular program area, students' work culminates in the annual Model Government Conference (MGC)—during which delegates are afforded opportunities to apply the skills developed and knowledge learned over the course of the program. The MGC is the state's most comprehensive mock government event.

Program Areas

- **Youth General Assembly** – INYaG's signature and gateway program. Based on the Indiana General Assembly, the program strives to turn the ideas of Indiana youth into formal laws through bill- writing, debating, and voting on legislation according to specific rules and procedures.

All high school students in their first year of INYaG must participate in the Youth General Assembly.

Primary Deliverables: Drafting and formal introduction of a bill; Understanding of and adherence to legislative processes and procedures in Indiana, Engagement in debate

- **Youth Executive Program** – Through the program, INYaG’s delegate-elected student leaders provide youth voice to development of the overall program and provide operational leadership during the annual MGC. These elected individuals also represent INYaG at national events and serve as peer leaders among fellow delegates.

The program is open to any duly elected delegate.

Primary Deliverables: Experience in program administration, conference planning and conference operations; Understanding of political campaigns and elections

Model Supreme Court (MSC) – While exposing high school students to the formal judicial process in Indiana, the program promotes leadership through use of practicing attorneys and law students who not only judge delegates, but also serve as mentors. The MSC also promotes collaboration and compromise using teams of attorneys and teams of justices who together to accomplish their goals.

The MSC is open to all high school students who have previously participated in the Youth General Assembly.

Primary Deliverables: Development and delivery of oral arguments; Experience presiding over cases; Understanding of Indiana’s judicial process and the role of the Indiana Supreme Court

- **Middle School Program** – The goal of the program is to give middle school delegates an opportunity to experience different components of the high school program, allowing them to form an insider opinion to guide their own choices of program during subsequent years. The program balances group activities with individual leadership development.

The Middle School Program is mandatory for all 7th graders and 8th graders who are participating in the MGC for the first time. Returning 8th graders who have previously participated in the Middle School Program may participate in the Youth General Assembly.

Primary Deliverables: Drafting and formal introduction of a bill; Understanding of and adherence to formal committee and general assembly procedures; Engagement in debate; Understanding of the roles of Indiana’s judicial and executive branches

- **Media Program** – Planning is underway to reintroduce the INYaG Media Program during a future season. Media Program delegates will serve as the eyes and ears of INYaG before and leading up to the annual MGC. Prior to MGC, these students will research and report on their delegations’ activities. During the conference, they will write, edit, design, and print four editions of the INYaG newspaper. Additionally, they will maintain the Media program’s social-media presence.