California Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities (YLF) Frequently Asked Questions

**Program Overview**

**How much does YLF cost?**

There is no cost for students to participate in YLF. The program covers travel arrangements, accommodation, meals, and any reasonable accommodations needed during the week.

**What is the gender ratio of participants?**

We aim to create a diverse group of delegates and staff, representing all gender identities and expressions.

**How many delegates are selected each year?**

We typically select 50-60 students each year, based on factors like cost, space availability, staffing, and safety considerations.

**How many students apply each year?**

We receive approximately 100-150 applications annually. A selection committee reviews the applications, conducts interviews, and makes final decisions.

**Eligibility & Application Process**

**Can parents attend with their teenager?**

While we value parent involvement, we encourage students to attend independently to develop their leadership skills and confidence.

**Are students with autism eligible to attend?**

Yes, YLF is open to students with all disabilities, including Autism. We provide accommodations such as quiet spaces and breaks to ensure all students are supported.

**Can students who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices attend?**

Yes, we welcome students who use AAC devices. Many alumni have successfully participated with AAC devices, and some have even become public speakers advocating for these tools.

**What criteria are used to evaluate applications and interviews?**

We look for students with leadership experience, community involvement, and a strong interest in the program. Age, disability type, and demographics are also considered to ensure diversity and balance.

**How are non-verbal students accommodated during interviews?**

We offer accommodations for non-verbal students, such as allowing them to use AAC devices, type responses, or submit answers in advance. When scheduling the interview, please let us know if accommodations are needed.

**Can students who have graduated high school apply for YLF?**

Students who have graduated high school or completed a transition program are eligible to apply as a volunteer staff. This provides them with valuable peer mentoring and leadership experience.

**Staff & Supervision**

**Is there supervision during the program?**

YLF has a dedicated team of volunteer staff who are present throughout the week. All staff undergo background checks, and night security is provided.

**Who are the staff members?**

The staff team is made up of YLF alumni, community members, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and professionals. We also have contracted staff, including nurses and personal care attendants.

**What is the staff-to-student ratio?**

We strive for a 2:1 staff-to-student ratio, with staff members in roles such as co-counselors, peer mentors, logistics support, and more.

**Do staff stay on-site overnight?**

Yes, many staff members, especially those from out of town, stay overnight in the dorms. Night security and medical staff are on-site as needed.

**Rooming & Accommodations**

**What are the rooming arrangements?**

Delegates stay in apartment-style dorms with shared bathrooms. Room assignments are based on accommodation needs, gender identity, and age.

For more information including photos and virtual room tours, please visit the CSUS webpage for [American River Courtyard](https://www.csus.edu/student-life/housing/housing-options/american-river-hall.html).

**Are meals and snacks provided?**

Yes, delegates receive three meals per day in the on-campus dining commons, along with snacks and special meals like BBQs and catered lunches. Dietary restrictions are accommodated.

**What physical activities are available?**

Physical activities include campus tours, visits to the state capitol, and gym access during free time.

**Travel & Transportation**

**What support is available for delegates traveling to Sacramento by plane or train?**

YLF arranges travel and ensures delegates are booked on the same flights or trains. We will also arrange for pre-boarding to allow delegates to travel together. We provide a transportation team to meet delegates at the airport or train station and assist with getting them to campus. However, parents and families may need to assist their delegate with getting to and from the airport or train station for departure and arrival from their home city.

**Will staff meet delegates at the airport or train station?**

Yes, YLF staff will meet delegates at the airport or train station in Sacramento, taking a headcount to make sure all are accounted for and ensure they are safely transported to campus. For the return journey, staff will assist delegates in boarding their flights or trains and connecting with their families when they arrive at their destination.

**What preparations should be made for delegates traveling by airline?**

For delegates under the age of 18, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Southwest Airlines do not require photo identification.

Parents and families can request a gate pass at the check-in counter to escort their teenager through TSA security and to the departure/arrival gate. A valid government-issued ID is required to obtain this gate pass. For more details, visit the [Southwest young traveler’s webpage](https://support.southwest.com/helpcenter/s/article/How-do-I-book-a-reservation-for-a-Young-Traveler-ages-12-17-traveling-alone).

When booking travel, we will note that the delegate is a person with a disability and may need additional assistance at the gate. This includes requesting gate passes and pre-boarding, allowing delegates to board together and sit next to one another. Delegates aged 18 and older must provide a government-issued ID to pass through TSA security.

Additionally, starting May 7, 2025, a California Real ID will be required for all domestic travelers. Learn more about Real ID requirements on the [DMV website.](https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/driver-licenses-identification-cards/real-id/)

**Program Activities & Support**

**What activities do delegates participate in during the evening?**

Evening activities include a movie night, talent show, comedy performance, dance, and free time for delegates to socialize.

**How do you address homesickness?**

Homesickness is common, especially on the first day or two. Our trained staff are prepared to support delegates and help them adjust. Most delegates end up enjoying the program so much that they don't want to leave at the end of the week.

**Additional Information**

**What are the next steps after applying?**

After submitting the application, YLF will schedule an interview with the student. Both the application and interview are part of the selection process, and students will be notified of their status afterward.

**When will students find out if they’ve been selected?**

Applicants will be notified by early May. Those who aren’t selected may be placed on a waitlist and contacted if a space becomes available. Those not selected are encouraged to apply the following year or attend a regional event in their local area.

**Is additional information required after selection?**

Yes, selected participants will need to complete forms related to travel, dietary needs, and accommodations to help us plan for the program.