



“YLA has taught me that we shall either adapt or perish. It’s a great experience. I love it!”
— Chevar Dessuitt

Youth Leadership Academy

Developing Young Leaders

The Youth Leadership Academy, formerly known as the Youth Leadership Forum, is one of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities’ flagship Training Programs and is held every other year on a university campus. The YLA seeks to empower youth with disabilities to further develop and demonstrate their leadership skills. Students serve as Delegates from across the Commonwealth during this summer program and participate in a wide range of activities and learning experiences.

Rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are interested in becoming leaders in their schools and communities are strongly encouraged to apply for the honor of serving as YLA Delegates.



ADVOCACY



LEADERSHIP



TEAMWORK

ABOUT THE YLA

The YLA seeks to develop personal, leadership, and career development skills in young people with developmental or other disabilities. Based on the California Model of Youth Leadership Development, YLA recruits rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have demonstrated leadership potential and the motivation to serve as Delegates.

Delegates participate in personal, leadership, and career development activities, as well as social skills enhancement, small group exploration, and an unforgettable experience interacting with enthusiastic peers and successful role models.

Delegates are exposed to guest speakers who address topics like disability rights laws, innovations in technology, and advocacy development. They also participate in "Capitol Day," which includes interaction with lawmakers and other government officials and delivery of testimony during a mock legislative hearing.

APPLY TODAY

This year's YLA will be held at Virginia State University between **Monday, July 14-Thursday, July 17, 2025**. The deadline to submit an application is **Friday, March 28, 2025**. Students are encouraged to use the preferred online application. **Apply online at www.vbpd.virginia.gov/training/youth-leadership-academy/ylaapp.**

ELIGIBILITY

- Have a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (60% of participants must have a developmental disability)
- Be a rising high school sophomore, junior, or senior, as of **December 2024**
- Demonstrated leadership potential in his/her school and community
- Reside in Virginia

"YLA changed my life and turned me into the advocate I am today."

— Amy Bryce



To learn more, visit www.vbpd.virginia.gov/training/youth-leadership-academy or contact us.



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