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# YES Ambassador Program Frequently Asked Questions

Points of Light

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## **YES AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is the YES Ambassador Program?**

Sponsored by The Points of Light Foundation, the YES (Youth Engaged in Service) Ambassador program places community-minded young people between the ages of 18-25 for one year with statewide leadership organizations (Partner Organizations) in order to create initiatives and partnerships and provide technical assistance and training in youth service, service-learning and youth leadership.

### **What is the program year?**

The 1999-2000 program year will begin on September 1, 1999 and end August 31, 2000.

## **PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Who are Partner Organizations?**

Partners are statewide organizations who share the Foundation's commitment to youth leadership, youth service and service-learning. They are on the cutting edge of the youth service field. They are building opportunities and infrastructure which support the involvement of young people in community problem solving. Examples of current and past Partners include: Constitutional Rights Foundation (CA), Colorado Department of Education, Wisconsin Positive Youth Development, Kentucky Council on Higher Education, Ohio Governor's Service Council, and National Youth Leadership Council (MN).

### **What is the Partner Organization Experience?**

Partners enter into a partnership with The Points of Light Foundation to provide needed technical assistance and training at the local and state level in youth service, service-learning and youth leadership and to develop leaders for the field's future. Partners provide on-site support for an Ambassador through office space, access to telephone, computer, fax and other logistical support. They lead the development of the Ambassador's action plan, professional development plan, and provide daily supervision, mentoring, guidance and evaluation. They also provide \$20,000 to the Foundation, which covers the Ambassador's salary.

The Foundation selects Partner Organizations through a competitive process. Once Partners are selected they attend an orientation session in Washington, DC. This orientation session provides Partners with an introduction to the Foundation, the program, and provides training that will assist them in hosting an Ambassador. Specific topics covered include roles and expectations, the

recruitment, application and selection process for Ambassadors, training and ongoing support for Partners and Ambassadors, performance review process for Partners and Ambassadors and the program evaluation. Training on mentoring and supporting young people is also provided.

After the orientation Partners develop a recruitment, application and selection process and select their Ambassador in consultation with the Foundation. Ambassadors are employees of the Points of Light Foundation. The selected Ambassadors receive an initial training and orientation from the Foundation. They also receive an orientation from their Partner Organization. Once Ambassadors have completed their training and orientation period, Partners work with their Ambassador to develop a one-year action plan. Partners assist in this process by suggesting people to talk to, project or task ideas, gaps or needs in the state related to youth service etc... As Ambassadors begin implementing their action plan, Partners provide day to day supervision, guiding and mentoring the Ambassador as necessary.

Partners receive ongoing support from the Foundation in the form of regular check in calls and mailings, partner networking sessions, and inclusion in special Points of Light Foundation events. Partners are expected to participate in scheduled performance review sessions with their Ambassador and the Foundation and in program evaluation with the Foundation.

### **Why should I become a Partner Organization?**

Past and present Partners agree that hosting a YES Ambassador is a valuable experience:

*"We have gained a great deal by having an Ambassador join our staff. They have brought an informed perspective toward service-learning and youth leadership that has often challenged us and moved us to grow."*

*"The program gives young adults an opportunity to make a real contribution to a local and even statewide community."*

Other benefits they cite include:

- assistance in achieving your organizational mission and goals
- an opportunity to actualize your commitment to young people
- the ability to reach audiences you otherwise could not reach
- connection to a national network of other statewide leadership organizations in the field
- the ability to conduct projects/provide services you might not be able to conduct/provide otherwise
- heightened visibility for your organization at the local, state and national level
- leadership role of hosting a YES Ambassador

## **YES AMBASSADORS**

**Who are YES Ambassadors? What kind of work experience and education do YES Ambassadors have?** YES Ambassadors are a diverse group of young people between the ages of 18-25. They have a demonstrated commitment to service and they understand the power of youth to positively impact serious social problems. They are self-motivated, able to work independently, are excellent speakers and writers, exhibit leadership potential and have an entrepreneurial spirit. Several former YES Ambassadors have taken time off from college to take part in the program, some have been recent high school graduates and others have had a Master's Degree; many have been AmeriCorps members, VISTA leaders, etc. before they were YES Ambassadors.

### **What do YES Ambassadors do?**

- Provide training to youth and adults. Examples of topics covered: youth leadership, adult-youth partnerships, service-learning, service project development, reflection, agency readiness, diversity.
- Consult with individuals, organizations and institutions on the development youth service, service learning and youth leadership programs for youth.
- Connect individuals, organizations and institutions to local, state and national networks and resources in the community service field.
- Build and support youth leadership opportunities in policy setting and governance activities in organizations and programs which effect youth.

The YES Ambassadors prime constituency is other young people ages 5-25. On a given day an Ambassador might:

- Facilitate the development of a service project by a classroom of 9th graders as part of their civics curriculum;
- Meet with the Executive Director of the State Commission to strategize the role young people could play in the Commission or create a state youth council;
- Work with a local Volunteer Center to develop a recruitment strategy for youth volunteers;
- Orient members of a local AmeriCorps program who are working as service-learning aides in an elementary school;
- Connect a campus-based service program with an area high school program to develop a joint housing rehabilitation project;
- Train teachers at a local school in service-learning.

**What is the YES Ambassador Experience?** YES Ambassadors are selected by and work with Partner Organizations in a particular state for at least one year (Ambassadors, however, may be offered a second one-year term if their Partner is reselected). Partner Organizations are committed to supporting and sustaining youth leadership, youth service and service-learning and are leaders in the national and community service field. Ambassadors play a key role in assisting partners in meeting the above goals. Partners provide ongoing supervision, support, guidance, evaluation, as well as office space, including access to telephone, computer, fax, Internet access, etc.

Ambassadors and Partner Organizations, with assistance from the Foundation, develop an action plan and professional development plan for their term. The plan details what the Ambassador

will accomplish personally and professionally during his/her term and tasks they plan to undertake to accomplish these goals.

Ambassadors receive training and ongoing support from the Foundation to assist them in their role. The initial orientation and training focuses on laying "common ground": building a team, creating a core understanding of youth leadership, youth service and service-learning and developing general skills related to the position (group facilitation, conflict resolution, training and consultation skills, etc.). Ambassadors receive a follow-up training three months later. Trainers are brought in to help with specific issues and skills identified by the Ambassadors. Ambassadors participate in the Foundation's National Community Service Conference held each summer. Ambassadors also participate in a year-end meeting which provides them with an opportunity to reflect on their experience and to transition into their next role.

Ongoing support is provided by the Foundation in the form of a resource guide, bi-weekly mailings, regular phone calls, additional training and networking opportunities through the attendance of conferences and seminars (e.g. COOL Conference, National Service Learning Conference), and conference calls regarding issues in the field. The Foundation also provides an in and out-of-state travel budget for each Ambassador.

**Is there a stipend? Would I get reimbursed for moving costs? Would I have health insurance? Is my spouse and/or family covered? Is there student loan deferment?**

YES Ambassadors are considered employees of the Points of Light Foundation. They receive an annual base salary of \$20,000 with benefits (life, dental and health insurance). Spouses and children are covered under the health insurance. Ambassadors do pay a small amount each month in co-pay costs for health insurance. There is no student loan deferment or reimbursement for relocation costs at this time.

**How do I apply to be an Ambassador? Can I apply to a state that I've never lived in? Can I apply to more than one state? I'm 25 now, can I still apply?**

There is no general application for the YES Ambassador program. Each Ambassadorship is individualized to meet the needs of the state and therefore you must apply directly to each state you are interested in working with. If you are interested in the next program year, please contact the Foundation and we will send you contact information for each state when it becomes available. YES Ambassadors tend to have some connection (i.e. attended college there) to the state they work with, but there are no restrictions about residency. You may be 25 when the program year *begins* in order to apply.

## **STILL HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?**

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