



Advisor Handbook

Wyoming's Youth – Exceeding Expectations

Advisor's Role

The Congressional Award is a voluntary, non-competitive program open to all 14-23 year olds in the United States – regardless of prior or current achievement, life circumstances or physical ability. It provides opportunities for young people to unleash their potential by achieving personal goals focused on community involvement, volunteerism, character development and fitness. When young people involved in the Congressional Award program become aware of their potential and value within society, the benefits are remarkable. They develop compassion, a sense of responsibility and create a better environment in which to work and live.

Overview:

As an advisor, you play an important role in a young person's pursuit of the Congressional Award. Advisors serve as mentors to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood.

Benefits of the program include providing successful experience for all students. All demographics regardless of age, race or religion are eligible and students are encouraged to be involved in their communities where they learn the value of volunteerism and gain self-confidence.

To earn the Award, youth set goals in all four program areas: Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness and Expedition/Exploration.

Typically, an advisor needs to commit approximately one to two hours every four to six weeks to help a young person to focus on their goals and ultimately reach a medal level.

Any adult (18 and above or an alumni of the program) may serve as an advisor with the exception of parents, relatives and peers. It is the responsibility of the young person to select his/her advisor. Teachers, coaches, neighbors, church members, club sponsors and civic leaders all make excellent advisors.

Your guidance will be remembered long after the young person earns the Award. Thank you for your time and support!

Initial Steps:

- Review the requirements to earn the Bronze Medal with the participant.
- Assist the participant in setting goals that are personally challenging.
- Help the participant select appropriate activities and validators for each goal.
- Maintain periodic contact with the participant while they work towards the Congressional Award.
- Once the participant has completed the requirements to earn a medal, review their record book and provide support and comments.





Program Requirements

Certificate Levels

| Minimum Hours by Program Area | Bronze | Silver | Gold |
|---|--------|--------|----------|
| Voluntary Service | 30 | 60 | 90 |
| Personal Development | 15 | 30 | 45 |
| Physical Fitness | 15 | 30 | 45 |
| Expedition or Exploration | 1 Day | 2 Days | 3 days |
| Total Minimum Months of Activity Needed* (for each of the main three program areas) | N/A | N/A | 6 Months |

Medal Levels

| Minimum Hours by Program Area | Bronze | Silver | Gold |
|---|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Voluntary Service | 100 | 200 | 400 |
| Personal Development | 50 | 100 | 200 |
| Physical Fitness | 50 | 100 | 200 |
| Expedition or Exploration | 1 Night/ 2 Days | 2 Nights/ 3 Days | 4 Nights / 5 Days |
| Total Minimum Months of Activity Needed* (for each of the main three program areas) | 7 Months | 12 Months | 24 Months |

Voluntary Public Service: *Providing service to the community at large*

All activities must be unpaid and must have community impact. Public service cannot target one individual but must benefit the community at large. Church-affiliated activities must improve the general community and be open to the public. Hours spent proselytizing are NOT allowed under volunteer public service.

Examples: soup kitchen, mentoring, mentoring youth, community beautification, aid to the elderly

Personal Development: *Developing personal interests or employment*

Goals must be both challenging and measurable. Demonstration of learning is required.

Examples: gardening, photography, marketing, livestock, part-time job, driver's education, job shadowing, interviewing veterans to learn about history, creating/managing personal budget

Physical Fitness: *Improving quality of life through challenging and measurable fitness activities*

Beginning fitness level must be indicated in goal.

Examples: Improving upper body strength by 10%, decreasing running time by 30 seconds, learning five new yoga poses, increasing shooting percentage by 5%.

Expedition/Exploration: *Undertaking an outdoor, wilderness or venture experience (historical, cultural or environmental)*

Participant must take the lead on planning the trip. The experience should be personally challenging and show learning. **A minimum of eight hours of immersion per day in an unfamiliar environment is required.** It must provide a unique setting different from previous life experiences and cannot be a "sign-up and go" opportunity.

Voluntary Public Service

A series of activities may be combined to achieve one goal. However, a collection of unrelated volunteer service activities would not be acceptable.

Acceptable goals with a series of activities: "I will provide a minimum of 100 hours of service under the direction of the Volunteer Office of Central Florida." (A similar situation could be applied to service clubs, scouting programs, American Red Cross or other organizations).

In pursuit of your Award, if your volunteer activity requires you to spend several consecutive days, earning many hours in a short period of time, plan a follow up activity or continue other volunteer activities throughout the remainder of your program:

Acceptable goals with activity throughout the program: "I will volunteer as a counselor at a scout camp for 12 days. I also will serve as an assistant scout leader for one year."

In order to qualify, activities coordinated by a church, synagogue or mosque must provide service to the community as a whole. Responsibilities related to membership in a religious institution (churches, synagogues, etc.) or religious teaching are not acceptable for voluntary public service, but many are acceptable as Personal Development activities.

Acceptable Volunteer Public Service activities: Assisting with food and clothing drives; Working at soup kitchens; Providing community-wide day care.

Unacceptable Volunteer Public Service activities: Singing in the church choir; Participating in religious education; Baby-sitting in the church nursery; Teaching religious doctrine; and Missionary and proselytizing work (preaching and converting).

Activities pursued, as a member of an organization or service club such as Key Club, fraternities or sororities must provide service to the community. Work related to internal, membership activities (such as recruitment, training or initiation) do not qualify for Voluntary Public Service.

Service volunteered at private businesses does not qualify for Voluntary Public Service, but may count as Personal Development. Voluntary service must be nonpartisan.

Unacceptable places for volunteer service: Volunteer work at a private office (such as a law firm or doctor's office), working for an elected official and working for a political campaign are not acceptable Voluntary Public Service activities.



Examples of Voluntary Public Service:

Animal Care Shelter Work
Aquatics/Water Safety Instructor
Camp/Outdoor School Volunteer
Civil Air Patrol (leadership role)
Conservation Projects
Crime Prevention
Day Care Center volunteer
Disabled Citizen's Assistance
Fire Dept. or Police Volunteer
First Aid Instructor
Health Service
Hospital Volunteer
Immigrant Services (bilingual tutoring, etc.)
Interpreter
Leadership (Scout, 4-H)
Library Work
Meals on Wheels
Nursing Home Volunteer
Park Volunteer
Peer Counseling
Public Housing Services
Red Cross Volunteer
Safety Escort for Young Children
Tutoring
United Way Volunteer
VISTA Programs
YMCA Volunteer

Certificates

Bronze – 30 hours & no min. months required

Silver – 60 hours & no min. months required

Gold – 90 hours & 6 months of activity

Medals

Bronze – 100 hours & 7 months of activity

Silver – 200 hours & 12 months of activity

Gold – 400 hours & 24 months of activity

Personal Development

Your goal or goals should identify a definite task to be completed and activities which require the application of specific skills.

Acceptable goal: "I will improve my acting skills and learn more about working behind the scenes in a theater."

Acceptable activities: "I will perform in community theater, work as a stage hand, and learn about lighting, props and costumes."

If you are a full-time student, a part-time job could count for Personal Development. In order to qualify, the goal must indicate the development of vocational and/or work skills and the activities must be performed without school credit. Similarly, if you are employed full-time, educational activities could serve as a Personal Development activity.

Example: Part-time work pursued by a full-time student as Personal Development: "I will work part-time at a bank where my duties will include: answering telephones, filing, word processing and operating photo copiers and fax machines. This will allow me to explore careers in banking."

Example: Education pursued as Personal Development by a person employed full-time: "I will attend classes to prepare for and take the exam for a General Education Diploma. In addition, I will explore jobs that I will be qualified for at a hospital and practice writing letters to apply for those jobs."

Your Personal Development goals can be pursued either individually or as part of a group. If your goal is within a group activity, your individual contribution to the planning, execution, and completion of the activity is the basis for assessment. Your individual progress should be measured against your goals, not other teammates.

Personal Development goals as part of a group: "I will pursue my interest in photography as a member of the school newspaper staff. I intend to produce and publish at least 10 photos during the next school year."

Your Record Book should show an intended improvement level from where you stand now in a particular skill or hobby to where you intend to be at the completion of your goals. If no obvious way to measure your progress exists, include extra activities.

Personal Development additional activities to show improvement: Babysitting, including child safety or choke prevention course. Reading - develop a vocabulary list and write book reviews.

Examples of Personal Development:

Agriculture or Farming
Amateur Radio
Arts and Crafts
Astronomy
Automotive Science
Career Development
Clerical and Office
Collecting (Stamps, Coins, etc.)
Conservation/Environment
Construction
Creative Writing
Cross Cultural Programs
Dancing
Dog Training
Electrical Engineering
Fashion Design/Tailoring
Floral Art
Forestry
Gardening
Horsemanship
Job Training Programs
Language Study
Leadership Training
Learning For Life
Literacy Programs
Magic
Model Building
Music/Singing
National Guard
Nursing
Part-Time Work
Photography
Speech and Debate
Sewing/Quilting
Theater/Acting
Venturing
Video Production
Woodwork

Certificates

Bronze – 15 hours & no min. months required

Silver – 30 hours & no min. months required

Gold – 45 hours & 6 months

Medals

Bronze – 50 hours & 7 months

Silver – 100 hours & 12 months

Gold – 200 hours & 24 months

Physical Fitness

Your activities can be competitive but your goal cannot.

Example: "I will improve my basketball skills so that my free-throw percentage will increase from 35 to 40 percent. Within one year I hope to advance from junior varsity to the level of a varsity player."

This goal does not work: "I will become the captain of the basketball team;" (Becoming captain of the team depends on the decisions of others.)

Your goal can involve a new activity or achievement of a new level of performance in an ongoing activity. Be sure to include relevant physical fitness statistics to ensure that a challenging, objective goal can be achieved.

Try to include:

Experience level, Weight, Heart rate, Respiration, Specific skills, Times and distances, Batting or hitting averages, Average scores

Include your current fitness level or sport skill and specify how much you plan to improve while working toward The Congressional Award.

Showing a new level of achievement: "I can presently jog 5 miles in 50 minutes and I intend to improve my time to 8.5 minutes per mile. Through my aerobics programs, I will improve my resting heart rate from 90 to 75 and lose 10 pounds within 15 months."

Physical fitness goals for persons with disabilities are given special consideration.

Often an appropriate activity can be identified with the help of a physician. Remember, a fitness activity does not have to be strenuous in order to be challenging.

Certificates

Bronze – 15 hours & no min. months required

Silver – 30 hours & no min. months required

Gold – 45 hours & 6 months of activity

Medals

Bronze – 50 hours & 7 months of activity

Silver – 100 hours & 12 months of activity

Gold – 200 hours & 24 months of activity

Examples of Physical Fitness:

Aerobics
Archery
Backpacking
Badminton
Baseball
Basketball
Bicycling
Bowling
Boxing
Canoeing or Kayaking
Dancing
Exercise Program
Exploring
Fencing
Field Events
Figure Skating
Fitness Walking
Football
Golf
Gymnastics
Handball
Hiking
Hockey
Martial Arts
Racquetball
Rafting or Rowing
Rollerblading
Rugby
Running or Jogging
Sailing
SCUBA Diving
Skateboarding
Skiing
Soccer
Tennis
Volleyball
Weight Training
Wrestling

Expedition/Exploration

Challenge yourself through an interaction with the wilderness or by immersing yourself in an unfamiliar culture. The Congressional Award allows you to choose between an Expedition and an Exploration.

The aim of your Expedition or Exploration should be to develop a spirit of adventure and discovery. Organizing, planning, training and completing the Expedition or Exploration requires self-reliance, determination and cooperation.

The Expedition or Exploration is a one-time experience that you plan and execute. It is not an event you attend that someone else has planned. You should learn to be responsible for yourself while learning more about our world, through first-hand experience in the wilderness or in a new and different culture.

Many activities are acceptable for the Expedition or Exploration, but your activity will need to involve a significant amount of planning that you will complete independently. Expeditions and Explorations are neither designed nor intended to be expensive. For example, participants should work together to secure the necessary equipment, but should not have to purchase tents, sleeping bags, etc. Some participants even make their own camping equipment!

By their nature, Explorations can involve fairly high expenses. This is something you must consider if you choose this type of activity. You may wish to explore sponsorship or scholarships. Although participants are to be self-supporting and self-sufficient, an adult supervisor oversees the venture.

The adult supervisor observes the activities, but the actual participants are responsible for carrying out the Expedition or Exploration.

These are just some of the activities that young people have participated in to earn the Award. Remember – it’s about your interests and your own challenges. If you have a question about a specific activity and want some feedback, please [contact us](#): Wyoming Congressional Award Council - www.wcac.us.

Expedition Ideas:

- Bicycle Tour
- Canoe Trip
- Horseback Endurance Ride
- Mountain Climbing
- Outward Bound Activities
- Camping
- Civil Patrol Rescue
- Reenactment
- Wilderness Hiking

Exploration Ideas:

- Undertake a special cultural project while studying abroad (outside of class time)
- Live with an Amish family or on a Native American Indian Reservation
- Shadow a person with a physical impairment
- Live the life of a ranch hand for cattle round-up
- Explore a new historical area or culture

Certificates

- Bronze – 1 Day
- Silver – 2 Days
- Gold – 3 Days

Medals

- Bronze – 1 Overnight
(2 Days/ 1 Night)
- Silver – 2 CONSECUTIVE Overnights
(3 Days/ 2 Nights)
- Gold – 4 CONSECUTIVE Overnights
(5 Days/ 4 Nights)



Advisor Checklist

Preliminary Education/Engagement:

- Review the mission of the program.
 - The Congressional Award provides opportunities for young people to unleash their potential by achieving personal goals focused on volunteerism, character development and fitness.
- Youth set goals in 4 program areas to better themselves and their communities
- Review program areas
 - VPS: Voluntary Public Service
 - PD: Personal Development
 - PF: Physical Fitness
 - E/E: Expedition/Exploration
- Download the following from the website or register online
 - Registration
 - Summary of Goal Plan
 - Social Media Release
 - www.wcac.us

Registration:

- Invite parent to join you as you visit with your advisee
- Review requirements to earn Bronze Medal:
 - VPS: 100 hours / 7 months
 - PD: 50 hours / 7 months
 - PF: 50 hours / 7 months
 - E/E: 1 night wilderness or cultural experience
- Brainstorm goals and add to the Summary of Goal Plan
- Write name of validator next to each goal
- Mark months of activity for each area
- Review Summary of Goal Plan:
 - Personal Development Goals demonstrate learning or expansion on a current skill.
 - Physical Fitness Goals indicate current fitness level and the final goal desired (measurable).
- Participant may either register online or mail in hard copy to:
 - WCAC – 314 East 21st Street, Cheyenne, WY 82001

Registration Checklist

Before completing your registration, read all instructions carefully.

This is a prestigious program and your best work should always be displayed. On-line forms and additional program information is available on our website at www.wcac.us. You may also join us on Facebook by liking Wyoming Congressional Award.

You may begin counting any activity or hours toward earning the Congressional Award upon submitting your registration.

All forms must be written in pen or typed.

Registration packets must include:

1. Registration Form
2. Registration Fee: \$15.00 (If unable to pay, please have parent initial ____)
3. Summary of Goal plan
 - a. Goals clearly written
 - b. Months indicated by an X or shaded box
 - c. Physical Fitness goals are measurable. A beginning skill level must be indicated or the final goal desired showing measurable gain.
 - d. Personal Development goals indicate that new learning will take place or that you will expand on a current skill.
4. Photo/Video release Form

Record Book Checklist

Before completing your record book, read this page carefully. Remember, this is a prestigious program and your best work should always be displayed. The processing of your record book may take up to two weeks.

Record book packets must include:

- Your record book cover must have advisor comments and signatures. Your advisor should not sign until he or she has fully reviewed your completed record book.
- Use only one validation page per goal as indicated on the summary of goal plan.
 - Dates indicated on each validation page should ONLY reflect the time and activity for that particular goal.
 - Validation pages **must** have validator comments and signatures.
 - Expedition journal entry pages must meet the minimum below:
 - Bronze medal (1 night, 2 days)
 - Silver medal (2 nights, 3 days)
 - Gold medal (4 nights, 5 days)
 - Log Book or timesheets for all activities must be attached.
 - Make one copy of all paperwork for your records in the event clarification is needed.
 - Submit original documentation to the state office:
 - WCAC
 - 314 East 21st Street
 - Cheyenne, WY 82001