



Division on Civil Rights 2024-2025 Youth Ambassador Program

The [New Jersey Division on Civil Rights](#) (DCR) invites high school students with a passion for civil rights to apply to the 2024-25 Youth Ambassador Program. The Youth Ambassador Program empowers the next generation to work to eliminate bias and discrimination in their communities. DCR offers Youth Ambassadors mentorship, education, and leadership opportunities to encourage students to act as community change agents through education on the Law Against Discrimination.

Program Purpose

Youth Ambassadors participate in civil rights-related conversations, learn to amplify their voices, serve as community liaisons to DCR, and develop a rich understanding of civil rights. They will be divided into small groups and, together, identify a topic related to the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination. As a culmination of their participation in the program, they will create a zine. Zines are small magazines that are independently created and circulated. A DCR Community Relations Specialist will facilitate the meetings and teach the Youth Ambassadors the necessary skills to take their zine project from a concept to a finished product.

Program Outcomes

By participating in this program, youth ambassadors will:

- Gain a foundational understanding of the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination.
- Develop a strong sense of civic responsibility, awareness of civil rights, and leadership skills to take on new challenges.
- Develop an understanding of how to facilitate a discussion, participate in research, and productively work as a part of a team.
- Develop the confidence and skills to effectively communicate their ideas and collaborate with diverse groups of peers to achieve optimal project outcomes.

Youth Ambassador Project Requirements

Youth ambassadors will learn critical skills for developing their zines such as writing, editing, design, storytelling, and more, as detailed in the timeline below. Depending on the creator, zines can cover a wide variety of topics. For the purpose of this project, the theme of zines will be related to civil rights, advocacy, anti-bias vision, social justice, or the Law Against Discrimination.

Zines will not be shared publicly without formal approval from the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General. They will be used internally and shared at our last meeting, a project showcase

for only Department of Law and Public Safety employees, students, and parents/legal guardians.

Ambassador Selection Criteria

The New Jersey Division on Civil Rights Youth Ambassador Program is open to all New Jersey high school youth, entering 9th to 12th grade, interested in exploring civil rights issues. Up to 50 youth ambassadors will be admitted into the program, based upon the following criteria:

- Interest in civil rights;
- Passion for making a positive change on a community level;
- Interest in personal and leadership development; and
- Availability to attend bi-monthly Monday evening (6 p.m.) meetings.

Youth Ambassador Program Leadership Team

Returning Youth Ambassador members will have the opportunity to take on leadership roles as part of the Youth Ambassador Program Leadership Team (YAPLT). In addition to attending and participating in the regular meeting, YAPLT members will help lead and facilitate meeting discussions. There will be a maximum of 10 ambassadors assigned to the YAPLT.

The YAPLT will meet outside of regular meetings for a commitment of 1 to 2 hours a month virtually. Selection criteria for the YAPLT members will be based on previous participation, attendance of YAP meetings, and interests to expand leadership skills. Those interested in being part of the YAPLT must apply. See “Application Process” section for details. Meeting times for YAPLT will occur either after YAP meetings or Monday nights at 6 p.m. when regular YAP meetings are not scheduled.

YAPLT members will meet virtually in late August/early September for an orientation based on members’ availability.

Timeline

Each student who participates in the Youth Ambassador Program must be part of the program for at least one academic year (September through June). Monthly meetings will last 60-90 minutes, depending on the topic. All monthly meetings and workshops will be held virtually via Zoom.

Meeting Descriptions

Monday, September 23

Welcome & Orientation

Orientation to the program and icebreaker for youth ambassadors.

Monday, October 7

LAD Overview

This meeting will introduce ambassadors to the NJ Law Against Discrimination.

Monday, October 21

Introduction to Zines

This meeting will introduce ambassadors to zines and the way they are used to spread messages. A focus on zines used as activism and expose people to different topics.

Monday, November 4

Project Development: Storytelling

At this meeting, ambassadors will explore the power of storytelling and utilizing their voice for transformative change.

Monday, November 18

Civil Rights Analysis

At this meeting, ambassadors will dive deeper into the history of the Civil Rights Movement and examine the strategy behind key moments like the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Monday, December 2

Project Development

At this meeting, ambassadors will brainstorm their zine topic and break into groups and be introduced to student-led discussions.

Monday, December 16

Introduction to Implicit Bias (Education and Training Unit provided training)

This meeting will introduce ambassadors to the concept of implicit bias and discuss strategies on how to address it effectively.

Monday, January 6

Project Development: Vision Board

During this meeting, ambassadors will create a vision board for their zines and pick the topic.

Monday, January 27

Student Led Civil Rights Discussion

Two groups will lead the discussion for this night's meeting based on a topic of their choice.

Monday, February 10

Introduction to Mediation

This meeting will introduce ambassadors to the concept of mediation. This introduction will shift the focus from understanding the individual to understanding their role as a community member.

Monday, February 24

Student-Led Civil Rights Discussion

Two groups will lead the discussion for this night's meeting based on a topic of their choice.

Monday, March 10

Project Development

During this meeting, students will work on their zines and get feedback from their peers.

Monday, March 24

Student-Led Civil Rights Discussion

Two groups will lead the discussion for this night's meeting based on a topic of their choice.

Monday, April 7

Project Development

During this meeting, students will work on their zines and get feedback from their peers.

Monday, April 21

Student-Led Civil Rights Discussion

Two groups will lead the discussion for this night's meeting based on a topic of their choice.

Monday, May 5

Project Development: Finalizing Zines

Ambassadors will finalize their zine and plan their Zine showcase celebration.

Monday, May 19

Conversation with DCR Interns

This meeting will allow ambassadors to speak with current and former DCR interns about their experiences. This conversation aims to connect and network with the interns and prepare ambassadors to begin thinking about how best to access internship, job, and career opportunities.

Monday, June 2

Zine Showcase

DCR ambassadors will showcase their zines and have a final debrief about the work they have been doing over the year.

Application Process

- Interested applicants and their parent/legal guardian, if a minor, must complete the [Youth Ambassador Application form](#).
- Youth Ambassador Applications must be submitted by Monday, July 15, 2024.
- Students who are admitted to the program will be notified by Friday, August 23, 2024.

Youth Ambassador Program Leadership Team (YAPLT) Members

- Interested applicants and their parent/legal guardian, if a minor, must complete the [Youth Ambassador Leadership Team Application form](#).
- Applicants must be a returning member to apply for the Leadership Team.
- Applications are due Monday, July 15, 2024.
- Students who are selected to be part of the YAPLT will be notified by Friday, August 16, 2024.
- If applying to YAPLT, students **do not** have to fill out the general Youth Ambassador Application form. too.

Ambassador Responsibilities

- Attend bi-monthly meetings. Students can only miss 2 meetings over the course of the program.
- Participate in and promote DCR's programs.

Parent/Legal Guardian Responsibilities

- Stay up-to-date on the program and the meeting days.

Centralized Communication Methods

DCR youth ambassadors and their parents/legal guardians will receive monthly emails with upcoming activities, meetings, and workshop links.

Any questions please reach out to us by email at CommunityRelations@njcivilrights.gov.

About the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

The New Jersey Division on Civil Rights is the state agency charged with enforcing the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination ("LAD"), the first state civil rights statute to go into effect in the country. DCR also enforces the New Jersey Family Leave Act (NJFLA) and the Fair Chance in Housing Act (FCHA). The mission of DCR is to prevent, eliminate and remedy discrimination and bias-based harassment in employment, housing, and places of public accommodation throughout New Jersey. DCR's vision is a New Jersey free from discrimination and bias, where all people are treated with equal dignity and equal respect and have access to equal opportunity.