



**Youth Volunteer Corps  
Of Yellowstone County**

**Youth Volunteer Handbook**

Welcome!

Thank you for joining and welcome to the world of Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC). By becoming a YVC member you will be given various exciting opportunities to give back to the community and make a difference. This program will help you learn new skills, meet new people, and have fun as you explore what it means to volunteer and help others in need. It is designed to make your ideas, thoughts and presence known and let agencies and organizations see the amazing work you are capable of. We are excited to have you join our program and can't wait to help you make a presence in the community.

This handbook is designed to help guide and direct you through your time as a Youth Volunteer Corps member. Please take a few minutes to look it over and make yourself familiar with all of the information.

I hope your journey with YVC is educational, rewarding, and fun, and I look forward to supporting your growth as a volunteer.

Thank you

Kayla Sather  
Engagement Associate

# Need to Know

## Primary Contacts

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## Office Information:

United Way of Yellowstone County  
2173 Overland Ave  
Billings, MT 59102

**YVC Cellphone:** 406-794-1468 (We welcome text messages!)

**Website:** [www.yvcyellowstone.org](http://www.yvcyellowstone.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/yvcyellowstone](http://www.facebook.com/yvcyellowstone)

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## What is YVC

Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC) of Yellowstone County is a community service club that offers volunteer opportunities to youth ages 11-18. We take on projects that allow all ages to discover, investigate and address community needs. YVC is a program of The Volunteer Center of United Way. Our goal is to provide enriching activities that serve the community and are educational and fun.

**Summer** - During the summer, teams of youth volunteers work on extended projects. These can be weeklong projects that focus on an a single issue area, or one day activities that reoccur throughout the summer encouraging continued involvement. These projects allow the youth volunteer to see larger outcomes of accomplishment. These projects reinforce teamwork, appreciation for diversity and civic responsibility. Registration for summer projects begins around April.

**School year** - During the school year, we work together on service projects after school, on weekends, and during school breaks. YVC leaders work to design and implement age-appropriate service projects that are educational as well as service oriented. These often are shorter projects than summer projects are.

## Environment for Success

### Team Mentality

At YVC we believe that everyone from our in-office team, to our volunteer members, to our project partners are important to the success of the program. Without a great team of these three stakeholders, our program would be unsuccessful. We like to think of us as a tripod. When we are all strong we can stand tall and stable. We value and need your input, feedback and compassion to grow a successful program.

### Reflection

To wrap up our work at every project we do a group processing activity. This reflection helps us put what we did into perspective and appreciate and understand our value as volunteers. It also helps us decide what we like and what we don't like about certain projects. We use reflection as a way of getting feedback from volunteers and to help you learn about the important work you are doing.

## **What you can expect from us**

The YVC team in the office works hard to plan and schedule projects every month. Here is what you can expect from us as a youth volunteer in our program.

- Volunteer projects and activities
- Project supervision and safe project atmosphere
- Support in your volunteer goals, both present and future
- Quality projects created with youth in mind
- Training opportunities around issues you will be working on
- A complete service history of all YVC projects you have attended within our program

## **What we expect from you**

Just as important as the team behind the scenes setting projects up, our youth members are why we do what we do. Here is what we expect from our youth volunteers.

- Participate in community service projects with enthusiasm and commitment
- Follow YVC ground rules and policies as outlined in this handbook
- Ask about things you don't understand, communication is key to success!
- Be willing to learn and keep learning
- Welcome supervision, adult volunteers and staff are there for you
- Be dependable
- Help with all parts of activities. (Yep, this includes clean up.)

# Volunteer Ground Rules

These are to be followed by all YVC participants and leaders.

1. RSVP for all projects/events you plan to attend
2. Be on time, it's important to the team.
3. Participate in the projects, and reflections/evaluations.
4. Will **not** use drugs and/or alcohol.
5. Will **not** engage in violence or harassment, including sexual harassment of others.
6. Behave respectfully towards your fellow volunteers, your Team Leaders, and the workers/residents of the agency for which you are volunteering.
7. Conduct yourself at all times in a respectful and appropriate manner.
8. Always have a positive attitude. Work as a member of the team in dealing with problems and participating as part of the group.
9. Team Leaders are here to help, so be sure to share your thoughts and concerns.
10. Dress appropriately for project site and weather.
11. Keep all personal electronic devices off and out of sight.
12. Notify your Team Leader in advance if you cannot be present for any project you have registered for.
13. Have fun!

## Additional Program Policies

### Transportation

It is the responsibility of you and your parents or legal guardian to ensure transportation to and from YVC activities. YVC Volunteer Leaders cannot and should not transport any youth volunteer during, before, or after a project. In certain cases transportation during projects will be arranged by YVC, if this is the case a waiver will be sent prior to the activity and parent permission must be given.

### Confidentiality

During the course of your volunteer work you may be exposed to privileged information. Anything you may hear about a volunteer, staff, client, or partner should remain with you at the site you are working at.

### Diversity

The projects and agencies we work with are diverse, but our membership is as well. We include youth ages 11-18 to expose volunteers to different lifestyles, backgrounds and ideas. By meeting and working beside peers with different experiences we believe you can learn about your community and each other.

### Bringing Friends

YVC wants you to bring your friends to projects (unless the project is full!). Just remember... Everyone attending a YVC project must have completed the YVC application form and be 11-18

years old. If you know ahead of time a friend will be with you be sure they bring their completed application with them to the project. Applications can be printed from our website or picked up from our office. If you bring a friend to a project please notify a team leader immediately.

### **Dress Code**

Certain projects may require specific dress depending on the type of work we are doing, but for most YVC projects we ask you dress similar to what is expected from your school. As ambassadors of your peers let's make a good impression with the agencies and partners we work with!

### **Annual Re-enrollment**

In order to keep our records accurate we require participants to fill out the YVC application once a year. This helps us ensure addresses, phone numbers and emergency contact information is current. This will usually take place in the fall and a notice will be sent out.

### **Hours of Membership**

The more involved you are the more hours you obtain! If you ever want to know where you are with your volunteer hours call us up. Certificates are awarded at the end of the year based on the amount of hours you have accumulated. Sometimes we even award prizes!

## **Youth Leadership**

Members who would like to take a more active role in shaping YVC will have the opportunity to be a part of YVC's Youth Leadership Team (YLT). YLT members meet regularly, share ideas, discuss future projects, help pick out and post project pictures online, and have fun!

### **Ways Leaders get involved:**

- Developing fundraising activities
- Organizing and planning YVC projects
- Helping with recruiting and retaining members
- Reviewing YVC rules and policies
- Posting photos and project updates on our website and Facebook page
- Designing a newsletter
- Helping with school presentations
- And more!

# Introduction to Service Areas

Below you will find a short introduction to a few groups we volunteer with and some things to remember when working with them.

## Senior Citizens

The average age of senior citizens living in nursing homes is about 82. Many of them don't have families or can't be with their families, and they can be lonely. That's where volunteers can step in and make a huge impact. Just visiting and spending time with the elderly is a great way to lift their spirits. Treat them as though they're your own grandparents and tell stories, listen to their advice, read them the newspaper, or maybe play bingo. This sort of volunteer work will not only have a positive influence on you, but also on them – you can make them laugh, and they can teach you life lessons.

**Things to remember:** Sometimes elderly people have conditions that make it more difficult to work with them. Common limitations include memory loss, difficult moving, and difficulty hearing. Each individual will be different, and it is best to get to know those who you are working with to discover what limitations, if any, they have.

## People with Disabilities

Often those with disabilities can be a challenging group to work with because of the varying levels of functionality. Volunteers take on a role similar to working with the elderly in a sense that you are there to be a companion. Playing games, putting together puzzles, and encouraging them are keys to being a positive influence. Often when working with a person who is disabled it is expected that you act as their chaperone and guide. Some disabilities can limit functionality to a point that constant monitoring is needed and keeping an area safe and being aware of possible dangers is important. The degree this is needed will depend on the individuals with whom you work.

**Things to remember:** Every individual disability will be different. Getting to know those you are working with will shape the role you take as volunteer. Asking questions to other volunteers and staff members can help guide you. Often they are more familiar with the types of disabilities. Remember that there are different levels of functionality and that some individuals will need more direction and others will need less.

## Children

Children are a wonderful and unique group to work with. They are easy to entertain and eager to learn. The general role as a volunteer with children is to help with basic learning and development. Some ways this is done is by reading to them, playing games with them, and just plain showing them the world to them. One important rule is that if you want to teach a kid you need to act like a kid. Making funny faces and playing silly games can be rewarding for the children, and fun for the volunteer.

**Things to remember:** Children often have short attention spans. Keeping things entertaining and fun helps keep their attention. Be flexible and remember that kids pick up on everything we do.