



MARYLAND VOLUNTEER

Starting and Growing Fire/EMS Youth Programs

IT STARTS WITH WHY?

Why have a youth program? What is the goal of your youth program?

- Lower firefighter age requirement to supplement senior members
- Create a safe place where young people can learn valuable life and safety lessons
- Create a pipeline of future first responders
- _____

Whose best interests should you keep in mind when designing a program?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF YOUTH PROGRAMS

What are the different types of programs? Choose the program(s) that will work best for your youth, and your organization.

- RAM-Restricted Activity Member
- Junior Firefighter
- Fire Explorers
- Fire Prevention Ambassador
- High School Cadet
- Junior Auxiliary
- _____

Will they be members of your fire department or just the club or post? _____

What are the ramifications of either model? _____

SUPPORT IS A MUST!

Who do you need support from?

- Leadership: Assign dedicated individuals to lead the effort
- Your Organization: Members need to be onboard and ready to meet these young people and any challenges that may come with them
- To Make Changes: Address any organizational changes that need to happen BEFORE you bring younger members into your organization



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CYA - COVER YOUR ASSETS

Who are your assets?

- Youth Members
- Youth Leadership
- Your Organization and its members
- Parents

Consult your Insurance Company and Legal Counsel

- Make sure you are complying with all rules, regulations and laws related to youth activities
- Will they participate in a ride-along program? What are the pros, cons and liabilities and how will you protect them from what they may be exposed to visually, physically, mentally and emotionally?
- All leaders should undergo a background check and the program should use the Buddy System
- Have parents sign a liability waiver and a photo/media release

+ BONUS: Use their photos for future recruitment efforts!

BUILD YOUR PROGRAM

- Look at other programs to model your program after
- Create SOG's with clear expectations to include:
 - Program application
 - Academic Performance
 - Behavior
 - Attendance for training, meetings and events
 - Social media policy
 - Formal pathway to leadership
 - What hours youth can be at firehouse
 - What activities youth can participate in
 - _____



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MARKET YOUR PROGRAM

Make a plan to market your program

- Who to market to?
- Where to market?
- How do you want to market?
 - Create a program logo
 - Create a tagline-what keywords would you use?
 - Decide which social media platforms to be on

Be sure to add youth program info to your department:

- Website
- Social media
- Fundraising events
- Open house and public outreach functions

RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR YOUR PROGRAM

- Get out there - go where the young people are -
- Go to where the young people are
 - Schools
 - Sporting events
 - Businesses that cater to your target age group
 - _____
- Bring youth members and program alumni to recruitment events -NO ONE is better at recruiting their peers than they are!
- Host a kick-off event - make it a BIG deal
- Leverage the Power of Referral: Each One-Reach One. Remember: NO ONE is better at recruiting their peers than they are!
- Never underestimate the power of the influencers! (Parents, Grandparents, Coaches, Teachers and other mentors)

+BONUS: Parents and Grandparents are a great recruitment pool for your program and your organization.



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GET THEM HAPPILY INVOLVED

- Plan Ahead - Be Prepared!
- Make it FUN - ask THEM how
- Don't waste their time and don't take advantage of them as free labor
- Get youth program members involved in? _____

REWARD AND RECOGNIZE

- Ask the experts "What says thank you, we appreciate you?"
- Who are the experts? _____
- Where could recognition take place?
 - Picnics
 - Banquets
 - Youth program meetings
 - General membership meetings
 - _____
- Look into local, state and national awards

+BONUS: Earning recognition like this makes for a GREAT recruiting tool, who doesn't want to be a part of an award-winning team

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Evaluate your processes - make changes where needed
- Always be recruiting - even if it means creating a 'wait list'
- Look for opportunities to get youth involved:
 - Recruiting their peers
 - Training
 - Public education
 - Fundraising
 - Community events
 - _____
- Make service a habit