



Welcome to the Armory Youth Project Team!

We rely on volunteers like you to accomplish our Mission! Your dedication and support make it possible for us to provide an exciting, safe, and caring environment for young people.

We want our students to know that we care about them personally and we do that through a variety of connection opportunities. We believe that your participation by volunteering models a heart for service and community involvement that will be remembered by the youth with whom you come in contact. Although we know parents play the primary role in raising well-adjusted and thriving children, we also know that other adults play an important supporting role in helping young people navigate the challenges of adolescence.

We don't claim to have all the answers - we welcome your input as we take this journey together. It is our hope that this handbook will provide you with the information you will need to fulfill your responsibilities as an Armory Youth Project (AYP) volunteer and hope that you find a sense of satisfaction in your service to the youth of Manistee County.

Thank You!!

About the Armory Youth Project

Mission

The Mission of the Armory Youth Project is to provide a safe environment where young people can build community and be encouraged in their educational, emotional, physical and Christian spiritual development.

Organizational Structure

Volunteers fulfill essential roles in the operation of the Armory Youth Project's programs and events. The Executive Director, under the guidance of the AYP Board of Directors, is responsible for every aspect of the AYP's ongoing operations. Our staff consists of an Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, Program Coordinator, Office Assistant, and Youth Coordinator. During open hours, volunteers will be under the guidance of an AYP staff member who will be responsible for the facility.

Board of Directors

Una Miller, Vice President

Ben Feliczak, Treasurer

Shellee Seymour, Secretary

Katie Oviedo, Board Member

Sheila Cornell. Board Member

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Methods

The Armory Youth Project or AYP is a not-for-profit, 501c3 organization that was created to support our Manistee County youth and their families. The AYP successfully opened in 2017 and offers after-school and summer programming, mentoring, tutoring, art classes, and substance-free events. In order to offer these opportunities to our area youth, the AYP collaborates with area school administrations, area churches, organizations, and agencies, such as SEA Manistee, Staircase Youth Services, Young Life, Manistee Recreation Association, as well as individuals in our community. The AYP actively recognizes the impact of community investment and continually seeks to foster partnerships in developing programs and events.

The Armory Youth Project welcomes all students. We serve middle and high school youth grades 6 - 12 without regard to the individual's race, ethnicity, gender identity, culture, religion or beliefs. Our goal is to build relationships with the youth that visit the AYP and we believe in showing love through encouragement, a smile, a tasty meal, a listening ear, and offering a place to have fun. We do embrace Christian values, but youth served shall not be required to participate in any religious activity.

General Policies

Access and Building Use

All volunteer and youth participants will be required to sign in and out of the facility each time they attend an AYP program or event. All volunteer participants are required to:

- Complete the Volunteer Application, which includes emergency contact information and release of liability
- Receive clearance on background checks, which include DHHS Child Abuse/Neglect and Michigan ICHAT
- Use an ID barcode tag to check in and out of all AYP events and programs
- Wear an AYP ID badge

Substance Abuse Policy

Armory Youth Project is a substance-free facility. Absolutely no alcohol, tobacco, vaping materials, or non-prescription drugs are permitted at any time on AYP property or at any event sponsored by the AYP. Students or volunteers who carry prescriptions must notify the main office upon arrival at the AYP. AYP has the authority to search bags and seize any of the prohibited items. Violation of this policy may result in suspension, termination, or reporting to law enforcement agencies.

Weapons Policy

Absolutely no weapons, including pocketknives, are allowed on the AYP premises. Any suspicion of a weapon in the building should be reported to the main office or an AYP employee immediately. If a student discovers they have accidentally brought a pocketknife into the building, it must be immediately turned over to the main office to be picked up upon departure. The AYP has the authority to search bags and seize any prohibited items and the right to use a metal detector of any kind to find any weapons or prohibited items.

If a report is received of a weapon on the property:

- Notify an AYP staff member immediately
- Do NOT approach a person believed to be armed or touch an unattended weapon or individual
- If the person leaves, do NOT follow. Watch to be able to provide the police with the general direction they went.

Bullying/Harassment Policy

It is the goal of the Armory Youth Project to provide a safe and fun environment for youth that promotes respectful behavior and interactions. Absolutely no type of bullying or harassment will be tolerated. AYP encourages an environment free of discrimination, harassment, bullying or inappropriate treatment of any youth participant, volunteer, employee, or guest because of race, sex, color, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, or any category protected under federal, state or local law. This policy applies to all participants, volunteers, employees or guests.

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and results in a person being demeaned or distressed. This behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated over time. Bullying can be considered the severe or repeated use of oral, written, electronic or technological expression (image, sound, or data) regardless of method of transmission, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other person. Bullying and harassment are a situation that creates a hostile or uncomfortable environment for a participant, volunteer, employee, or guest at the AYP or AYP activity.

Report any instances of perceived bullying or harassment to an AYP staff member. Reports of bullying or harassment on-premises, including cyberbullying, will be immediately reviewed, and investigated by AYP leadership in a professional and timely manner. Bullying and harassment will result in disciplinary actions from suspension, termination or reports to law enforcement.

Volunteer Policies

The Armory Youth Project is committed to providing a safe environment where young people experience a sense of safety and belonging. To ensure this, we will provide supervision for all events and activities, and promote practices that provide for the safety and security of our youth, volunteers, employees and guests. Every effort will be made to create a culture that works to keep youth involved and engaged rather than excluded for unwelcome behavior.

Both paid staff and volunteers will be subject to a qualification process prior to involvement with youth at the AYP. This will include volunteer application, background checks, clearance procedures, orientation, and additional training as needed.

Volunteers will exhibit traits of character and integrity that provide for the safety and well-being of students as well as provide an example for students to follow. Volunteers are not required to belong to a Christian church or profess their faith, but all volunteers must be committed to the Armory Youth Project mission.

Volunteer Conduct

All Armory Youth Project volunteers will:

- Complete an initial application, background clearance process, orientation and sign an acknowledgment of this at the end of orientation
- Display character, integrity, and moral standards consistent with the mission of the AYP
- Demonstrate reliability and dependability by fulfilling all commitments made
- Contribute to the positive and encouraging environment cultivated by the AYP by being open, friendly, and accepting of all participants and treat everyone with courtesy, respect, and dignity
- Consistently comply with all policies outlined in the AYP Volunteer Manual
- Always check-in/out with ID barcode tag, wear an ID badge and suitable clothing for program needs, without offensive or inappropriate slogans or images
- Refrain from offensive language
- Respect all confidential information
- Use positive reinforcement and redirection to deal with problem situations
- Sign confidentiality agreement
- Avoid discussions related to personal political or specific doctrinal beliefs

All AYP volunteers will NOT:

- Use or possess alcohol, tobacco, or nonprescription medication while volunteering

- Strike, slap or engage in any violent physical interaction with youth
- Touch youth in any manner, physically or in a sexual/inappropriate manner
- Engage in any romantic relationship with youth, regardless of age difference
- Be alone with a student one on one.

Volunteer Absences

Volunteer attendance is very important to the operation of the Armory Youth Project, we count on you to help ensure a safe environment for the students in our care. Every volunteer is expected to report for his/her shift on time and stay for the duration of the time scheduled. When a volunteer expects to be absent from a scheduled day or if you will be late for your scheduled start time, you should contact the AYP at (231)299-1205, as soon as possible. We understand that things come up and sickness occurs, but please contact us as far in advance as possible.

Childcare

If you have children that meet the age criteria for participation in the Armory Youth Project (grades 6-12), they may be registered through a Youth Registration and Waiver Form, be issued a barcode ID tag, and attend programming while their parent is volunteering. However, if your child does not meet the age requirements for attendance at the AYP, you are not allowed to bring them with you while you volunteer.

Volunteer Misconduct

In the event of an allegation of volunteer/staff misconduct, the Armory Youth Project will launch a careful and thorough investigation to determine both the validity of the claim(s) and the most appropriate response moving forward. Our volunteers are greatly valued and, in any allegation, will be considered innocent until proven guilty. However, regardless of circumstances, each situation will be handled following the same steps:

- When an allegation is received, the volunteer will be put on leave from AYP involvement until a full investigation of the claim is completed. This does not indicate mistrust of the volunteer but is an essential aspect of the process to ensure our commitment to student safety.
- If appropriate, AYP will report concerns related to child abuse/neglect to appropriate authorities.
- AYP leadership will complete a full, confidential investigation of the allegations.
- If the claim is unfounded, the volunteer will be reinstated to continue with their position with full AYP support.
- If the claim is found to be true, the AYP Executive Director and Board of Directors will determine appropriate disciplinary action including, but not limited to, a warning, removal of the volunteer, or reporting the incident to law enforcement.

Youth Discipline/Incident Procedures

Every effort will be made by the Armory Youth Project staff to resolve disciplinary issues in a manner that seeks to understand the underlying problems contributing to disruptive behavior. Students who make poor choices regarding their behavior will be held accountable through consistent disciplinary or behavior modification procedures.

AYP believes mastering this difficult area of responsibility is crucial. Both good behavior and problematic behavior require a consistent response by those in charge. Our aim is to maintain a culture that helps keep troubled youth involved rather than penalizing them for unwelcome behavior by exclusion. Recognizing that our volunteers and staff may be dealing with very vulnerable students, they will need to show both compassion but also firmness, and consistency when dealing with youth misconduct.

In the event of youth misconduct, adhere to the following guidance:

Ensure the environment is safe

- Never step between youth in a physical altercation
- Never physically try to intervene
- Disperse any onlookers
- Make use of individual names, tone, and volume to grab attention
- Provide physical distance and cool off time before engaging

Engage – Allow each party to share their perspective on what occurred and why

- Take the youth to a quiet area - possibly an empty office, leaving the door(s) open
- Ask their thoughts, their feelings, or what they were trying to achieve.
- Share your perception in a non-judgmental way to present the reality of the situation
“What I saw was...” or “It seemed to me that...”

Notify an AYP employee as soon as possible, especially if the incident is ongoing. Volunteers may be asked to assist staff in the completion of an Incident Report, including a written statement on the incident. AYP leadership will review the Incident Report and determine disciplinary action on an individual basis.

Confidentiality Policy

All youth identifying information, including emergency contact information, is considered confidential. Do not share with anyone.

As volunteers build relationships with youth, it is both expected and healthy that teens may confide in their mentors. Volunteers must be very aware and use good judgment in building relationships with students, as well as maintaining confidentiality. Volunteers are expected to keep student disclosure confidential, with this exception:

- Confidentiality does not apply if the volunteer has any suspicion of danger or harm. Harm includes, but is not limited to, concerns of physical safety, any form of abuse or

concerns related to the welfare and safety of the student. Potentially sensitive disclosures should be documented. Please contact AYP staff to give a summary of the disclosure and your response.

It is recommended that volunteers discuss confidentiality early in a mentoring relationship, and let students know what would need to be reported to AYP staff. For example, saying “You can tell me anything and I will not judge you or stop caring about you. However, if I am worried about harm to you or anyone else, I have to get some support from other people.”

In the event a volunteer has the concern about potential harm to a student, they should follow these steps:

1. **Give the student a choice.** “This is one of those things that we have to report to the AYP staff. Would you like to talk to them, or should I?”
2. **Let the student know what you are going to do.** “Remember when we talked about confidentiality, and I told you I had to tell AYP staff or your parent(s) if I was ever worried about you? I am worried and I need to talk to them. Would you like to be there when I tell them what you just told me?”
3. **Let the student know you care.** “I hope you know that I keep everything that you tell me between us, but this is something I can’t keep to myself.”
4. **Talk to AYP staff.** Ask staff to contact the Executive Director as soon as possible. The AYP staff and Executive Director will determine the next steps, including involving parents or other resources. The intent of this process is not to harm your relationship with the student or get them in trouble, but rather to keep them safe.

Incident Reporting

Any volunteer who notices any concerning or unusual events or behaviors should contact an AYP staff member to report it to. Examples to report would include student altercations, concerning/unusual student behaviors, ANY (even minor) injuries, unidentified adults in the building, concerns with staff or volunteer behavior, etc. The AYP staff will complete an Incident Report and will ask for your input. Ongoing documentation over time will help AYP staff identify students who may have underlying struggles and provide them with needed support.

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Every effort shall be made to provide the highest level of safety and security for the youth and volunteers taking part in programs and events. Emergencies take many forms and may require several different actions. No one can foresee the type or extent of the emergency, and how it affects people and structures, so it is impossible to provide definitive, all encompassing, advice. The following are general instructions that are designed to guide volunteers regarding safety and emergency procedures for just a few types of actual and potential emergencies.

In the event of any emergency, notify AYP staff and they will make necessary decisions to ensure safety. If a volunteer believes they have an emergency, or a situation beyond your control, immediately contact AYP staff.

Injuries

Since injuries are an unavoidable fact of life, the Armory Youth Project has procedures in place to deal effectively with medical situations. Persons who experience any injury that is obviously minor will be provided with first aid supplies to treat their own injury. Please notify an AYP staff member so that first aid supplies can be obtained, and an Incident Report filled out. First aid supplies can be found on the east wall of the gym by the AED. There is also a first aid kit in the employee bathroom.

Any injury which may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid shall be given immediate attention. The parent or guardian of the injured person shall be immediately notified by AYP staff. AYP staff shall decide as to whether the injury warrants calling 911 or waiting for parents. AYP staff will fill out an Incident Report and will ask for a volunteer's input.

In the event of a medical emergency, please assist AYP staff in removing all students and bystanders from the immediate area, politely thank and redirect "good Samaritans" and help move the victim to the main office for privacy, if possible. Avoid discussing the situation or providing information to other students and bystanders.

If you are injured while volunteering, please notify an AYP staff member immediately and we will fill out an Incident Report.

Mental Health Crisis

A mental health crisis involves any situation in which a student participant feels they are in danger of harming themselves or others. **Always treat these discussions seriously.** Never attempt to diagnose or determine if they are "just looking for attention."

If you feel comfortable talking with the student and have let the student know that you cannot promise to keep the discussion secret, find a quiet place to sit with the student and listen to what they wish to share. Remind students that you can only keep confidentiality up until the point you are concerned about harm to themselves or others. Use reflective listening by making statements reflecting what you hear the student sharing: "It sounds like you feel..." or "It seems like..." Avoid discussing similar personal experiences. Focus on listening to them and asking open-ended questions related to their situation. Notify an AYP staff member where you are and of any threat of harm immediately. After your discussion with the student, whether you feel they are safe or not, please discuss the situation with AYP staff immediately after talking to the student.

If you do not feel comfortable talking with the student, contact an AYP staff member or the Executive Director immediately.

Unidentified Person(s)

All Armory Youth Project participants and volunteers are required to sign in using their ID barcode tag upon entering the building. Volunteers must wear a visible identification (ID) badge. Ideally, students will exit the building to be picked up in the front driveway. Occasionally, parents may enter the building to pick up their child. In the instance that a parent may be lost or need assistance locating their student(s), please ask them to wait in the front entryway until their student can meet them there. No adult should enter the AYP while youth are present without a background check.

If an unidentified adult is in the building, politely approach and ask how you can assist them. If he or she is not a parent picking up a student, direct the visitor to the front office for further assistance or contact an AYP staff member.

Reporting Child Abuse

If you suspect a student is being abused, please consult the Armory Youth Project staff or Executive Director. They may need to report it to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Evacuation/Muster Points

In the event of a building evacuation, the following muster points will be used:

- The primary muster point will be the dugouts located at Hamlin Field; the baseball diamond is southeast of the building.
- The secondary muster point will be the baseball field located at the corner of First Street and Cherry Road.

Fire Emergency

If a fire is reported, an alarm is sounding, or the sprinkler is activated:

- Evacuate students as soon as possible to the muster point.
- If cold weather conditions exist, instruct students to get their jackets on the way out ONLY if it is on the way to the exit.
- AYP staff will perform a headcount and prepare to notify emergency services of any persons remaining inside the building.
- Staff and volunteers must not allow students or other persons to enter the building once an evacuation has been initiated until the all-clear has been given by emergency services.

Inclement Weather

When inclement weather is forecasted in the Manistee County area, the Armory Youth Project follows these procedures:

- If the Manistee Area Public Schools (MAPS) has closed due to inclement weather during the school year, all AYP After School Open Hours and programs are cancelled.
- Blizzard warning or winter weather advisory has been put into effect, the AYP will close as the situation warrants
- Dial-A-Ride will be contacted to transport students home and parents will be contacted
- In the event of a tornado, we will shelter in place in the AYP basement and will remain until an all-clear is issued by law enforcement.

Closing Statement

Volunteers are one of the greatest resources we have at the Armory Youth Project. We are thrilled that you have chosen to give your time, energy, and talents to provide the youth of our community a safe environment to be encouraged in their educational, emotional, physical, and Christian spiritual development. We strive to provide our volunteers with a positive work environment, necessary training, supervision, and recognition. If you ever have any questions or concerns about your volunteer experience at AYP, do not hesitate to speak to the AYP Executive Director.