



## CO YLF June 29-July 3, 2019

University of Denver

Denver, Colorado

### COLORADO YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM INFORMATION PACKET

**Purpose and Goals** The Colorado Youth Leadership Forum (CO-YLF) is an innovative, 5-day on campus conference, for Colorado high school juniors, seniors, and young adults under 26 with disabilities, as they prepare for and experience transition to adulthood.

Students serve as delegates from their communities and are given the opportunity to cultivate their potential leadership, citizenship and social skills. Designed to foster personal growth through self-discovery, the CO-YLF provides dynamic, experiential learning opportunities to assist each individual as they identify and embrace their strengths while planning for their future.

Successful adults with disabilities serve as role models in helping youth realize their ability, right, and obligation to pursue meaningful employment and contribute to society.

Based on a national youth forum model, first developed in California in 1992, the Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) decided to do more to motivate and prepare Colorado youth with significant disabilities to confront the barriers to employment and social participation they face as they become adults.

Although purposeful and relevant, the true value of CO-YLF is not found in a workbook or in the words of an accomplished presenter. It is found in the climate of trust, mutual respect, and absolute acceptance, which allow youth to be themselves, to be heard, and to develop and change.

Most importantly, we envision creating a forum that embraces the philosophy of *Independent Living* and teaches the delegates to understand and not be ashamed of their experiences as people with significant disabilities.

We have created an annual, statewide training that provides powerful informative experiences to accelerate their learning. This in turn aims to:

- Make the young people aware that they have both a right and a civic responsibility to secure the highest form of employment or post-secondary education for which they are qualified.
- Encourage youth to overcome limits on their academic and career goals by exposing them to successful role models--adults with disabilities who have a variety of achievements.
- Give the student delegates skills and the knowledge of technology and other resources that can help them develop and achieve those goals.
- Motivate the delegates to become active in their communities and to realize their leadership potential, especially by serving as role models for other young people with disabilities and as advocates for the education, training, and employment of all people with disabilities.
- Teach the delegates about the history of their IL predecessors with disabilities, including the long struggle for civil rights, resulting in such legislation as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provide an opportunity for young people with disabilities to participate in an intensive forum that emphasizes leadership, independence, and personal and career goal setting.

The CO-YLF curriculum will provide eight (8) primary training components:

1. Principles of Leadership
2. Experience of Disability
3. Independent Living Technology and Resources
4. Living on My Own
5. Reaching My Education and Career Goals
6. Leading in My Community
7. Personal Development Planning
8. Preparation for Follow-up Mentoring

## **WHAT IS THE COLORADO YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM (CO-YLF)?**

CO-YLF is an innovative, 5-day conference, designed to foster leadership skills and personal growth for students and young adults who have disabilities, as they prepare for and transition to adulthood. CO-YLF believes leadership is a personal journey, and begins with maximizing leadership roles and responsibilities. CO-YLF provides experiential learning opportunities to assist each individual as they identify and embrace their strengths and gifts, in conjunction with planning for their future.

## **WHO PARTICIPATES IN CO-YLF?**

Youth with disabilities, referred to as Delegates, who demonstrate leadership potential, an interest in embracing and enhancing their lives, and who wish to interact effectively with other youth and adults are a great fit for CO-YLF. Accommodations are available to maximize access for all. It is essential to the dynamic process of CO-YLF that there is diversity in all aspects. Everyone has something to offer, and CO-YLF encourages youth to identify and take pride in who they are as a person, and how they choose to establish themselves in the world.

CO-YLF is intended to serve youth who have a variety of disabilities and diversities. Therefore, Colorado youth who will have completed at least two years of high school by June, those who have recently graduated, or those who are young adults in transition, are encouraged to apply and will receive selection consideration. The YLF accepts students with varying social-economic backgrounds and ethnicity from around the state.

## **WHAT HAPPENS AT CO-YLF?**

CO-YLF brings together up to 30 youth who have disabilities from across Colorado, for a 5-day experience that focuses on self-discovery, leadership development, career exploration, effective personal and systems advocacy, and empowers through heightened awareness of disability history and culture. Through Person Centered Planning, Delegates are assisted in developing a Personal Leadership Plan, which includes specific action items, as they return to their home communities. Delegates become a voice for their peers as they serve to inform the Colorado State Plan for Independent Living. Delegates are assigned a mentor for ongoing support for one year after CO-YLF, and are offered continued connection through joining the CO-YLF Alumni Association, following graduation.

## **WHY HAVE CO-YLF?**

Youth who have disabilities have both more opportunities and more challenges than at any other time in our history. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has created unprecedented opportunities for youth to fully develop as positive, contributing members of our society. However, many need encouragement to develop as leaders in their own lives, and in their communities. CO-YLF allows youth opportunities to learn from each other and from successful elders who have disabilities. CO-YLF not only benefits the Delegates, but all young people, our communities, and the elders who assist in producing the conference.

## **HOW IS THE CO-YLF FUNDED?**

All costs, including housing, meals, interpreters, personal care attendants, transportation, meeting space, operational costs, etc., are paid for through the SILC, fundraising, state agencies and corporate donations in addition to a grant from the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council.

## **HOW MUCH DOES CO-YLF COST?**

All Delegates are eligible for financial assistance to cover the cost of attendance. The YLF planning team secures funding through the SILC, fundraising, state agencies and corporate donations in addition to a grant from the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council. By utilizing the above funding streams, this ensures Delegates will not have any out-of-pocket costs to attend.

## **WHERE DO I SEND MY COMPLETED APPLICATION TO?**

Completed applications can be emailed to: **[SILCYLF@coloradosilc.org](mailto:SILCYLF@coloradosilc.org)**

Mailed to:  
**NWCCI % YLF19**  
**1855 Shield Dr. #300**  
**Steamboat Springs, CO 80487**

Any questions about the application process can be addressed by calling **303-902-5897** or emailing **[silcyf@coloradosilc.org](mailto:silcyf@coloradosilc.org)**