

OVERVIEW

Established in September 1999 and sponsored by the National Guard, Montana Youth Challenge Academy (MYCA) works with at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 18 to achieve short-term academic and personal goals and learn long-term life management skills. "Cadets" voluntarily commit to 22 weeks of residential programming and 12 months of post-residential mentoring, where they focus on their physical, emotional and educational needs. The program has more than 19 years of great success.

Achieving Success in Mentoring

80%

Cadets with verified placement upon graduation

70%

maintain placement and mentoring 12 months after graduation to receive Letter of Completion

MENTORING PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- Cadets **identify their mentor** in their application to the MYCA. The program has to "cold-match" approximately 20% of mentors. The program has some restrictions on who is eligible to serve as a mentor.
- Mentors go to the MYCA campus in Dillon for a **day of training**. The training program creates a feeling of "family," excitement about the MYCA, and instills in mentors the importance of the cadet's Placement Plan and the role the mentor plays in helping them execute that plan. Cadets also participate in mentor-mentee training.
- Upon graduation from the residential program, **mentors receive a packet** about their Cadet-mentee, which includes information about the Cadet's strengths and weaknesses, specific details about the Cadet's placement, and tools for being a mentor.
- MYCA staff spend the first 8 to 9 weeks of the post-residential phase making calls and checking in with mentors. This support increases **mentor retention**.
- Cadets will not receive a coveted **Letter of Completion** from the program unless they participate in mentoring sessions for the full 12 months.

For more information, please contact:

Michelle Nelon
Post-Residential
Supervisor

Montana Youth
Challenge Academy

michelle.nelon@mt.gov