

National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program

What is it?

The mission of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program is to intervene and reclaim the lives of 16-18 year-old high school dropouts producing program graduates with the values, skills, education, and self-discipline necessary to succeed as private citizens. ChalleNGe is recognized as America's premier program for at-risk youth. The program is available in participating States and Territories.

What has the Army done?

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program has 33 sites across the country and is the second largest mentoring program behind Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Congress authorized a pilot program in 1993, and to date more than 100,000 cadets have graduated, turned their lives around, and gone on to become productive citizens. The NGB uses a disciplined and focused approach to guide the ChalleNGe program to become a high performing organization with the emphasis on outcomes and results. The established infrastructure within the National Guard system that reaches from the national to the local level provides continuity for program administration and guidance. With limited financial resources, the ChalleNGe program directors use planned and structured networking opportunities to maximize the knowledge, skills, and abilities of all staff members.

The program per capita cost is \$17,300 per year on the average, but this cost is higher in certain cost-of-living areas. States receive both federal and state funds to conduct the ChalleNGe program and thus provide life-altering opportunities to young people who are at risk of becoming a burden on society.

What continued efforts does the National Guard have planned for the future?

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program consists of eight core components:

- **Leadership/Followership:** Identification and application of individual moral and ethical standards for each role and responsibility as the cadets live and learn in a structured group environment.
- **Responsible Citizenship:** Government structure and processes, along with individual rights and responsibilities at the local, state, and national level are addressed in the classroom environment, the student government process, and practical experiences within local communities.
- **Service to Community:** Cadets must complete a minimum of 40 hours of group and individual community service and/or conservation project tasks.

These activities provide additional opportunities for career exploration as well as enhancing a cadet's community awareness.

- **Life-Coping Skills:** Cadets improve self-esteem and self-discipline through a combination of classroom activities and a structured living environment. The development of individual strategies and coping skills for managing personal finance and dealing with anger, grief, frustration, and stress are developed through structured group discussion and in the classroom environment.
- **Physical Fitness:** Each program includes a physical fitness component using the President's Challenge – a test based on data collected from a variety of sources including: the 1985 President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports National School Population Fitness Survey, the Amateur Athletic Union Physical Fitness Program, and the Canada Fitness Award Program.
- **Health and Hygiene:** The program provides cadets with a holistic approach that combines physical and mental well-being with a learned awareness of the effects of substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases on their physical health and well-being. Cadets learn the physical and emotional benefits of proper nutrition through participation in classes and structured group discussions.
- **Job Skills:** Career exploration is accomplished through career assessment and interest inventories, job-specific skills orientation and awareness, and training in vocational centers. Specific classroom activities focus on development of individual resumes, completing job applications, and preparing for, and practicing, job interviews.
- **Academic Excellence.** All ChalleNGe participants attend daily academic classes preparing them for testing for the General Education Development (GED) credential, a high school diploma, or increased math and reading comprehension. Evaluation of a cadet's grade level progress during the residential phase is measured using the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) process.

Why is this important to the Army?

Graduates of this program are potential candidates for the ARNG or other military service and are much less likely to get into trouble.