



EXHIBIT C



Arkansas National Guard Youth Challenge Program

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[Arkansas Department of Military Website](#)



Youth Challenge - Background



32 U.S. Code § 509 - National Guard Youth Challenge Program of Opportunities for Civilian Youth

Program Authority and Purpose:

- The Secretary of Defense may use the National Guard to conduct a National Guard Youth Challenge Program.
- 22-week residential program and a 12-month post-residential mentoring period.
- Improve life skills and employment potential of participants by providing military-based training and supervised work experience, together with the core program components of assisting participants to receive a high school diploma or its equivalent, leadership development, promoting fellowship and community service, developing life coping skills and job skills, and improving physical fitness and health and hygiene.

Persons Eligible To Participate in Program:

- A school dropout from a secondary school.
- The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe the standards and procedures for selecting participants from among school dropouts



DoD Instruction 1025.8 - NGYCP



Program Information:

- Federal DoD program conducted and supported by the National Guard in 27 participating States, territories, and the District of Columbia.
- Funded with 75% Federal Funds and 25% State Funds through the National Guard Bureau Cooperative Agreement
- The ratio of cadet to YC Training Officers (Cadre) minimum is 25 to 1.

All NGYCP Participants Must Be:

- A National of the United States.
- Not under indictment, or ever convicted of a felony (or any crime that would be a felony if perpetrated by an adult), and not currently on parole or probation for other than juvenile status offenses or misdemeanors.
- Willing to be free from the illegal use of drugs or substances, alcohol, and tobacco products during the program.
- Between 16 and 18 years of age on the first day of the Residential phase. Applicants who are 15-years old and who will turn 16 during the Residential phase can attend if approved by the Program Director, but such applicants must be enrolled in a high school credit recovery track to allow for their eventual return to high school.
- A school dropout from secondary school.

Recruitment

- Greatest impact on disengaged youth by bringing in those best suited to benefit from the structured and disciplined residential environment.
- A voluntary program.
- **It is neither a juvenile justice detention alternative nor a therapeutic environment for those with serious clinical mental health or substance abuse issues.**
- Rigorous screening and selection criteria are the cornerstone of the recruitment approach.



National Rand Research Report



Research Report

JENNIE W. WENGER, ROBERT BOZICK, LINDA COTTRELL, STEPHANI L. WRABEL

National Guard Youth ChalleNGe

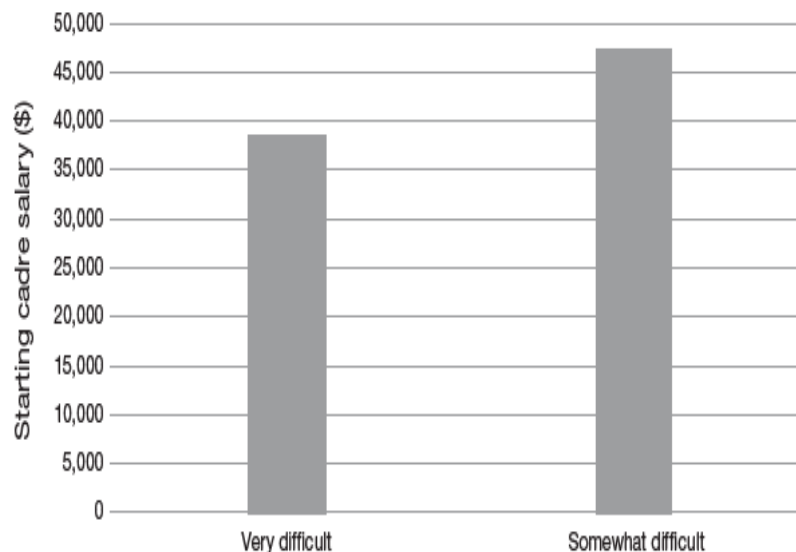
Program Progress in 2022–2023



“Staff turnover at Challenge sites remains relatively high, and program staff frequently report hiring difficulties (especially for cadre and instructors)”

FIGURE 3.2

Cadre Salary, by Difficulty of Hiring





National Rand Research Report



FIGURE 2.2
Average Graduation Rate, by Class



NOTE: This figure uses information reported by the sites over the past four years. The 2019 classes were 52 and 53; the 2020 classes were 54 and 55; the 2021 classes were 56 and 57; and the 2022 classes were 58 and 59. In this figure, we calculate graduation rate as the ratio of graduates to (Pre-ChalleNGe) entrants. There is no official definition of the ChalleNGe graduation rate. Sites often calculate the graduation rate as the ratio of graduates to (ChalleNGe) cadets. This calculation produces a higher graduation rate, but the overall pattern is very similar to the pattern shown in this figure.



National Rand Research Report



United States Government Accountability Office
Report to Congressional Committees

November 2023

NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE PROGRAM

Actions Needed to Enhance Oversight and Assess Performance

Accessible Version

- Persistent challenges with hiring enough cadre to meet cadre-to cadet ratio requirements.
- This increases the risk of cadets attempting to leave the program grounds without permission or engaging in self-harm.
- To address staff shortages, officials at this site said they lowered the rank requirements for cadre resulting in less experienced cadre staff.
- A different site told us that pay, and burnout are contributors to an inability to maintain cadre and that understaffing contributes to a significant risk to cadet safety of inappropriate contact or language.



YOUTH PROGRAM TRAINING OFFICER I



The Department of Military Youth Program Training Officer is responsible for providing physical training and guidance to students in the Youth Challenge Program. This position is governed by the state and federal laws agency institution policy.

Anticipated Starting Salary: \$32,405.00

This position is responsible for the following:

Minimum Qualifications:

The formal education equivalent of a high school diploma plus one year of specialized or related experience.

Special Requirements:

Ability to run up to 10 miles, light travel.
Must possess the temperament and training to work with youths who may become disruptive and use inappropriate language.
Must have the ability to comply with the Hands-Off Standard of Operations Procedural Youth Challenge internal Policy with the Youth.

Licenses:

Must maintain a valid Arkansas driver's license and meet the eligibility requirements covered by the state insurance policy.

- Oversee students, maintains/compiles evaluation of behavior reports by noting resident actions, medical problems, and disciplinary /rules violations.
- Ensure a clean, safe and secure environment that is conducive to behavioral changes based on program rules and regulations.
- Execute drill and ceremony procedures in daily activities, to include all movements of assigned students.
- Perform individual counseling with assigned students in the area of performance, personal problems and behavioral problems.
- Conduct physical training with assigned students.
- Participate in physical training exercises
- Run/walk up to 10 miles
- Perform barracks inspections
- Perform uniform/equipment inspections
- Escort students to special events
- Write shift reports
- Drive state issued vehicles



Arkansas Youth Challenge - Audit



Spectrum Group/National Guard Bureau On-Site Audit – 20 March to 23 March 2023

- The TSG Team noticed quite a bit of tension between Director and the Deputy Director.
- Staff have aligned themselves behind one or the other. This division, whether intentional or not, has created some difficulties in the flow of operations/communication that contribute to the issues outlined below.
- There is no established communication process—no regular staff/departments meetings with the Director.
- Organizational structure/lines of authority are inconsistent with normal Challenge practices.
- Cadets have been dismissed from the program without the approval (and in some instances, against the direction of) the Director.
- NGB indicated that no Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) have been submitted by the Arkansas Challenge Program since August 2022
- A unilateral decision was made to move cadre to 12-hour shifts, with little notice for the cadre staff. This caused some cadre to leave because they couldn't adjust to the new schedule.

Supplement to Youth Challenge Training Officers:

- 8 Servicemembers – 5 Feb 2022 to 31 March 2022 – EXORD 22-034
- 8 Servicemembers – 20 June 2022 to 9 Dec 2022– EXORD 22-051
- 10 Servicemembers – 10 Dec 2022 to 16 June 2023 – EXORD 23-016
- 10 Enlisted and 1 MAJ - Servicemembers — 15 July 2023 to 16 Dec 2023 – EXORD 23-047
- 1 Servicemember (Nurse) – 1 Oct 2023 to 30 June 2024 – FRAGO 1



Arkansas YC- Investigations



- **May 2024** – An administrative investigation found:
 - Six (6) cadets tested positive for THC who had not left Youth Challenge campus in forty-five (45) days.
 - A cadet was able to gain access to the operation center and use a restricted phone to make personnel calls.
 - A YC Training Officer engaged in aggressive horseplay in violation of hands-off policy.
 - A YC Training Officer had an inappropriate relationship or acted inappropriately with one or more female cadets.
 - A YC Training Officer came to work smelling of marijuana and was under the influence at work.
 - Female cadets were given or took unauthorized access to the operations office.
- **April 2024** – An administrative investigation found:
 - A YC Training Officer supervisor engage in sexual harassment of a YC Training Officer and used cadets to make secondhand comments to the same YC Training Officer.
 - A YC Training Officer supervisor used unprofessional language towards a YC Training Officer.
 - A YC Training Officer was disrespectful and rude to their supervisor.
- **March 2024 - Police Report** – a YC Training Officer was charged with criminal mischief 1st degree when he broke into a billeting room and destroyed property during the day.



Arkansas YC- Investigations



- **January 2024** – An administrative investigation found:
 - YC Training Officer “A” unfairly treated cadets by punishments and risked their safety by leaving them in cold weather without proper uniforms.
 - YC Training Officer “B” had an inappropriate romantic relationship with a cadet.
 - YC Training Officer “B” had a physical and sexual contact with a cadet.
 - YC Training Officer “B” potentially violated ACA 5-14-125 sexual assault in the second degree by having sexual contact with a minor while in a position of trust or authority over a minor.
 - YC Training Officer “B” violated many Youth Challenge and DOTM policies while employed at YC.
 - YC Training Officer “C” had sexual and romantic communications with a cadet.
 - YC Training Officer “C” had an inappropriate romantic relationship with a cadet.
 - YC Training Officer “C” engaged in behavior that involved unwelcome sexual comments
 - YC Training Officer “C” violated numerous YC and DOTM policies by dancing inappropriately, making flirtatious remarks, engaging in inappropriate games, and talking about not liking and wanting to harm a cadet.
- **Oct 2023** – An administrative investigation found:
 - Two YC Training Officers placed cadets at risk by leaving them unsupervised, abandoning their posts, and sleeping on the job.
 - During this time, an electrical fire started requiring cadets to wake up others to evacuate the building and put out the fire.
- **May 2023** – An administrative investigation found:
 - A State Active-Duty Soldier engaged in conduct placing a cadet in harms way.
 - A State Active Duty Soldier failed to comply with YC program operations procedures regarding safety, and professionalism.



Arkansas Youth Challenge – Graduation Percentage



Class #	# Of Cadets on Day 1	Graduated	Percentage
62 - Graduated June 2024	71	32	45%
61 - Graduated Dec 2023	95	60	63%
60 - Graduated June 2023	117	60	51%
59 - Graduated Dec 2022	63	42	66%
58 - Graduated June 2022	92	58	63%
57 - Cancelled			
56 - Graduated June 2021	82	74	90%
55 - Graduated Dec 2020	102	78	76%
54 - Graduated June 2020	130	74	57%
53 - Graduated Dec 2019	152	104	68%



YOUTH PROGRAM TRAINING OFFICERS



July 2024

33 Total Youth Program Training Officer I (28 positions) and II Positions (5 positions)

- **Youth Program Training Officer I**

- 9 out of 28 Youth Program Training Officer 1 positions Vacant – July 2024
- 4 Youth Program Training Officer I employees were facing disciplinary action
- 12 Youth Program Training Officer I had less than 1 year experience
- 6 Youth Program Training Officer I had less than 1 year and a half experience
- 2 Youth Program Training Officer I had over 4 years and a half experience

- **Youth Program Training Officer II**

- 4 Youth Program Training Officer II had less than 1 year experience
- 1 Youth Program Training Officer II had just over 1 year experience

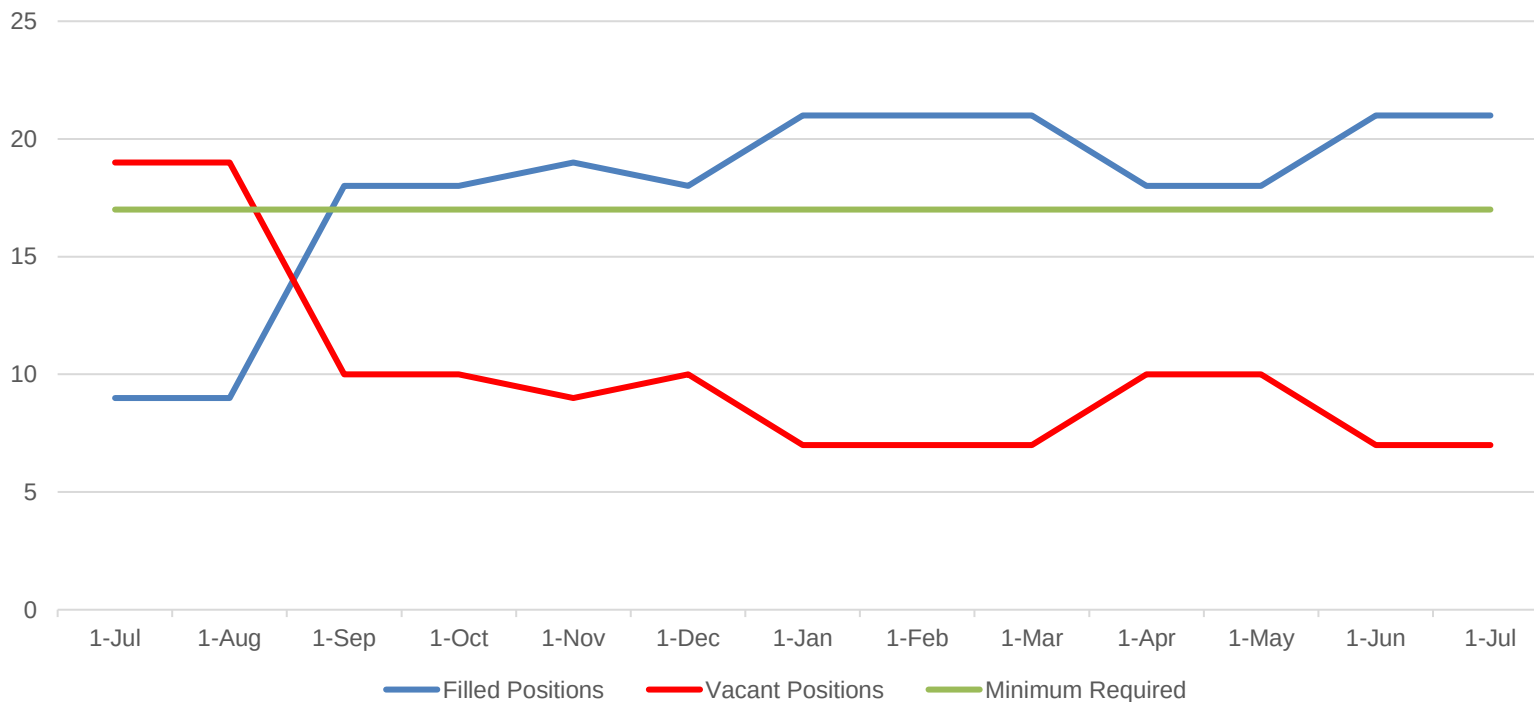
- **Staffing Requirements**

- 24 Hour, 7 Days a week operations (168 Hours a week per 25 cadets)
- 25 cadet to 1 Youth Program Training Officers (Cadre) ratio



YOUTH PROGRAM TRAINING OFFICER I

YC Training Officer I - 28 Positions



July to Dec 2023 – Supplemented with 10 State Active-Duty Soldiers

Average turnover of 5 months for new employees with half leaving in 3 months or less

May to July 2024 – 4 Facing Disciplinary Actions

May 2024 – 12 – Less than a Year Experience



What Happened and Causes



Inability to Recruit and Retain Youth Program Training Officers

- Cadre staffing levels not viable to support safely running a Youth Challenge Program
- 14 YC Training Officer I - less than a year experience
- 4 YC Training Officers II - less than a year experience
- 4 Training Officers facing Discipline
- Continuous YC Training Officer Turnover
- Starting Pay for Cadre - \$32,000 (Raised from \$27,000 last biennium)
- Adequate Cadet to Cadre Ratio (Lowered Class Sides – Males Only)
- Lack of interest in advertised YC Training Officer positions
- Advertised individual YC Training Positions over 357 times since January 2023
- 21 Job Offers of YC Training Positions Denied or Individual a No Call No Show over past year
- Youth Program Training Officer I – reclassified from GS3 to GS5 with promotion.
- Youth Program Training Officer II – reclassified from GS5 to GS6 with promotion
- August 2023 – initiated continuous advertising and weekly tracking of vacant Youth Challenge positions



Questions?

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