

## **White Paper: Michigan Youth Challenge Academy (Executive Summary)**

The **Michigan Youth Challenge Academy** (MYCA) is a voluntary 17 month program (five month residential) designed to intervene and assist 16-18 year old high school dropouts in reclaiming their lives. The program has an educational and life skills component, is administered by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (Michigan National Guard) and funded through a Federal (75%) / State (25%) cost share program. The MYCA is located at the VA Medical Center in Battle Creek. The academy mission is to lead, train, and mentor at-risk youth so they may become productive, employed, and law-abiding citizens. The program has been recognized as one of the state's most effective for targeting youth who are at the greatest risk for delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and involvement in criminal activities.

### **Program Information**

- Phase one of the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy consists of a five month residential program focusing on eight core components that include: academic excellence, life coping skills, employment skills, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship, service to the community, leadership/followership, and physical fitness.
- Phase two of the program consists of a full year of post-residential, mentoring and monitoring of all MYCA graduates as they utilize newly learned life coping skills, academic excellence, vocational skills, community service awareness and employment preparedness. Graduates are encouraged to seek placement or completion of one or more of the following:
  - Return to community high school for diploma completion
  - Credit recovery for awarding of high school diploma
  - GED completion
  - Enrollment in four-year degree producing college/university
  - Enrollment in community college
  - Enrollment in vocational technical / trades licensing program
  - Small business development (entrepreneurial)
  - Employment
  - Military induction
  - Acceptance to Michigan Job Challenge Program
- Since 1999 the MYCA has graduated over 3,000 Cadets, with 50% of graduates earning a GED or high school diploma. Approximately 40% continued their education, 15% enlisted in the military and the remaining found employment after graduation.
- The Youth Challenge program is strongly supported by the National Governors' Association, State Legislatures, and the National Guard Association of the United States; all of which have acknowledged Youth Challenge programs nationally with legislative resolutions supporting their efforts.

## **Graduate Demographic**

- 16-18 year olds (male & female)
- At-risk student: a student who requires temporary or ongoing intervention in order to succeed academically
- Individuals committed to changing their lives
- High school dropout
- Non-traditional learners
- Academically capable of achieving Michigan Merit Curriculum Standards or attainment of GED
- Students from all socio-economic backgrounds
- Applicants from all ten Michigan Economic Development Regions
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) students (will accept up to 30 individuals per class)
- Will accept those with tendencies for running away, self-harm and violence - normally will not accept severe cases or those that have all three traits
- Those with an interest in the military

## **What the MYCA is not**

- Not a treatment facility (not resourced to provide individual counseling need of all troubled youth)
- Cannot accept applicants that have a felony charge or on probation
- Not truly resourced to accept all Cognitively Impaired (CI) applicants (applications evaluated prior to acceptance)
- Not truly resourced to accept all Emotionally Impaired (EI) applicants (applications evaluated prior to acceptance)

For more information visit [MIYCP.org](http://MIYCP.org) or call 269-968-1067 or 1-800-372-0523.