

YB Student Enrollment Policy 25-26

Admissions Policy. In accordance with the Charter granted to YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School by The School District of Philadelphia, YouthBuild Philadelphia admits out-of-school youth between the ages of 17 and 20 who are residents of the City of Philadelphia.

Eligibility for enrollment. In order to be eligible for enrollment in YouthBuild Philadelphia, applicants must—

- be at least 17 years old (and turn 18 years old by January 1 of the following year), but not older than 20 years, on the first day of the school year,
- be a resident of Philadelphia,
- have dropped out of school and not have received a high-school diploma, and
- successfully complete the three-stage enrollment process demonstrating both punctuality and motivation to attend the school.

Definition of “Dropout”. Applicants are considered to have “dropped out of school” if they meet one of the following criteria:

1. They did not attend school for the last quarter (April, May, and June) of the prior school year. This is demonstrated by having an exit date entered in the School District of Philadelphia’s Student Information System, Infinite Campus, prior to April of the prior school year.
2. They are out-of-school youth in a high-risk category. This is demonstrated in either one of three ways:
 - by being enrolled in the prior school year in one of The School District of Philadelphia’s alternative/credit-recovery schools, or
 - by having repeated one or more grades.
 - by not having enrolled in 12th Grade in the prior school year.
3. They have less than 17.5 graduation credits at the end of the prior school year. This would indicate that, being at least age 17, they would not be able to earn the 23.5 credits required by The School District of Philadelphia to graduate in the coming school year and, thus, are liable to be dropped from the roll of their current school as being overage. This would be demonstrated in one of these two ways:
 - by applicants self-certifying that they have less than 17.5 credits
 - by not having enrolled in 12th Grade in the prior school year.
4. They state that they have dropped out of school and would not be able to graduate in the coming school year. This would be demonstrated by applicants self-certifying that they have dropped out of high school.

In addition to their enrollment history from Infinite Campus, applicants sign a self-certification form to indicate how they qualify as a “Dropout.”

Conversely, applicants would *not* be considered to have “dropped out of school” and thus *not* be eligible to enroll in YouthBuild Philadelphia, if they (1) had attended school during the last quarter of the prior school year, (2) did not meet at-risk criteria, (3) had accrued more than 17.5 graduation credits, and (4) are not able to sign the self-certification indicating how they qualify as a “Dropout.”

Enrollment period. YouthBuild Philadelphia has two potential points of entry in each school year for the enrollment of new students: the first each year at the end of Mental Toughness Training, and a second to start within 90 days after Labor Day.

Re-Enrollment

During the course of the school year, some students face unanticipated obstacles to their success in School. To allow for these situations, students who have been withdrawn from the School’s roll for having more than ten consecutive unexcused absences may be re-enrolled, if they meet the following three conditions:

1. The former student must submit a petition for re-enrollment to his/her Student Success Coordinator. The petition will include statements addressing: (a) why the former student wishes to be re-enrolled, (b) what the former student plans to do differently in order to be successful and to graduate from the School, and (c) identification of the supports, if any, the former student needs in order to be successful.
2. The former student will discuss the petition with his or her Student Success Coordinator; and
3. The former student will discuss the petition with a team of selected staff who are knowledgeable about the former student, one of whom will be an administrator/manager. This group will then make a decision on whether to re-enroll the former student. In considering the former student’s petition for re-enrollment in the current school year, the staff will decide whether the former student would have a viable pathway to graduation if re-enrolled, at the upcoming August graduation. If they decide that there is no viable graduation pathway, then they will recommend that the former student either (1) re-apply for admission in the following school year (if the student will continue to be age-eligible at that time) or (2) visit the School District of Philadelphia’s Re-Engagement Center at 440 North Broad Street to explore other diploma-program options.
4. If a former student submits a petition for re-enrollment and schedules a meeting with the staff, and if that former student fails to attend that meeting without notifying those member of his or her inability to attend or offering a reason why he or she failed to attend, the former student will be permitted up to two more opportunities to reschedule that meeting. After that, the former student will be ineligible for re-enrollment in the current school year.

Recruitment. Applicants are recruited Citywide. From February through July of each year, YouthBuild Philadelphia actively recruits applicants for the following school year through fliers, targeted mailings to social-service agencies and other community organizations, as well as with paid advertisements on public transportation and social media and in local newspapers. In addition, we seek and receive referrals from the City’s Office of Re-entry, the District Attorney’s Office, the juvenile justice system, detention centers, The School District’s Re-engagement Center, the Department of Human Services, and shelter systems. A large number of applicants learn about the School each year by word-of-mouth—from relatives, friends and neighbors who have attended YouthBuild Philadelphia.

The three-stage admissions process. There are three stages to becoming enrolled in YouthBuild Philadelphia. They are:

- **Stage 1: The *Application***

Applicants can complete the YouthBuild Philadelphia Application online at www.youthbuildphilly.org or contact the School to be invited to an Information Session at the school where they will complete an Application form either online or in hard-copy form with the support of school staff members. Applications are available in either English or Spanish. Applications are accepted from mid-February through early August, prior to the start of a given school year. As long as applicants meet the three main eligibility criteria (*i.e.*, age, residency and out-of-school status), they are invited to the next stage of the process.

- **Stage 2: The *Information Session***

Eligible applicants who have submitted an Interest Form are invited to attend a mandatory Information Session. At the Information Session, applicants complete the school enrollment documents and learn about (a) the school program, (b) the graduation requirements, and (c) the requirements for admission and enrollment paperwork. Applicants must be on-time to the Information Session. If applicants are not on time, they are re-scheduled for another Information Session. Applicants will continue to be invited to an Information Session until the final Information Session, which typically occurs in mid-August. If an applicant does not attend the mandatory Information Session, they will not continue to the next stage in the admissions process.

The Information Session is a time for applicants to assess if YouthBuild Philadelphia is the right fit for them at this time and to determine if they want to continue with the enrollment process based on what they have heard. Because the School only enrolls one cohort of students per year, it is important that applicants understand the expectations of the School and be committed to the program so that they do not inadvertently take an available slot from someone else who does want to be a part of our program.

The Information Session is designed to reflect YouthBuild Philadelphia's welcoming climate and culture. It highlights the supports offered to students who have struggled with school in the past, with an emphasis on the human-services supports available through our program (including supports with mental-health issues, learning disabilities, and personal barriers). These sessions are conducted in a small-group format to encourage questions and reduce embarrassment for quiet and shy applicants. In addition to the dissemination of critical information about the School and the admissions process, other goals of the Information Session for applicants are to:

- begin to form connections with other applicants to create peer supports and cohesion
- get excited about re-engaging with their education, and
- have a warm point of contact between the submission of their application and the beginning of school.

At the Information Session, YouthBuild Philadelphia staff are available to guide applicants through how to obtain required paperwork (such as proof of age), including where and how to get it. In addition, if an applicant is experiencing financial hardship in obtaining necessary enrollment documentation (*e.g.*, a copy of a birth certificate costs \$35), the School will provide financial assistance to the applicant. Moreover, the School will provide transportation fare on

SEPTA to applicants who need it. Because the goal of the Information Session is to encourage re-engagement with school, YouthBuild Philadelphia allows applicants to reschedule attendance at these sessions multiple times if necessary.

- **Stage 3: *Mental Toughness Training***

Applicants attend half-day orientation sessions for between 3 and 5 days at the end of August, called Mental Toughness Training. They must be present, on time, and participate in each day of Mental Toughness Training. If applicants are not on time and do not have a valid excuse for their absence or tardiness (*e.g.*, documentation from a physician, hospital, detention center, court, etc.), or if they violate the stated rules, those applicants can no longer continue on in the admissions process. In that event, each former applicant is given a packet of information about other programs for out-of-school youth and told that, so long as they do not exceed the age limit for eligibility, they can reapply for admission to YouthBuild Philadelphia in the next school year.

The goals of Mental Toughness Training are to help ensure that the School is the right fit for the applicants, and to prepare the applicants for the rigor of the YouthBuild Philadelphia program. These goals are accomplished by (a) team-building activities, (b) staff attempting to inspire all applicants to believe that they can have successful futures, and (c) having applicants demonstrate their motivation to return to school. The primary methods by which an applicant's motivation to return to school is determined are attendance and punctuality.

YouthBuild Philadelphia places an enormous amount of value on attendance and punctuality in our enrollment process because this is the most objective/least subjective indicator that applicants are ready and motivated to commit themselves to an intensive, accelerated program and post-graduate placement. While the field of motivation research is complex and layered, several studies make the link between motivation and persistence at goal-related activities. Moreover, because the School's rigorous program is only 10 months long, it is imperative that students attend School regularly and on-time.

To eliminate any financial barrier to daily attendance at Mental Toughness Training, the School provides applicants with transportation fare on SEPTA every day.

Moreover, data throughout our School's history shows that attendance in the first few weeks of school is highly linked to program success: if a student has above 90% attendance in the first two sessions of school (the first 10 weeks of programming), they graduate at a rate of 93%; if a student has below 60% attendance during that time period, they graduate at a rate of 11%. Furthermore, our college and employment partners agree that attendance and punctuality are the top indicators of success in post-secondary settings. Helping students establish a pattern of regular school attendance has enormous benefits: it helps students know that they can re-engage fully with a program; it instills in them important work habits; and it helps them start the school year with a feeling of success.

Notification of admission. Applicants are notified on their admission to the School in-person on the last day of Mental Toughness Training.

Enrollment lottery. Typically, all applicants who have successfully completed the School's three-stage admissions process are enrolled in YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School. However, from time to time, there are more applicants who have successfully completed the School's admissions process than there are openings

available in the School. In those cases, YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School uses a lottery to determine which of those successful applicants are enrolled as students. If necessary, the lottery is held on the last day of Mental Toughness Training, and the successful lottery applicants are notified in-person immediately.

That lottery process consists of numbering an alphabetized list of all remaining eligible applicants, and then using an online program to generate a randomly-ordered list of all the numbers assigned to the applicants. The successful applicants then are identified by the series of randomly-ordered numbers, starting with the first randomly-ordered number on the list generated. The unsuccessful applicants are placed on a waitlist in the same random order generated by the lottery process. Families have up to three days to enroll their student after being given a seat off of the waitlist.

YouthBuild Philadelphia has two potential points of entry in each school year for the enrollment of new students. The first each year is after the end of Mental Toughness Training, to start the day after Labor Day. A second potential point of entry occurs only in years when a lottery has been required, to start within 90 days after Labor Day. In any year in which a lottery is required, the School will provide a copy of the list of unsuccessful applicants within 10 days of a request for it from the Charter Schools Office.

Required documentation. YouthBuild requires that the following documents be submitted before enrollment:

- *Proof of age*
Any of the following is acceptable to document proof of age: birth certificate; notarized copy of birth certificate; baptismal certificate; copy of record of baptism, notarized or duly certified and showing the date of birth; a valid passport; a prior school record indicating the date of birth; or a notarized statement from parents or another relative indicating the date of birth.
- *Proof of residency*
Any of the following is acceptable to document proof of residency: driver's license; PennDOT identification card; current utility bill; a deed; a lease; current credit card bill; property tax bill; or vehicle registration.
- *Home Language Survey*
- *Parent Registration Statement*
A sworn statement attesting to whether the applicant has been or is suspended or expelled for offenses involving drugs, weapons, infliction of injury, or violence on school property.
- *Evidence of Immunizations*
Students may not be admitted to school if they (a) have not completed the full series of all immunizations required by the Pennsylvania Code, and (b) are not exempted from immunization for medical or religious reasons or on the basis of a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief. Any one of the following constitutes acceptable documentation of immunizations:
 - the student's immunization record
 - a written statement from the former school district or from a medical office that the required immunizations have been administered, or that a required series is in progress, or
 - verbal assurances from the former school district or from a medical office that the required immunizations have been completed, with records to follow.

However, these requirements do not apply to a student if any one of the following occurs:

- *Homelessness*: the student has not been immunized or is unable to provide records on the first day of attendance due to being homeless. Children experiencing homelessness are exempted from the school immunization requirements and do not have any timeline under the protection of the McKinney-Vento Act.

- *Foster Care*: The student has not been immunized or is unable to provide records on the first day of attendance due to being in foster care. Enrollment for youth in foster care must not be denied or delayed because documents and records normally required for school entry have not been provided. A student in foster care shall have three days to provide immunization records or complete an exemption.
- *Relocating*: The student is moving or transferring into school in the Commonwealth and is unable to provide immunization records immediately upon enrollment in the school. The student's parent or guardian has 30 days to provide immunization records or a medical certificate, or to complete an exemption.
- *Emergency*: A temporary waiver has been issued by the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth due to national vaccine shortages or a disaster that impacts a student's ability to provide immunization records.
- *Charter School Student Enrollment Notification Form* (optional, but preferred).

Applicants may submit these enrollment documents to the School by any of three ways:

- bring hard-copies of the documents to the YouthBuild Philadelphia school building at 2309 North Broad Street;
- upload electronic documents online through PowerSchool Enrollment; or
- email electronic documents to the School at admissions@youthbuildphilly.org

Immigration status. An applicant's right to be admitted to YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School may not be conditioned on the applicant's immigration status, and YouthBuild Philadelphia may not ask about the immigration status of an applicant as part of the admission process.

Unhoused Students (McKinney-Vento).

YouthBuild Philadelphia must immediately enroll unhoused students and begin instruction, even if a student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, which include, but are not limited to school records, immunizations, other health records and proofs of residency or guardianship. However, YouthBuild Philadelphia may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information which includes identification of the school district of origin.

YouthBuild Philadelphia recognizes its obligation to ensure that unhoused students have access to the same educational programs and services provided to other YouthBuild Philadelphia students. The School makes reasonable efforts to identify homeless children, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education, in compliance with Federal and State law regulations. Federal Law provides that a school selected based on an unhoused youth's "best interest" must immediately enroll such child or youth even if he or she has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. "Best interest" determinations include the following:

- (a) YouthBuild Philadelphia must presume that keeping an unhoused youth in the school of origin is in the youth's best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth. The term "school of origin" is the school in which the youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the youth was last enrolled.
- (b) YouthBuild Philadelphia must consider student-centered factors related to a youth's best interest, giving priority to the request of the youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth.

(c) If YouthBuild Philadelphia determines that it is not in a youth's best interest to attend the school of origin, or the school requested by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, it must provide a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form that is understandable.

To the extent feasible, and in accordance with the student's best interest and parent/guardian's wishes, an unhoused student must continue to be enrolled in his/her school of origin while he/she remains unhoused, or until the end of the academic year in which he/she obtains permanent housing.

Parents/guardians of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the student is actually living or other schools. If a student is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, YouthBuild Philadelphia's Homeless Liaison will consider the views of the student in determining where he/she will be enrolled.

Once enrolled, the YouthBuild's Homeless Liaison will ask unhoused families to complete a transitional-housing form to determine the precipitating event(s) leading to homelessness, the specific date that homelessness last occurred, and details of current temporary living arrangements.