

AMERICANISM CHILDREN & YOUTH



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Who can tell me the difference between Americanism and Children and Youth?

Ok, let's break them down.

Americanism is love of America; loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity, and happiness; and the willingness to defend our country and flag against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

It is complete and unqualified loyalty to the ideals of government as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. It is respect for, and ready obedience to, duly constituted authority and the laws of the land. It is freedom without license, religion without bigotry, charity without bias, and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty for our nation and for our posterity.

What programs fall under the heading of Americanism?

We are going to review these eight programs and activities.

- Community Service and Safety Activities
- Service to God and Country -
- Education Activities
- Flag Education
- Immigration and Naturalization Activities
- Youth Activities
- Patriotic Holiday Programs
- Counter-Subversive Activities

Community Service and Safety Activities – Winter activities like: Ice skating, sledding, teen centers, hobby and craft shows, dances, forum discussions on community problems, voting activities and Americanism study courses. These and many other activities unique to respective communities of the country should be so designed that the greatest number of people of all ages in the community will be favorably affected.

Organize a teenage council so that the post may have the benefit of the teenage group's input in preparing a program for spring and summer.

Spring and Summer – Boys State, bicycling, golf tournaments, hiking, concerts, street dances, parks, playgrounds, festivals, planting trees, marksmanship, fishing tournaments and the development of swimming and wading pools and bathing beaches.

Fall – County fairs and exhibits, educational facilities, educational entertainment courses, organize a Boy Scout troop, Color Guard activities and other participatory school programs, and election activities.

Service to God and Country - In order to present the program in a practical way, The American Legion has divided it into three objectives to be emphasized:

- Regular public worship.
- Daily family prayer.
- The religious education of our children.

By promoting these three points of emphasis, we feel that the program can continue to be a viable and practical movement in fulfilling our duty to God and Country. Without the cooperation of the posts, the movement is not an American Legion activity – it is only an ideal. It is merely fine sounding phraseology if it does not accomplish the purpose of bringing the American people to the realization that their Creator has endowed the individual with his individual rights.

The following objectives and policies, adopted by National Convention action, provide the guidelines for The American Legion's Education Program.

The objectives are:

1. To help make it possible for any child of a veteran who has ability or desire to receive an education beyond high school.
2. To encourage the membership of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations to take an active part in the development and maintenance of a school system that will serve the needs of all children at every level.
3. To encourage students to select careers where personnel shortages exist.

The policies established to accomplish the objectives are:

1. To collect and disseminate information on existing scholarship sources
2. To provide sources of scholarships and financial aid to potentially eligible students
3. To develop new scholarship opportunities for students
4. To cooperate with established organizations in the recruitment of students for careers where personnel shortages exist

The major objective of the Flag Education program is to build patriotism in our youth and to develop a thorough understanding of proper flag display and courtesy. Since the establishment of the National Americanism Commission, flag education has been a major program of The American Legion. Each year, posts in every section of the country distribute hundreds of thousands of copies of flag literature to local schools and youth groups as a community service. Thousands of Flag Codes, *For Which it Stands* flag education DVDs and *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* are distributed annually. Single copies of these pamphlets are available gratis from the National Americanism Commission by contacting the National Americanism and Children & Youth Division at acy@legion.org or (317) 630-1249. These publications are sold in quantity by American Legion Emblem Sales (888-453-4466 or <http://emblem.legion.org>).

The American Legion's interest in immigration and naturalization focuses on the security and protection of our nation's borders, the assimilation of immigrants into American society, immigration quotas and citizenship and naturalization matters. The Americanism Commission works closely with the Legislative Commission to review all legislation affecting these subjects.

The American Legion is unalterably opposed to illegal immigration and the granting of amnesty to any and all illegal aliens.

The American Legion supports rigid enforcement of employer sanctions as called for in current laws that provide penalties for employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens. Because certain industries within the United States face persistent and/or seasonal labor shortages, The American Legion supports a temporary workers program but supports the establishment of a numerical quota to be established with strict control of the program by the appropriate government agency.

The American Legion has consistently opposed any great influx of legal immigrants and has insisted that immigration should be on such a moderate and regulated scale that they be readily absorbed into the life

stream of our country. The American Legion has insisted that legal immigrants should not be admitted in such numbers that they would displace veterans from either employment or housing.

The American Legion does not assist with individual immigration admissions, appeals or deportations, but it will try to direct the individual to the proper federal authority.

While The American Legion opposes any great influx of legal immigrants and stands firmly against those who bypass the system to cross our borders illegally, the organization has been a recognized leader in mentoring legal candidates for U.S. naturalization and citizenship. That proud tradition dates back to the beginning of The American Legion and continues yet today. Working closely with federal courts, and in more recent years with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Legion has conducted naturalization sessions throughout the country. These sessions set legal immigrants upon the path to citizenship by teaching them lessons about U.S. history, government and proficiency in the English language. The Legion has helped countless naturalized citizens become assimilated, contributing members of our society. Posts desiring to lead or assist with these efforts in their communities should contact their department.

The youth activities programs of The American Legion are designed to build physical, mental and moral alertness in youth; to cultivate in young America strong character, wholesome ideals and an appreciation for their heritage of freedom; and to develop devotion to civic responsibility. The respect and zeal for democratic institutions acquired by youths participating in the highly commendable “learn by doing” programs of The American Legion has received national acclaim. Citizenship responsibility, which is one of the major objectives of all American Legion youth activities, includes obedience in spirit and letter to the democratically- made law of the land. It also includes good sportsmanship in yielding to the will of the majority, tolerance for other people and their opinions, willingness to grant the privileges of liberty to all other citizens of our land regardless of race, creed or color, and patient and intelligent exercise of the right to vote.

American Legion Baseball American Legion Baseball began in 1925 and held its first national tournament the following year. Today, nearly 5,000 teams serving about 95,000 youngsters participate in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. In addition, it is believed that thousands of players compete under local Legion supervision that do not register for department or national tournament play.

In 1928, the National and American Leagues of Professional Baseball agreed to underwrite the National program. With the exception of two years, Major League Baseball has annually contributed funds to assist American Legion Baseball. This support has returned great dividends, with more than half of the players entering the Major Leagues having played on American Legion diamonds.

Junior Shooting Sports The American Legion’s Junior Shooting Sports program provides young people through the age of 18 the opportunity to learn gun safety and basic marksmanship and participate in competition while having fun doing it. Any recognized youth activity (school and club) with responsible adult leadership can affiliate with the Junior Shooting Sports Program. The club must be sponsored by an American Legion post.

American Legion Boys State American Legion Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students in the nation. It is a participatory program where each young man becomes a part of the operation of his local, county and state government. Boys State has been a program of the National Americanism Commission since 1935. Forty-nine states conduct this program serving nearly 20,000 young men each year. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors a similar program for young women called Girls State.

American Legion Boys Nation Youth training in citizenship programs of The American Legion reaches its pinnacle at Boys Nation, held annually in the Washington, D.C. area. The two most outstanding participants in each of 49 Boys State programs are selected to attend Boys Nation, which focuses on the study of the federal government and its supporting agencies.

American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program - "A Constitutional Speech Contest" The American Legion's Oratorical Contest is an activity designed to develop in high school students a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Constitution of the United States.

Patriotic Holiday Programs - The American Legion has been the acknowledged leader in observing patriotic holidays since its inception in 1919. Patriotic observances, like those listed below, revitalize our intrinsic beliefs; beliefs which make ideas, institutions and progress possible. It is therefore hoped that all Legion posts participate to the fullest extent in these programs, as well as other observances at the community level.

Arbor Day - The exact date for the observance of Arbor Day is set by proclamation. However, it is generally observed throughout the United States during the months of April and May each year. The American Legion should take the lead each year in the observance of the day because it's an appropriate time for the planting of trees as living memorials to the war dead of the community.

Flag Day June 14 is the birthday of the flag of the United States of America. Every American Legion post should observe the day with appropriate ceremonies. It is suggested that the program be scheduled to include a "Pause for the Pledge" of Allegiance at 7 pm, EDT, to coincide with Flag Day activities held at historic Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland.

Independence Day To celebrate our nation's independence the birthday of our great republic American Legion posts are encouraged to sponsor and conduct appropriate activities.

Memorial Day Thousands of American Legion posts conduct Memorial Day services in their respective communities. They decorate veterans' graves and scatter flowers upon the water in memory of the sailor dead.

Veterans Day Veterans Day will always have a very deep personal significance to many members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion. All posts are strongly encouraged to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies. Some may choose a community observance while others may opt for a school program.

The 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to attack from domestic and international terrorists here in America.

Objectives An enlightened and informed citizenry is the greatest deterrent to subversive activities (terrorism) within the United States of America. It stands to reason that, if a citizen understands the objectives, methods, and mechanics of how terrorists operate, the chances that terrorists will be successful in their attempts to attack America will be diminished.

Combating subversive (terrorist) activities As Americans each of us has a right and duty to be alert to suspicious or unusual activity in and around military installations and other potential terrorist targets within our communities.

Vigilant citizens can make a difference in the war on terrorism. Following are some things investigators are asking people to look for:

- Suspicious persons photographing, videotaping or peering into a military installation, or other potential targets, with binoculars.
- Someone asking questions about troop movements, ship movements or how to get onto an installation.
- Unusual small aircraft or boating activity around installations.
- Thefts of uniforms or ID cards or other military items, including decals from cars.
- Potential intrusions onto military bases, possibly by people claiming to be lost.

If you do notice something odd, get a good description and write it down – estimated height, weight, unusual scars, license tag number and description of their vehicle. Do not approach or intervene with suspicious persons or activities, but do immediately call the police or the FBI.

Children & Youth

Since our inception, The American Legion realized a need to care for and to protect our nation's most valuable resource – our children. In 1925, our National Child Welfare Division adopted the “whole child” plan. This provides that “the child of every veteran should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity,” and is founded on three guiding principles:

- To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society.
- To extend support to organizations and facilities providing services for children.
- To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the needs of today's young people.

Family Emphasis. The family is the cornerstone of American society; however, modern society places demands on the family that didn't exist in years past demands that can deteriorate family strength and unity. The family emphasis programs of The American Legion National Commission on Children & Youth seek to promote the importance of family strength and integrity.

Family Support Network The American Legion recognizes that families of deployed and activated military personnel face special difficulties and hardships. With the help of the Family Support Network they do not have to shoulder this burden alone. Families can connect to local American Legion Family members by requesting assistance through the nation-wide toll free number or electronic application. Legionnaires at the post level then provide assistance that can range from minor household chores and repairs, completing a Temporary Financial Assistance application, to connecting the family to existing local programs.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) TFA is the landmark program of the National Commission on Children & Youth and was established in 1925, as a form of direct aid to children.

Through TFA, a post can call upon the National Organization for cash assistance to help maintain the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds are granted to eligible families when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that all other local resources have been exhausted or are not available to provide the required assistance. TFA can help families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and health expense items when the parents are unable to do so, thereby affording the child, or children, a more stable home environment.

The veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion, but they must be eligible and there must be minor children in the home. Eligible children include biological children of an eligible veteran or

children in the legal custody of an eligible veteran. TFA applications are obtained and must be submitted through the Department Children & Youth Chairman or Department Adjutant.

Operation: Military Kids When National Guard and Reserve parents are mobilized, their children suddenly have unique needs for special support and services. Operation: Military Kids exists to garner community resources to provide the needed support and to highlight the challenges these children face. The American Legion is a proud partner of this program and urges support from all levels of the organization to assist the children of our comrades while they serve our nation.

Child Health & Well Being The American Legion believes that every child should have access to adequate healthcare. We have partnered with several organizations that share this philosophy. Our collective effort to improve the quality of life for children is making a difference in the lives of millions of children every year.

Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) Everyday 15,000 children are waiting for an organ transplant and another 5,000 are in need of a bone marrow transplant. COTA exists to assist families in raising funds to assist with lifesaving organ and bone marrow transplants. All monies raised are tax deductible and stay local to assist the family transplant-related expenses.

Ronald McDonald House Charities Pop Tab Collection Program This national fundraising project encourages the collection of aluminum pop tabs to support local Ronald McDonald Houses. This program helps raise funds to provide housing for financially challenged families with seriously ill or injured children who must undergo medical treatment at a children's hospital.

Special Olympics Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provide year-round sports training and competition to 2.5 million adults and children with intellectual disabilities across 165 countries. The Special Olympics movement offers one of the world's greatest platforms for acceptance and inclusion for all people regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or cultural differences. Find out how you can become involved by contacting your Department Headquarters or Department Children & Youth Chairman. The National Commission on Children & Youth urges all its posts, districts and departments to work with and support Special Olympics programs to increase community awareness and opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and to foster public acceptance of differences.

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals Children need specialized care and equipment that only children's hospitals can provide. Children's Miracle Network Hospitals provide state-of-the art care, life-saving research and preventative education 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Every year, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals treat 17 million children for every disease and injury imaginable, impacting the lives of more children than any other children's organization in the world. The American Legion's ongoing commitment to improve the quality of life for our nation's children parallels Children's Miracle Network Hospital's own mission. Supporting Children's Miracle Network hospitals in their efforts to provide quality health care to all children is the right thing to do and is a natural for The American Legion Family. A corporate partner since 1998, The American Legion family has contributed over \$4 million for Children's Miracle Network hospitals to ensure that the best care is available whenever children need it.

Mercy Medical Airlift Mercy Medical Airlift (MMA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving people in situations of compelling human need through the provision of charitable air transportation. MMA is totally supported through charitable giving and the services of volunteer pilots and office assistants.

Child Safety The American Legion National Commission on Children & Youth believes that child safety is everybody's business. Prevention through education remains the best way to keep children safe. To promote child safety, the Commission publishes several useful brochures designed to educate children and parents and supports numerous national initiatives to keep children safe.

Gateway Drugs Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of drug dependency and delinquency. Gateway drugs are so-called because the use of these drugs often leads to drug abuse, addiction and to the use of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD. The Commission asks all members of The American Legion Family to educate parents and children in their communities about the dangers of gateway drugs.

Warning Signs The National Commission on Children & Youth recognizes the serious, yet often overlooked, problem that continues to plague our nation's youth: suicide. Suicide is a tragic and senseless act of desperation. Suicide is never a pleasant topic, but one that must be brought out in open discussion to combat its devastating effects on our youth. As a responsible society, we must equip ourselves with the facts, dispel the misconceptions, and learn the warning signs of youth suicide.

Halloween Safety As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, the National Commission on Children of Youth of The American Legion believes children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. This annual program continues to be one of our most popular.

Missing Children The American Legion encourages posts to provide or assist in making available child identification activities to give parents a means of providing this information to authorities should the need arise. In addition, all levels of the organization are encouraged to increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and to cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their states and communities.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization, is "dedicated to the betterment of all children." Its purpose: To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and their programs.

To make wider, more effective use of the knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations to the end that such information will benefit youth and be more adequately used by society.

The Child Welfare Foundation accomplishes these goals each year by awarding grants to nonprofit youth-serving organizations for the explicit use of disseminating information that conforms to the Foundation's purpose. Since 1954, over \$11.8 million has been granted to help deserving organizations produce and disseminate current and valuable information.

The American Legion Endowment Fund The Endowment Fund Corporation is a 501(c)(3) organization. Funds for the operation of the Temporary Financial Assistance program are provided from a share of the earnings of the Endowment Fund. In 1925, World War I had been over for six years, but for veterans and their widows and children, the years had been a continuing struggle to adjust to the war's aftermath. The members of The American Legion, aware of the grave responsibility entrusted to them by those who had served, knew the time had come to take action. More than 900,000 Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary members, and other American citizens joined the campaign, raising nearly \$5 million and establishing The American Legion Endowment Fund.



