



Information for STUDENTS with DISABILITIES



YES AND YOU

The YES program is committed to providing all eligible students with the opportunity to take part in the program. This includes students with disabilities. Since the program began in 2003, over 190 students with visual, hearing, motor, and other disabilities have become YES participants.

All YES participants have an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of other cultures, increase their skills and self-esteem, acquire new language skills, expand their career opportunities, and much more. Study abroad can be a life-changing experience and a gateway to becoming independent and better able to overcome obstacles and challenges.

YES does not discriminate due to physical ability. As long as an applicant meets the age, grade, and citizenship requirements for participation, she or he may apply to the program. YES can accommodate applicants with a wide range of disabilities. Testing materials are available in a variety of formats that enable anyone to be tested. Please contact your local American Councils office so that we can best accommodate your needs.

THE MIUSA PROGRAM

Students with disabilities who become finalists of the YES program attend a one-week independence skills workshop in Oregon, in mid-August, before traveling to their U.S. host communities. The workshop is organized by Mobility International, USA (MIUSA, www.miusa.org), a leading disability rights organization in the U.S. The MIUSA workshop will include:

1. **Interactive sessions on life in the U.S. for people with disabilities, including rights and opportunities in education and community activities;**
2. **Activities to build leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills; and**
3. **Action planning to set and achieve short- and long-term goals for the YES year.**



“I discovered that I could do my own thing, all by myself. I was happy to know that there is a way to solve almost everything that occurs in life... Dear exchange student with any disability, be open-minded and open-hearted and come to the United States if you get a chance. It will be the best lesson in your life and one of the best experiences you will ever have.”

- Dzenana

“Taking risks is not easy, but if you do not take risks, how are you going to know what awaits you in life? You cannot just sit there and wait for something to happen. I wished to have an adventure, and so I applied for YES. I was amazed to see everyone accepting me the way I am and not judging me. My motto that has kept me going, even through tough situations, is “disability is an ability.” We all are here to help each other and no matter our background our race, or our disability, we are united, and will continue to be that way.”

- Stanimira

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

YES seems very competitive. Why should I try?

YES accepts a number of students with disabilities each year. It is not easy to try something new, especially something as big as spending a year away from your family and friends. Based on alumni experiences, it is worth taking the chance, and giving it your best try.

What are the age and grade requirements for students with disabilities?

The age/grade requirements for students with disabilities may differ from the country requirements for other applicants. Candidates must be:

1. **Born between February 15, 2006 and July 15, 2009;**
2. **Must be enrolled in secondary school in the Fall of 2023;**
3. **A citizen of the country in which they apply.**

If I need medical care in the U.S., who will pay for it?

The YES program provides all finalists with program insurance that covers medical emergencies. In addition, the program has additional funds available to each student with a disability. However, YES is not a medical treatment program, and does not provide for consultations, treatments, or surgeries.

I require special accommodations to take tests at school. Can YES help me?

All students who apply to the YES program regardless of physical ability or disability go through the same testing process. However, adapted tests (Braille, enlarged, etc.) are available and can be used to allow anyone to be tested. As long as a candidate is able to communicate in English (spoken, written, etc.), YES is able to accommodate them. Feel free to contact your local YES office to get more details on how you can be accommodated.



“My exchange year in the US as person with disability was a life changing experience. I made friends as quickly as possible and that gave me the courage to explore more. One right that I enjoyed...was first preference equality, and accessibility to public or private places. In the US everyone is given the opportunity to do things by themselves. Like sports...I had the opportunity to play wheelchair basketball.” - Mark

“The advice I would give high school students who are considering applying to the YES exchange program is, “Believe in yourself. You can overcome every obstacle. Your disability is your power. You and your family may have some worries about spending a year in an unknown culture, but never mind the differences. Just let it go. During your exchange year, you will learn that the differences are the colors of life.” - Nikola

