

## I am an Attorney. How can I get involved?

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with the New York Statewide High School Mock Trial Program, contact the Mock Trial Coordinator at 518.487.5611, who will put you in touch with your County Coordinator. Your County Coordinator can assist you in finding a team that is in need of an attorney advisor or utilize your skills to assist with “judging” the County Tournaments.

## The State Mock Trial Finals

The New York State High School Mock Trial Finals are held in Albany, NY in May over a three day period. The finalists from each region travel to Albany to participate. Expenses for the teams and coaches/mentors are funded in part by a grant from The New York Bar Foundation. On Day One, following hotel check-in and dinner, the teams are granted practice time to finalize their presentations. On Day Two, all teams compete twice to determine the top two teams that will move forward to compete in the final round. On Day Three, the final round is held to determine the New York State Mock Trial Champion. While in Albany, the students are given the opportunity to network with students from around the state who share similar interests and pursuits. All students participating in the New York State Mock Trial Finals receive special awards and a commemorative tee shirt. More importantly, the students leave Albany with the knowledge that they did their best in one of the oldest and largest Mock Trial programs in the nation.

Go to [www.nysba.org/nysmocktrial](http://www.nysba.org/nysmocktrial) for more info.

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# New York Statewide High School Mock Trial Program



These programs are made possible in part by a grant from the New York Bar Foundation.



## What is the Mock Trial Program?

The New York Statewide High School Mock Trial Program is a joint venture of the New York Bar Foundation, the New York State Bar Association, and the Law, Youth & Citizenship (LYC) Program. There are two ways schools can participate in the program; by utilizing the mock trial materials as classroom enrichment tools or by entering a team in the New York Statewide High School Mock Trial Tournament. While the Mock Trial Tournament is set up as a “competition,” emphasis is placed on the educational aspect of the experience which focuses on the preparation and presentation of a hypothetical courtroom trial that involves critical issues that are important and interesting to young people.

High school teams from public and nonpublic schools participate in the tournament, beginning at the county level. In tournament competition, the teams argue both sides of the case and assume the roles of attorneys and witnesses. Judges, usually local judges or attorneys, score the teams based on a rating sheet that includes scoring on preparation, performance, and professionalism. The highest scoring team from County Tournaments proceeds to the Regional Competition to perform the Mock Trial against other county winners. The top team from each of New York State’s eight regions is then invited to attend and participate in the State Finals.

Each year more than 350 teams and 1,500 volunteer attorneys participate in the New York Statewide High School Mock Trial Program. The rules, policies, and guidelines, as well as each year’s new mock trial case, are established by the LYC Mock Trial Subcommittee. The New York State Mock Trial Coordinator, who is a member of the LYC Program staff, administers the program.

## What is the goal of the Mock Trial Program?

The goal of the Mock Trial Program, as with all LYC programs, is to further the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for students to become civically engaged in our democratic society. The Mock Trial Program gives students a better understanding of the legal system; from the nuts and bolts of case preparation to the proper procedure for evidence presentation during the trial. Their involvement in the program increases their awareness of the

importance of law in a democratic society and strengthens their understanding of the fundamental rights awarded by the Constitution. The outcomes of a student’s participation in the Mock Trial Program are:

- A deeper understanding of the law, court procedures, and the legal system;
- Improved proficiency in an array of life skills such as active listening, public speaking, critical thinking, and reasoning;
- Promotion of positive civic attitudes including better communication between the school community and teachers and between students and members of the legal profession;
- Cultivation of interest in law-related and academic careers.

## How do I start a Mock Trial team in my school?

It’s easy to do. You will need to gather at least eight high school students, a teacher to serve as the teacher coach, and a lawyer to serve as the attorney advisor. The students must all be registered at your school. Teams may participate as part of an elective class, as part of the regular school curriculum, or as an after school activity.

A volunteer County Coordinator is in place to assist your team in securing an attorney advisor, the annual mock trial case studies, and other pertinent information for your team. If you need information regarding the County Coordinator in your area, please contact the New York State Mock Trial Coordinator at 518.487.5611.

LYC also has an online video which outlines the basics of Mock Trial. You may view or download the video, *Mock Trial 101*, at [www.nysba.org/nysmocktrial](http://www.nysba.org/nysmocktrial).

## What does a team do?

A team, with the guidance and assistance of an attorney advisor and teacher coach, prepares for competition using a standard set of procedures that are similar to formal trial procedures, but have been modified for use in the mock trial setting. Through review and practice of the case study, the team members develop their various roles, prepare a team strategy, and learn trial procedures. The team members must enhance their critical reasoning skills, their listening skills, and their ability to “think on their feet” as they are judged not only on their case presentation, but also on their ability to follow courtroom procedures and professional decorum.

## What skills do students learn from participation in the Mock Trial Program?

- Public speaking
- Persuasive writing
- Active listening
- Critical reasoning
- Team work/cooperation
- Extemporaneous argument
- Ability to speak comfortably with adults
- Self-confidence and poise

## What content do the students learn?

- Rule of law
- Rules of evidence
- Proper courtroom decorum
- Legal terminology
- Civic responsibility and attitude

## What civic attitudes are fostered as a result of participation?

- Respect for the law and the legal system
- Ability to view an issue from differing viewpoints
- Empathy
- Respect for authority
- Empowerment
- Leadership