

THE MARYLAND CIVICS AND LAW ACADEMY engages young people of middle school and high school age in learning about law and society. The purpose of the Academy is to prepare young people to be participants in our democratic society. In an Academy, knowledgeable, civically active judges, legal professionals and educators share their expertise, experience, and enthusiasm for civic engagement with young participants.

## Why Civics and Law?

Academies are designed to develop civic competency, which requires knowledge about law. Understanding of law and legal issues is essential to understanding the functioning of government, culture, and society. By participating in an Academy, young people gain the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function effectively in our pluralistic, democratic society based on the rule of law.

## Instruction

The Academy provides participants with a minimum of eight (8) hours of curricular focus. Sessions will be scheduled according to the needs of the sponsors and instructors.

Judges may choose from six (6) different legal areas to explore issues of law and civic participation within their curriculum, developed by the American Bar Association.

These areas are:

**Law and Justice**  
**Power and Empowerment**  
**Identity and Pluralism**  
**Freedom and Equality**  
**Rights and Responsibilities**  
**Constitutions and Constitutionalism**

### Law and Justice

Participants examine the nature and function of law in society and, in particular, in American society. They explore the ideal of justice, the relationship of law to justice, and the operation of legal institutions.

### Power and Empowerment

Participants are introduced to the concept of power in politics and government, focusing on the United States. Participants explore the purpose, authority, and limits of political power. Looking at power in the context of democratic government, they consider how “we the people” can be politically engaged and empowered to participate in civic life.

Maryland Judiciary  
Government Relations and  
Public Affairs Division  
[mdcourts.gov/communications](http://mdcourts.gov/communications)  
410-260-1488

*Engaging young people in learning about law and society*

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## Constitutions and Constitutionalism

Participants examine the ideal of constitutionalism, the general principle that the authority of government derives from the people and is limited by law, and the actual practices of constitutional governments. It contemplates how and why the U.S. Constitution has changed over time and has been interpreted by the federal courts and amended through constitutionally established procedures. Participants also analyze the institutions and political/legal processes critical to sustaining American civil society under the rule of law.



## Freedom and Equality

Participants explore two fundamental, highly cherished principles of American constitutional democracy—freedom and equality.

Participants examine how the principles are related. They study how individuals and groups have secured freedom and equality under law, which has sometimes involved using the law to challenge the status quo.

## Rights and Responsibilities

Participants explore the concept of individual rights and the challenges in protecting and guaranteeing such rights. It identifies basic political and individual rights secured under the U.S. Constitution and the reciprocity of rights and responsibilities, such as those related to voting.

## American Identity and Pluralism

Participants seek answers to questions, such as “What does it mean to be an American?” “What does it mean to be a citizen?” “How is American identity forged in the context of a complex pluralistic society?” They examine how the legal standards and political ideals enshrined in America’s founding documents and symbols help form that identity. They also explore the ways the diverse values and beliefs Americans hold influence our sense of national identity and the core norms of civil society.

**PARTNERS**

The Academy’s partners include the American Bar Association, the Maryland State Bar Association and the Citizenship Law-Related Education Program for the Schools of Maryland (CLREP).

The Civics and Law Academy is an important tool needed to promote public understanding of the courts and, thus, to a means of increasing the public’s trust and confidence in the administration of justice. Judges are needed to volunteer to conduct sessions. To volunteer or for more information, contact the Maryland Judiciary | Government Relations and Public Affairs Division: 410-260-1488.

