



JUST A START

Program Overview

YouthBuild Just A Start is a youth workforce development program serving young people, ages 16 - 24, from the Boston Metro North region. Our approach is based on positive youth development and trauma informed practices. We provide wraparound services, academic, and career training.

Academics

All students attend classes in Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies. These classes will help students who have not earned a high school diploma to prepare for their High School Equivalency Tests (HiSET). If an applicant already holds a high school diploma, they will still be expected to attend these classes, and work towards an academic skill gain. Classes are generally 65 minutes long, with class sizes ranging from 5 - 8 students.

Life Skills

Students develop additional skills in: 1) personal finance; 2) career and post-secondary education pathways; 3) socio-emotional/wellness; and 4) personal effectiveness. Classes are generally 45 minutes long, with class sizes ranging from 8 - 12 students. We also complete community service projects, as well as visit college campuses and employer partners.

Career Training

Each student chooses a career training track at YouthBuild Just A Start. Each track includes hands-on training as well as classroom instructional time. Students earn an industry-recognized, portable/stackable credential from the National Retail Federation or Home Builders Institute. The two tracks include:

Construction: Learn the fundamental skills of residential construction from experienced professionals. Skills include: painting, tiling, cabinet installation, demolition, flooring, how to use common power tools safely and effectively, and more! OSHA-10 Construction certification included.

Retail / Customer Service: Explore fundamental retail industry concepts, including: sales, customer service, inventory management, loss prevention, merchandising, and calculating profit and loss. After in-class instruction, students will secure hands-on training in a retail setting. Retail Industry Fundamental (RIF) certification included.

Case Management and Counseling Services

Our counseling services team provides wraparound services to ensure students are able to engage in the YouthBuild program to the best of their ability. No matter what a student needs support with (e.g. mental health, substance use, housing instability, food insecurity, learning disabilities, etc.), our team will work with students to identify an appropriate treatment and/or intervention plan. If additional support is needed, students are referred to professionals within our network.

*Located at 1175 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Please contact Christina Uplinger, Program Operations Manager,
christinauplinger@justastart.org, 617-918-7532*

Benefits

Students have the opportunity to earn a \$300 bi-weekly stipend (based on program attendance and engagement). We provide students with a monthly MBTA Student CharlieCard, as well as free coffee, breakfast, and lunch daily. Students who go above and beyond can also earn “Gotcha Tickets”, redeemable to YouthBuild staff for \$10 gift cards.

Additional Leadership Opportunities

In addition to class work and career training, YouthBuild students can participate in community service events, Youth Policy Council, State House Advocacy Day, new staff interviews, peer tutoring, and more!

Program Schedule

Our program follows an ‘alternating week’ model: this means that students will spend one week in the classroom working on academics and soft skills, and then switch to a week of hands-on career training. Our school day goes from 9 AM - 2 PM (M, T, Th, and F). We do not have school on Wednesdays, unless there is a federal holiday on the Monday of that week. Many students find it possible to work part-time in addition to attending YouthBuild.

YouthBuild Just A Start takes approximately 10 months to complete, although progress ultimately depends on an applicant’s academic and engagement levels. Months 1-2 are spent acclimating a student to the classroom through academic and career credential classes. Months 3-9 integrate hands-on career training and Life Skills classes. As students make progress in their academic classes, they will begin taking the HiSET credential tests. A student who earns their academic credential (or demonstrates improvement in their academic skills), career credential, and required training hours will be invited to attend graduation. After graduating, students enter their follow-up year, receiving alumni services for: job searches, post-secondary education applications, financial aid, and additional wraparound services.

Eligibility

Students must be ages 16 - 24, live in the Boston Metro North area, NOT be enrolled in public or private high school (at time of acceptance into YB), be authorized to work in the U.S., and complete all application steps (outlined below).

How to Apply:

1. Fill out an [Inquiry Form \(https://justastart.org/youth-programs/\)](https://justastart.org/youth-programs/) and attend a 30-minute Informational Session
2. Complete a YouthBuild Program Application & submit required documentation
3. Attend two 30-minute interviews with our Academic and Counseling Services teams
4. Complete two academic assessments to understand each applicant’s academic level
5. Attend an orientation to decide if the program is a good fit