



Youth Trooper Academy



The South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy is a cooperative effort between the South Dakota Highway Patrol and the American Legion of South Dakota.

Our mission is to recruit young men and women from culturally diverse backgrounds from across the state of South Dakota, and to increase their understanding of the job of a state trooper. The program is designed to expose young adults to the demands of Highway Patrol Recruit training and to develop better relationships between the youth of our state and the Highway Patrol.

The Youth Trooper Academy is an intensive, one-week, residential learning experience for young adults who are entering their senior year of high school or have just graduated high school in 2026. The Youth Trooper Academy is held at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Academy in Pierre, South Dakota. The Youth Trooper Academy is not a summer camp and is not designed for troubled teenagers. The program is mentally and physically demanding. The Youth Trooper Academy utilizes a paramilitary approach to training, and discipline is strict. Candidates should be highly motivated, of good moral and ethical character, and have an interest in a career in law enforcement.

Veteran South Dakota Highway Patrol Troopers will serve as mentors and chaperones during the week. Troopers and members from other law enforcement agencies throughout the state of South Dakota will provide classroom and hands-on training in topics such as firearms safety, defensive driving, crash investigation, traffic stops, leadership, defensive tactics, and criminal law. Youth Academy Recruits will also get to experience demonstrations from the Highway Patrol's special operations section such as aircraft operation, SWAT, and Police Service Dogs.

Recruits that graduate from the program will be proud of their accomplishments. The lessons learned from this program will serve them well for years to come.

The 2026 South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy runs June 22nd – 26th, 2026. **Space in the program is limited to 24 students from across the state.**

Qualifications:

The program is open to male and female high school students who are entering their senior year of high school or have just graduated high school in 2026 and have an interest in a career in law enforcement.

Candidates must be in good academic standing with their high school. They must be of good moral character and present a well-groomed appearance.

The candidates must possess a valid SD driver license.

The Youth Trooper Academy is physically demanding; those requiring special diets or having physical needs will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Cafeteria style food will be served. The program is open to all, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, or national origin.

Cost:

There is a \$250 fee for each student that is selected to attend, that their local American Legion Post is responsible for paying. All other fees associated with the week-long course will be covered by South Dakota Highway Patrol and the Department of South Dakota American Legion. The only cost to the student will be transportation to and from the event along with some personal items for the week.

Applications:

Applications may be obtained from any American Legion Post Commander, any South Dakota State Trooper, or any high school guidance counselor. Applications will be sent to the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

If accepted, it will be the responsibility of the student to obtain a doctor's certification attesting to his or her fitness. This form will be mailed to successful applicants and must be returned on the date indicated.

A parent or legal guardian must sign a release of liability for the South Dakota Highway Patrol and the American Legion of South Dakota. The release of liability form is contained in the application and must be returned along with the student's application.

The application deadline is **March 21, 2026**. Apply early as space is limited to 24 students from across the state. **APPLY NOW!**

All applications must be mailed to:

Sergeant Jordan Melius – HP 8

Training & Professional Standards Division

SD Department of Public Safety – Highway Patrol

Jordan.Melius@state.sd.us

118 W Capitol Ave • Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Questions may also be directed to:

Larry Price, SD American Legion Past Dept Commander
and Current Public Safety Chairman

Phone: 605.472.2272 or 605.460.2273

larrylprice@hotmail.com