



CyberPatriot Engagement Guide:

The National Youth Cyber Defense Competition



CyberPatriot – A program of the Air Force Association

CyberPatriot Program Overview

CyberPatriot is the Air Force Association's National Youth Cyber Education Program, created to attract students to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education and careers. CyberPatriot programs include:

- National Youth Cyber Defense Competition (Grades 6-12)
- AFA CyberCamps (Grades 6-12)
- Elementary School Cyber Education Initiative (Grades K-5)
- Cyber Education Literature Series (Grades K-5)
- CyberGenerations (Senior Citizens)
- Tech Caregiver Program (student and adult volunteers [ages 14+])

The success of CyberPatriot has been made possible because of the outstanding support offered by sponsors and volunteers. Participation in CyberPatriot can make a real difference in your community and in the public's perception of your organization. This leading STEM program enables you to engage directly and in an extremely positive way with educators, administrators, community leaders, parents, and students interested in improving STEM and cybersecurity education.

This guide is specifically designed to assist you in identifying and recruiting schools and youth organizations to join in the excitement of CyberPatriot's National Youth Cyber Defense Competition!

For information on promoting or getting involved in other CyberPatriot programs, please see the program-specific guides offered on our website.

General Guidance – Get Organized

Organizations that are most successful are those that adopt CyberPatriot as a key activity and give it consistent focus throughout the year. These tips may help you in your efforts to be successful:

- **Appoint someone to lead your CyberPatriot efforts:** This will lead to improved continuity, communication, and consistency.
- **Make CyberPatriot a regular topic in your communications.** CyberPatriot has a variety of programs that are offered throughout the year. Make sure you know what is happening and when:
 - **April through early October:** Competition registration and training for competition (scored competition begins in late October / early November). Focus on recruiting teams.
 - **October through February:** Competition season. Support participating teams.
 - **March:** State and Tier awards mailed to teams for end of season recognition. National Finals Competition hosted in Bethesda, Md.
- **Tell your CyberPatriot story:** Use your CyberPatriot involvement with local schools and youth organizations to tell your community how you are inspiring students to get more involved in STEM studies! This could include reaching out to media (media releases, letters to the editor, or local media appearances) or informing your congressional representatives about CyberPatriot's success. You can also submit your stories directly to CyberPatriot for a chance to be featured in *The CyberSentinel*, CyberPatriot's monthly newsletter.
- **Ask for help:** AFA's CyberPatriot Program Office is happy to help you in any way it can. Staff members can be reached at info@uscyberpatriot.org or by phone at 877-885-5716.

The National Youth Cyber Defense Competition

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the competition

Before introducing CyberPatriot's National Youth Cyber Defense Competition to prospective teams, we strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself at a basic level with how the competition works.

To summarize the competition briefly, teams of high school and middle school students take on the role of newly hired IT professionals tasked with managing the network of a small company. Through a series of online competition rounds, teams are given a set of virtual operating systems and must find and fix cybersecurity vulnerabilities while maintaining critical services. The top teams earn all-expenses-paid trips to Maryland for the National Finals Competition, where they can network with sponsor representatives and earn national recognition and scholarship money.

The following resources are most useful to review before recruiting teams:

- [National Youth Cyber Defense Competition Factsheet](#): This two-page factsheet is a good starting point for understanding the five W's of the competition.
- [Promotional Videos](#): These YouTube videos range from 3 to 7 minutes in length and provide first-hand accounts from students and volunteers who have experienced the highest level of competition.
- [Competition Timeline](#): Outlines important registration deadlines, training round dates, and competition round dates.
- [Technical Specifications](#): List of technical specifications (hardware and software) needed to participate in the competition.
- [Demonstration Software](#): Sign up to receive access to the CyberPatriot Competition Demo Software. This application gives you an inside view of what competitors see when competing and is an excellent recruiting tool to help participants understand what the competition is about.
- [Registration Instructions for Coaches/Teams](#): Step-by-step instructions on the coach and team registration process.
- [Registration Instructions for Technical Mentors/Team Assistants](#): Step-by-step instructions on the technical mentor and team assistant registration process.

Step 2: Identify schools and potential teams

Once you feel confident in your understanding of the competition, it's time to identify schools and youth organizations that might be interested in participating. To avoid reaching out to schools that are already involved, first check the [list of teams that have already registered for the competition](#), which is available on our website.

Open (High School) and Middle School Division teams: All high schools and middle schools (public, private, parochial, charter, magnet, home schools, etc.) are eligible to participate. The challenge is identifying an appropriate person within these institutions to approach. In cases where no relationship exists between your organization and the school, a call to the school's administration office (principal, superintendent, school secretary, etc.) should help identify who on the faculty or staff could best address interest in a cybersecurity competition. Best points of contact are often science teachers, technology teachers, or computer club faculty advisors.

In addition to schools, there are a variety of both in-school and out-of-school programs that are eligible to compete. These include but are not limited to scouting units, 4-H clubs, boys' and girls' clubs, and other nonprofit youth organizations.

All Service Division teams: All Service Division teams are made up of students in JROTC, Civil Air Patrol, or the US Naval Sea Cadet Corps. Many All Service Division teams receive communication from their respective headquarters regarding CyberPatriot, but some still need an introduction to the program. To find a list of units for each service, see the links below:

- **Air Force JROTC:** <http://www.airuniversity.af.mil/Holm-Center/AFJROTC/Display/Article/950637/>
- **Army JROTC:** https://www.usarmyjrotc.com/JROTC_schools.html
- **Navy JROTC:** http://www.njrotc.navy.mil/host_schools.html
- **Marine Corps JROTC:** <http://www.mcjrotc.marines.mil/Schools/JROTC-Schools-by-State/>
- **Space Force JROTC:** <https://www.airforcemag.com/space-force-jrotc-to-get-first-units-this-fall/> (for the purpose of the competition, Space Force JROTC falls under Air Force JROTC)
- **Civil Air Patrol (CAP):** CAP is organized into wings at the state level, and squadrons at the local level. Squadrons are categorized as either senior (adult members only), composite (adult and cadet members), or cadet squadrons (cadets only). You can identify CAP squadrons in your area by visiting CAP's website at <http://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/>.
- **U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps:** USNSCC units can be designated as Divisions, Squadrons, Ships, and Battalions. A complete list of units may be found here: <http://www.seacadets.org/join/>

Additional ideas for recruiting teams:

- Promote the competition in your next newsletter
- Make personal phone calls to “likely volunteers”
- Contact youth groups that specialized in STEM or cybersecurity
- Advertise through local media outlets

Step 3: Facilitate team registration

Registration for CyberPatriot consists of several stages (outlined below). The registration period is typically open from April 1 through early October. Teams cannot sign up for the competition after the set deadline, so encourage prompt registration.

1. A prospective “coach” (an adult member or employee of the organization who will lead the team) creates a CyberPatriot Volunteer account on the CyberPatriot website.
2. Using their newly created volunteer account, the coach creates a team (can create up to five teams). For each team, the coach submits the participating organization's name, team nickname, address, as well as the contact information for an official at the organization (principal, squadron commander, etc.) who can verify the coach's good standing with the organization and provide permission to field a team.

3. Once the team application is submitted, CyberPatriot staff contacts the coach's verifying official by email to confirm the prospective coach's role in the organization. The verification official selects to approve (or deny) the team.
4. Once verified, the CyberPatriot staff gives final approval to the team. At this point, the coach registers the team's competitors. Each team roster may have between two to six students. The coach must provide a name, email address, and t-shirt size for each of the team's competitors on the form.
5. After the coach has registered a competitor, the competitor receives an email with a link to a questionnaire through which they can provide additional personal information (optional).
6. Any fully approved team with registered competitors is eligible to compete in the online rounds.

Complete [registration instructions for coaches/teams](#) are available on the CyberPatriot website.

Step 4: Recruit technical mentors and team assistants

While each team has a designated coach, the coach is not always an expert in cybersecurity. Because of this, the CyberPatriot Program Office maintains a database of technical mentors who have volunteered to provide their cybersecurity expertise to teams in need. Additionally, CyberPatriot offers a team assistant role for individuals who want to help with the team but who are not tech-savvy.

CyberPatriot is always looking to expand its pool of technical mentors. If you know somebody who might be interested in becoming a technical mentor, encourage them to apply.

Ideas for recruiting mentors and team assistants include:

- Solicit CyberPatriot Mentors in your next newsletter.
- Personal phone calls to "likely volunteers"
- Contact community businesses and colleges/universities that specialized in information technology or cybersecurity. Many businesses carry out volunteer service initiatives throughout the year, aiming to be active members of their community.
- Become a mentor yourself!

Note: All individuals applying to be a mentor or team assistant must register on the CyberPatriot website and undergo a basic criminal background check, regardless of any security clearances or other outside background checks already obtained.

Steps for registering as a mentor or team assistant:

1. Individual creates a CyberPatriot Volunteer account on the CyberPatriot website.
2. Using their newly created account, the mentor signs into the volunteer dashboard and completes the Mentor Application form.
3. Upon completing of the form, the mentor receives a confirmation email with a link to a background check.
4. The mentor submits the background check, which is processed by the CyberPatriot staff within 1-3 business days of submission. An email is received once approval is granted.
5. The mentor may contact local teams through their volunteer dashboard (or coaches can contact the mentor).

Complete [registration instructions for technical mentors](#) are available on the CyberPatriot website.

Step 5: Maintain contact during the competition

The recruitment of a CyberPatriot coach, team, or mentor is not the end of the story. You can continue to support a team's journey in a number of ways:

- Publicize or recognize the team for their participation and/or success in the competition
- Attend practices or competition sessions
- Coordinate facilities or meeting places
- Offer grants or financial assistance for entrance fees
- Offer donation of equipment (hardware) that meets technical specifications

We greatly appreciate your support of the CyberPatriot Program!

**If you have any questions, the CyberPatriot staff can be reached at
877-885-5716 or by email at info@uscyberpatriot.org.**