



Unleashing the leadership potential of Illinois youth

# Guardian Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What is Illinois Leadership Seminars (ILS)?**

**A:** Illinois Leadership Seminars is a non-profit, 100% volunteer organization with one mission: to unleash the leadership potential of Illinois youth. We accomplish this mission in two major ways. First, we provide students all over the state with an opportunity to attend a free leadership seminar. Second, after a student has gone through one of our programs, they have the option to stay involved with our Alumni Association. The Alumni Association provides our students with an active, nationwide network of successful leaders to rely on for support with everything from advice on how to run a high school pep rally, to college applications and job interviews.

Your student leader has been selected to go through phase one of our program by attending our free, three-day leadership seminar.

**Q: How did my son or daughter get selected to attend the Illinois Leadership Seminar?**

**A:** We reach out to high school counselors and representatives all over the state and ask them to nominate one outstanding sophomore from their high school to attend our seminar. We leave who to select and how to select totally up to the schools. Some schools have a private staff vote, some hold an essay contest, and some school representatives just hand pick a student on their own. No matter how our students are selected, they all have one awesome thing in common: *leadership potential*.

**Q: Why should I let my son or daughter attend?**

**A:** ILS is an opportunity for your student to be around other outstanding leaders their own age. Sometimes students are nervous about attending a seminar where they don't know anyone, but to us, that's the best part! ILS is a fresh start. Our message to the students is simple: No matter your gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status or background... you (yes YOU!) can be a leader.

Open spots at our seminar are in high demand, so if you decide ILS is not right for your leader, please let us (and their nominator) know as soon as possible so we can offer the opportunity to another student.

And if you're still unsure about sending a student, connect with us on [Facebook](#) to get a glimpse of who we are for yourself.

**Q: How do I register my student for ILS?**

**A:** Please sit down with your student and register online for our seminar. Even if your student's nominator has already nominated them to attend ILS, their spot is not reserved until they complete the online registration process. The sooner you register your student, the sooner we can reserve their seat at seminar. Registration is a simple process that should not take longer than 10 minutes.

All students will receive a personalized email with registration instructions needed to register. Registration emails will be sent out within one week of the nomination being submitted. Spots are given on a first come first serve basis so filling out registration in a timely manner is the only way to guarantee your spot at seminar. Please read the entire registration email as well as this entire FAQ to ensure you fully understand the scope of commitment for your student during seminar weekend before you register them.

[Illinois Leadership Seminars \(ILS\)](#)

ILS is a Member of the [National Society for Youth Leadership \(NSYL\)](#)



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**Q: When and where is the Seminar?**

**A:** The 2020 seminar will be held June 12, 13, and 14 (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) at North Park University in Chicago, IL. This is a three-day, overnight event. Students must attend the entire seminar.

Address:

North Park University  
3225 West Foster Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60625

The campus is accessible from I-90, I-94, and several forms of public transportation. [Click here](#) for map of the campus.

**Q: Does my student have to stay for the entire seminar?**

**A:** Yes, your student must be at North Park University from Check-In early Friday morning until the Closing Ceremony on Sunday afternoon. We cannot allow students to arrive late, leave and come back, or leave early for any reason. Sponsors have paid for each student to attend ILS in its entirety, and we ask that each student honor that sponsorship by fully committing to the weekend. Additionally, our programming is designed to foster student growth through the weekend by building upon itself, so missing pieces would create an incomplete experience.

We recognize that while a majority of schools are finished with the semester and on summer break, some schools in Illinois are still in session or taking finals during our seminar. We understand the conflict; however, we ask that students reschedule their final(s) and/or get an excused absence for Friday, June 12, the first day of our seminar.

**Q: Where will my student be sleeping?**

**A:** Before we answer that, let's get some ILS lingo out of the way. All of our participants are referred to as "leaders" throughout the weekend. So from here on out, "leader" refers to a student who is attending our program, in this case, your son or daughter.

All of our staff and leaders will be staying in dorms on campus. There will be all male floors and all female floors reserved exclusively for ILS (i.e. participants from other events going on at North Park University will not be on the same floors as ILS participants). Access to each floor is restricted to leaders rooming on that floor by each participant's key card. Therefore, no male can access a female floor and no female can access a male floor. Your student will have one or two other leaders of the same gender as roommates for the weekend. Each floor will have an emergency adult contact on call whenever leaders are in the dorms. Staff members are strictly prohibited from *EVER* entering the dorm room of a leader. Leaders will not be allowed to go back to the dorms during the day. Therefore, leaders only have two reasons to be in their dorms throughout the weekend, to drop off their luggage and to sleep.

Please note, students are required to bring their own linens (sheets, blanket, shower towels, etc.) as well as toiletries for use in the dorms.

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**Q: How many adults will be supervising my student during the weekend?**

**A:** Our Staff is divided into two groups, Junior Staff and Senior Staff. Your child will be assigned to a group which will be staffed by one Senior Coach and two Junior Coaches. Our Junior Staff are all alumni of the seminar. They are ages 16-20 and have several different roles operating under the direction of our Senior Staff throughout the weekend. Our leader to Junior Staff ratio is about 3:1. Our Senior Staff are adult volunteers, 21 and older, most of whom are alumni of the seminar. Our leader to Senior Staff ratio is about 5:1. Adults from many different backgrounds volunteer at our seminar. All staff members go through a rigorous application process, and every staff member ages 18 and older undergoes a background check conducted by our Corporate Board. This ensures that we always have the best staff on hand to assist your student for the duration of the weekend.

**Q: Is the seminar REALLY free?**

**A:** Absolutely. We work very hard all year long to make sure that no student has to pay to attend the Illinois Leadership Seminar. All meals (beginning with lunch on Friday and concluding with breakfast on Sunday), housing, and overhead has been paid for. Sponsorship funding is provided by GFWCs (Women's Clubs), corporate grants, ILS fundraising efforts, and individual donors, including many alumni of the seminar itself. Schools, parents, and students incur no costs, with the exception of transportation to and from our seminar site.

**Q: Why would anyone put on this event for my student for free?**

**A:** All of our staff members are volunteers. Not a single Corporate Board member, Seminar Planning Committee member, Alumni Board member, coach, speaker, panelist, or any other staff member gets paid. We do this because, quite simply, we believe in your student leader. Most of our staff have actually been through the seminar themselves and were so moved by the weekend that they choose to give back year after year. We actually have to turn away volunteers for the weekend because so many people want to help with ILS.

**Q: When and where do I drop off my student? How do they Check-In?**

**A:** Check-In times will be EARLY morning on Friday, June 12th. Please plan ahead and consider that there may be traffic on Friday morning. When you arrive at North Park University, please park in the free visitor parking lot on the southeast corner of Kedzie and Foster Avenues, across from McDonalds. Cross Kedzie Avenue and Illinois Leadership Seminars volunteers will meet you at the front steps of Hamming Hall (number 12 on the campus map) and direct you to Check-In. Please bring everything you will need for the weekend (including your signed consent form) with you.

At Check-In on Friday morning, please be sure you clearly indicate who will be picking up your student on Sunday. For your child's own safety, we will not release them on Sunday to someone not listed on their Check-In form. If there may be several different people picking your child up on Sunday, please list them all.

Once checked-in, you can accompany your student to their dorm room to drop off their luggage. Finally, you will leave them with their small group where you can meet their Senior Coach for the weekend. It is not mandatory that you accompany your student to Check-In or to their dorms; however, you are more than welcome to if you would like.

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**Q: When and where do I pick up my student? How do they Check-Out?**

**A:** Seminar will conclude with a special Closing Ceremony on Sunday, which you and your family are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Closing Ceremony times will be sent in future communications but you can plan for late morning on Sunday. Please arrive about a half hour before the start for these ceremonies. Check-Out will immediately follow Closing Ceremony.

You may park in the same free visitor parking lot on the southeast corner of Kedzie and Foster Avenues where you parked for Check-In. After Closing Ceremony is over and you have completed Check-Out with your student's Senior Coach, you may collect their luggage and leave. Please be advised that your student may want to say goodbyes and/or purchase items from our ILS store at this time.

**Q: My student has a conflict. Can they arrive late/leave early?**

**A:** All of our leaders are required to stay for the entire weekend, no exceptions. Sponsors have paid for your student to attend the whole weekend, and we require all of our participants to experience seminar in its entirety. Please put ILS on your calendar now and have your student check their finals schedule, sports schedule, camp schedule, work schedule, vacation schedule etc. If your student has a conflict that prevents them from attending the entire seminar, please email our Recruitment Director, Samantha Kiluk, at [recruitment@illinoisleadershipseminars.org](mailto:recruitment@illinoisleadershipseminars.org) ASAP so we can find a replacement.

**Q: What about transportation?**

**A:** Each leader is responsible for getting themselves to North Park University at Check-In and home after Check-Out. Please plan ahead. Some of our leaders live five minutes away from campus while others live five hours away from Chicago. Whatever your individual transportation situation, we ask that you do your best to plan ahead. We understand that getting to North Park University is more difficult for some parents and leaders than others.

If you will be driving your student to seminar, please make sure you are free Friday morning! Friday is a business day and we understand that many parents have to work. Please be aware that Check-In is EARLY on Friday morning, June 12th and remember that we require of our leaders to be at North Park University on time.

Some leaders choose to drive themselves to seminar. If that option works best, they can park in the visitor parking lot on the southeast corner of Kedzie and Foster Avenues. Parking is free for the entire seminar weekend.

If circumstances arise that prevent you from getting your student to and from our seminar site, please let us know as soon as possible so we can offer the spot to another student.

**Q: We live really far away; can you recommend any hotels in the area to stay Thursday night?**

**A:** Unfortunately, no, we cannot. It's not that we don't want to help, but making recommendations about where parents and families should stay for the weekend, if you plan on doing so, is a liability issue. Chicago has an abundance of practical transportation tools, as well as, hotel options.

**Q: Does my student need to bring anything special for the weekend?**

**A:** We have a detailed check list of everything your student should pack for the weekend. [Click here](#) to view it.

Please make sure your student does not bring valuables of any kind. ILS is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.



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**Q: What actually happens during the weekend?**

**A:** The program includes motivational speakers, leadership activities, group discussions...and that's just the beginning. During the ILS experience, a broad spectrum of leaders will address various aspects of leadership in our changing world and the challenges future leaders will confront. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions of the speakers and participate in small group discussions throughout the seminar. This is a dynamic weekend! We will conclude Friday evening with a dance and Saturday evening with a leader showcase "talent show."

The program is not designed to teach students what to think, or even how to think, but rather to emphasize the importance of critical thinking skills in leadership roles.

**Q: How is the seminar structured?**

**A:** Once a leader has registered for our seminar, they are assigned to a small group of 8-10 leaders. These groups are random to ensure each leader is exposed to other leaders with different backgrounds. Each group has one adult Senior Coach and two Junior Coaches, student alumni of our program. Different seminar activities require different levels of participation. Some highly interactive activities and discussions will be done within the small group, while other activities will be done as a large seminar group. Your student will have an opportunity to interact with leaders from every group at some point during the weekend.

**Q: What, if any, additional interaction should we be expecting before the seminar?**

**A:** Our Recruitment Director, Samantha Kiluk, will be sending out additional reminder emails in the months and weeks leading up to seminar. Email communications will be sent to all email addresses that were provided to us during the nomination process. If you have questions about which email address we have on file for you or your student, or wish to make changes, please email Samantha at [recruitment@illinoisleadershipseminars.org](mailto:recruitment@illinoisleadershipseminars.org).

Other than the reminder emails, your student will be receiving a phone call from their Senior Coach in late May. When you register, please be sure to list an accurate phone number where we can get a hold of your son or daughter. If an incorrect phone number is listed, we have no way to call them. Each Senior Coach will be calling to ease any pre-seminar concerns and answer any questions your son or daughter may have, but if you have questions they would like to ask, your son or daughter's Senior Coach is available as a resource.

**Q: What if an emergency comes up and I need to get in contact with my student during ILS?**

**A:** Illinois Leadership Seminars requests that all cell phones and other electronic devices should be kept in the dorm rooms throughout the weekend or turned off if with the student. In the event of an emergency, please contact our Seminar Chairperson, Ixtel Viramontes, at 815-217-1111 and she will assist you.

Please note, we encourage students to call home each evening once they return to the dorms for the night, which may be between 9-10pm.

**Q: What about religious services?**

**A:** Illinois Leadership Seminars is not affiliated with any one faith or religious identity. We understand that regular religious services are a part of many leaders' lives; however, we do not allow leaders to leave campus during the weekend for any reason. To meet the spiritual needs of our leaders and staff, we have time set aside on Sunday morning for optional quiet reflection, prayer or meditation. Those who do not wish to participate are not required to do so.



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**Q: Something has come up and my student will be unable to attend. What do I do?**

**A:** We understand that things come up, but if they do, please let us (and your student's nominator) know! There is a long waiting list of Illinois students who want to participate in this weekend and if your student is unable to attend, we would like to offer this opportunity to a student on our waiting list. You can email our Recruitment Director, Samantha Kiluk, at [recruitment@illinoisleadershipseminars.org](mailto:recruitment@illinoisleadershipseminars.org) or give her a call at the phone number listed at the bottom of the registration email or this form.

**Q: Whom may I contact if I have additional questions?**

**A:** Make sure you have looked through all the Frequently Asked Questions first. If you do have additional questions, please contact our Recruitment Director as she is your liaison until you arrive at North Park University. Samantha will always get back to you within 72 hours. If you have questions regarding the programming, structure, or other details about the weekend, you may call our Seminar Chairperson, Ixtel Viramontes. Please do not hesitate to ask questions! We are here to help! We understand that most of our leaders have never done anything like this and we are always willing to assist you in any way we can.

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