
VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUTH JUSTICE TEEN COURT PROGRAM

Teen Court is a voluntary youth diversion program designed to allow teenagers who have committed a minor first offenses to accept responsibility for their actions by submitting to the sentencing decisions of their peers and by fulfilling sentences consisting of community service, jury duty, and appropriate educational classes. Teen Court hears cases involving disturbing the peace, simple battery, shoplifting, possession of alcohol and tobacco, and trespassing. Teen Court teen volunteers serve in roles of bailiff, clerk, juror, defense attorney, and prosecuting attorney. An adult attorney volunteers to serve as the Teen Court judge. Teen Court is held at the Caddo Juvenile court located at 1835 Spring Street.

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PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of Teen Court is to utilize peer pressure as a positive force, help young people accept accountability for their actions; while educating defendants and community volunteers about the legal system and good citizenship. Teen Court also believes in restorative justice that seeks to repair the damage done to the victim, offender, and community by the commission of a crime.

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION INTO TEEN COURT AS A DEFENDANT:

1. Offender must be a first time offender
2. Offender must admit guilt
3. Offense must be a misdemeanor
4. Offender must be between the ages of 13-17 at the time of the offense
5. Offender/Parent must agree to participate in the program

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATING IN TEEN COURT?

Advantages are:

1. The defendant does not have to go through the regular Juvenile Court System where the disposition can vary.
2. The defendant knows exactly what the minimum and maximum sentence is for the offense before appearing in court.
3. Teen Court is much cheaper and there are minimal fees for workshops the youth may be assigned to attend.
4. If the youth completes the Teen Court sentence requirements successfully, the charges are dismissed. It will not go on their record as a conviction.
5. The defendant has the opportunity to participate in the Teen Court Program as a volunteer after the sentence is complete.

Teen Volunteer Roles

Bailiff

- The bailiff ensures that the court process runs smoothly with no distractions or outbursts. The bailiff opens the court session by announcing the judge, escorts the jury to and from the deliberation room, escort families in and out of the courtroom, escorts the defendants to the witness stand. **(Requirements: bailiffs must attend mandatory Teen Court Training, attend courtroom etiquette workshop, have the ability to speak loudly, have the desire to maintain order in the courtroom, direct defendants and families to and from courtroom, direct jury members to jury deliberating room, communicate with judge, jury, and clerk.)**

Clerk

- The clerk is responsible for keeping the records of the court proceedings. The clerk swears in the defendants and the jury. The clerk assists the judge by proofreading all documents before allowing the judge to sign. The clerk also organizes and collects all court documents and folders after the Teen Court Session and returns those items to the Coordinator. **(Requirements: attend mandatory training, attend courtroom etiquette workshop, and speak loudly and clearly.)**

Jurors

- Typically 6 teens who decide what constructive sentence to give to the defendant based on his/her testimony. Jurors should pay close attention to both direct and cross examination of the attorneys. Jurors must reach a unanimous decision and use critical thinking and sensitivity skills when deciding sentencing. **(Requirements: attend mandatory Teen Court Training, attend courtroom etiquette workshop, attend sensitivity training, must be an active listener, must be a critical thinker, challenge other jury members on making a unanimous fair sentencing.)**

Master Jurors

- A panel of teen jury members who question the defendant directly regarding the facts of the case. The master jurors also decide the sentencing for the defendant. All sentencing must be unanimous. During the master jury process, there are no attorneys used. **(Requirements: speak loudly and clearly, attend mandatory Teen Court Training, attend mandatory case preparation/attorney training, attend sensitivity training, professionalism workshop, attend courtroom etiquette workshop, be an active listener, be a critical thinker, challenge jury panel members to come up with a fair sentencing that is unanimous.)**

Prosecuting Attorneys

- The prosecuting attorney represents the best interest of the community and attempts to show the jury how the defendant's actions, no matter how justified, hurt the community. The prosecuting attorney must show that the defendant should take full responsibility for his/her actions because the choice was theirs alone. Because witnesses are not used, the prosecutor must prepare the case based on the case facts which include the police report and written witness statements. During the case, the prosecuting attorney uses Opening Statements, Cross Examinations, and Closing Arguments to state their case. **(Pre-requisites: attend mandatory Teen Court Training, attend mandatory Teen Court Attorney Training, attend workshops on opening and closing statements, attend workshop on professionalism, attend courtroom etiquette workshop, sensitivity**

training, case preparation techniques workshop, serve on regular jury 1 time, serve on Master Jury 2 times).

Defense Attorneys

- The defense attorney brings up mitigating circumstances that attempt to explain the reasons why the defendant committed the offense. The defense interviews the defendant and prepares the case. During the case, the defense attorney uses Opening Statements, Direct Examination, and Closing Arguments to state their case. It is not the defense attorneys job to prove that the defendant is innocent because the defendant has admitted guilt (**Pre-requisites: attend mandatory Teen Court Training, attend mandatory Teen Court Attorney Training, attend workshop on opening and closing statements, attend workshop on professionalism, attend courtroom etiquette workshop sensitivity training, case preparation techniques workshop, serve on regular jury 1 time, serve on Master Jury 2 times).**)

ADULT VOLUNTEER ROLES

Jury Monitor

Sits in on teen jury deliberations to ensure that deliberations are conducted in a fair and timely fashion.

Counselors

Assists with signing in defendants and volunteers before court begins and completes paperwork with defendants and parents after sentencing.

Jury Coordinator/Courtroom Monitor

Coordinates the jury and instructs defendants on what to do and where to go when their case is called by the clerk.

Judge (must be an attorney)

Presides over Teen Court sessions and assists in ongoing instruction of teen attorneys.

Teen Attorney Advisors (must be an attorney)

Instructs teen attorneys on proper courtroom procedure.

CADDO TEEN COURT RULES AND DRESS CODE

These rules apply to defendants, volunteers, and all other participants in the courtroom. The most important thing regarding dress, language, and behavior is to show respect for the court proceedings at all times.

Dress:

Boys

- ❖ Should wear slacks and a button down shirt or polo shirt.
- ❖ All shirts should be tucked in, pulled up to the waist with a belt, and earrings removed **before** entering the courthouse building.
- ❖ Absolutely no jeans, shorts, or jogging pants of any kind are allowed.
- ❖ Shoes should be worn at all times, no slippers or flip flops.
- ❖ Sneakers may be worn, but without colored shoe strings.
- ❖ No t-shirts, tank tops, or shirts with offensive language should be worn.
- ❖ No hats, doo rags or handkerchiefs are allowed.

Girls

- ❖ Should wear slacks or a skirt/dress (appropriate length and no high splits).
- ❖ Girls should wear blouses or shirts without a revealing neckline or midriff (belly), no tank tops or t-shirts allowed.
- ❖ Absolutely no jeans, shorts, or jogging pants of any kind are allowed.
- ❖ Shoes should be worn at all times, no slippers or flip flops.
- ❖ Sneakers may be worn, but without colored shoe strings.
- ❖ No shirts with offensive language.
- ❖ No hats or head scarves allowed.

BEHAVIOR:

- ❖ **Be courteous and respectful to all participants and each other.**
- ❖ **Do not display anger.**
- ❖ **Be alert and attentive.**
- ❖ **Speak loudly and clearly and use only acceptable language.**
- ❖ **Refrain from unnecessary talking, laughing, or noise.**

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- ❖ **Please sign in upon arriving to Teen Court and sign out upon leaving Teen Court (you will not receive credit or volunteer hours if you do not sign in or out)**
- ❖ **COMPLETELY RISE** on appropriate occasions: when instructed to rise for the opening of court, recess of court, or the closing of court.
- ❖ **WHEN ADDRESSING THE JUDGE OR BEING ADDRESSED BY HIM/HER:** Say, "Judge, or Your Honor, or Yes, Sir/Ma'am, No Sir/Ma'am."
- ❖ Maintain good posture while seated or standing.
- ❖ Do not put your feet on furniture, write on furniture, or do anything to harm the appearance of the courtroom.
- ❖ **NO** gum chewing, smoking eating, or drinking is allowed.
- ❖ All cell phones should be turned off upon entering the courtroom.
- ❖ No cameras or recording devices are allowed without permission of the **Teen Court Coordinator or Judge.**

IF YOU DO NOT ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING RULES, YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT OR VOLUNTEER HOURS. IF YOU ARE A DEFENDANT, YOUR CASE WILL BE DISMISSED AND RETURNED TO THE REFERRING PARTY FOR FURTHER PROCEEDINGS.

CADDO TEEN COURT SENTENCING GRID

CLASS B OFFENSE

Curfew Violation
Trespassing
Criminal Mischief
Entering/Remaining After
Being Forbidden

Mandatory:
1-2 Terms as a Juror
8-20 Hours of Community Service
Optional:
Power of Choice Workshops
500 word essay on a topic chosen by the jury
Letter of apology to the victim
Victim Impact Interview

CLASS C OFFENSE

Theft
Possession of Stolen Property
Taking
Illegal Possession of Stolen Things

Mandatory:
1- 2 Terms as a Juror
16-48 Hours of Community Service
Stamp Out Shoplifting Workshop
(includes apology letter to victim)
Optional:
500 word essay on a topic chosen by the jury
Victim Impact Interview

CLASS D OFFENSE

Property Damage
Simple Battery
Disturbing the Peace
Engaging in a Fistic Encounter

Mandatory:
1 - 2 Terms as a Juror
10 - 48 Hours of Community Service
Optional:
Power of Choice Workshops
Anger Management Class
500 word essay on a topic chosen by the jury
Victim Impact Interview

CLASS E OFFENSE

Offenses not listed above
-- at Teen Court
Coordinator's discretion

Mandatory:
1 - 2 Terms as a Juror
8 - 48 Hours of Community Service
Optional:
Power of Choice Workshops
Stamp Out Shoplifting Workshop
Anger Management Class
Personal Responsibility Class
500 word essay on a topic chosen by the jury
Victim Impact Interview

CLASS F OFFENSE

Possession and/or use of Alcohol

Mandatory:
1-2 Terms as a Juror
16-40 Hours of Community Service
500 word essay on the consequences of using
alcohol or a topic chosen by jury

Possession and/or use of Tobacco

Optional:

Power of Choice Workshops

Substance Abuse Assessment (can only be ordered by Teen Court Coordinator)

Mandatory:

1-2 Terms as a Juror

8-30 Hours of Community Service

500 word essay on the effects tobacco has on the body or topic chosen by jury

Optional: Power of Choice Workshops

Essay Topics:

1. The Importance of Respect
2. Your Attitude and You
3. The Effects of Bullying
4. How Will I Develop Decision Making Skills
5. The Importance of my Behavior
6. The Effects that Theft Has on the Community
7. The Effects Tobacco has on the Body
8. The Consequences of Using Alcohol

All essays must be presented to the Teen Court Coordinator. The defendant will be given guidelines by the Coordinator of the essay requirements. Upon presentation the defendant will be graded on these requirements.

Victim Impact Interview

This is a mediated meeting between the offender (conducted by an adult and a youth mediator). The purpose of the meeting is to allow both parties to communicate about the issues concerning this offense with the hope that a resolution would prevent any further occurrences.

TEEN COURT WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS AND FEES

Power of Choice teaches youth how their decisions impact their lives. A variety of topics are explored in POC, including peer pressure, goal setting, sexual responsibility, substance abuse, and the importance of education. Parents are required to attend **Fee: \$40.00**

Stamp Out Shoplifting is targeted to juveniles with first time theft offenses, however, repeat offenders are also accepted. Youth are required to attend a 4-hour workshop, complete community service, and personally deliver a written apology to the store manager or victim of the stolen item. Parents are required to attend. **Fee: \$40.00**

Anger Management is a class hosted by At Risk Behavior Management that encourages youth to deal with their anger in positive ways. **Fee: \$35.00**

Early Education Substance Abuse Program is a program for juveniles who have been in trouble with law enforcement or the Caddo Parish School Board as a result of drug **or alcohol use or distribution**. This program is a six session program and juveniles report to the Juvenile Court Annex Building or Zoom on nights assigned. Parents of the juveniles in the six session program are responsible for making sure the client is on time. **Fee: \$100.00**

*Any fees listed above are in addition to the **\$40.00 Teen Court Fee**. If the youth is not sentenced to any workshops, then of course, there are no additional fees.