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Teen Court Operations

1. How does Teen Court work?

The Teen Court operates on Peer Influence. The "jurors" who make up the Teen Court are teens. When a juvenile is arrested for a crime, the arresting police department refers the case to the North County Teen Court. The offender is brought before a panel of area teens. The panel asks questions of the offender. The questions are aimed at trying to understand why the offence occurred. The panel is not trying to "investigate or interrogate" but ask questions to help determine what the offender's remedies will be.

Once the questioning is completed, the offender is issued a list of remedies. These remedies are designed to restore the juvenile back to being a productive student citizen in their community. The remedies are NOT PUNISHMENTS. Once the remedies are completed successfully, the juvenile is brought back to the panel and released from the program.

2. Are there adults involved?

YES. The Court is made up of teen jurors and an adult moderator. The moderators are attorneys from the community that volunteer their time to the program. The moderators are there to ensure the court proceedings go smoothly and assist the questioning. The moderators make sure the juvenile offender understands why they are there and that there will be consequences if they do not complete the program.

There are also police officers at the court hearings. Officers from the arresting agency may be there to present the case. Officers from the Williamsville, Riverton, Rochester and Grandview Police departments also act as Coordinators for the program. Citizen Coordinators are also involved in the program. These volunteers are community members who volunteer their time to help the program.

3. Aren't juvenile arrests confidential?

Juvenile arrests are confidential. When a juvenile is arrested for a crime and referred to the North County Teen Court, during the processing the parent and juvenile must waive their confidentiality. All members of the Teen Court are sworn to confidentiality prior to the start of the hearing. It is understood as a juror or any person attending a hearing that all information at the hearing is confidential. ANY breach in that confidentiality will be handled with criminal charges.

4. What happens after being released?

When a juvenile offender is brought to Teen Court they have admitted to the crime. At the hearing they will be given a list of remedies to complete in order to be released from the program. They are issued a station adjustment form and placed on a temporary "probation" period for a designated time period to complete their remedies. If the remedies are completed successfully and the juvenile does not violate any other terms of the station adjustment, they will be released from the program. Once released successfully, it is as if the arrest never occurred. A CONTACT is reported with Sangamon County Juvenile Probation, but it is NOT AN ARREST.

5. What if the juvenile does not complete the program successfully?

If a juvenile violates the terms of the station adjustment they are brought back to the Teen Court to allow the panel to determine the course of action. The panel may choose to extend the station adjustment time period allowing more time to complete the remedies and they may issue additional remedies.

The panel may also decide to mark the case as unsuccessfully completed and the case is referred back to the arresting agency and the arrest is forwarded to Sangamon County Juvenile Probation for formal charges.

6. How does Teen Court decide what cases to hear?

The Teen Court will hear cases referred to them by the arresting agency. The arresting agency determines if the case will be sent to Teen Court based on several factors. The Program is designed for FIRST TIME OFFENDERS, but sometimes juveniles are allowed to return a second time based on the offense. The juvenile offender must be a GOOD RISK and the juvenile and parents must also agree to have the case handled by the Teen Court. Juvenile offenders who do not admit to the crime will NOT be sent to Teen Court. The hearings are not designed to determine guilt or innocence but WHY the offense occurred and to help the juvenile not make the same mistake again.

IT IS THE ARRESTING AGENCY'S DECISION TO SEND A CASE TO TEEN COURT.

7. What types of crimes/cases are handled by Teen Court?

Teen Court focuses on first time offenders. Criminal Misdemeanors and status offenses make up the bulk of cases brought to Teen Court. Curfew violations, illegal consumption, possession of cannabis or drug paraphernalia, criminal damage and other "juvenile" crimes are heard on a normal basis.

- Felonies are taken on a case by case basis.
- Serious violent crimes are NOT heard by the Teen Court.
- Minor traffic violations (speeding, seatbelts etc.) are NOT heard by the Teen Court.
- It is also the decision of the Teen Court that driving under the influence (DUI) and zero tolerance arrest are NOT heard by the Teen Court. These are serious and dangerous violations that should be handled by criminal courts.

Teen Court Panel

1. How do I become a panel member?

Teen Court takes teens from area school districts and places them on the panel. An interested teen must submit an application. Applications can be picked up at their school counselor's office or downloaded from the Website Home page. The applications will be reviewed by the Coordinator and the teen will be contacted to join the court. New jurors are typically added at the start of the school year. Training sessions are held each year in August.

2. What if I don't attend one of the "member" schools?

Teen Court is open to ANY teen from any area school district. As long as the teen meets the requirements and is eligible for the program, he/she can be chosen as a member.

3. Can I be a panel member if I have been in trouble?

Teen Court is available to teens that have been in trouble in the past. Some of the teen jurors have actually been on the "other side" of the court room as offenders. They completed the program successfully and chose to return as jurors so they could help other teens who are "in trouble".

The coordinators will determine if a teen is eligible for the program based on a variety of factors.

4. Is attendance mandatory?

YES. If you are selected to be a Teen Court juror, you are required to attend Teen Court hearings once a month. Depending on what panel you are on, hearings are held on a Monday or Wednesday evening once a month. School activities (sports, clubs, etc.) are considered EXCUSED. Recreational sports (indoor soccer, club sports) are NOT EXCUSED.

It is understood that many teens have part-time jobs. These jobs should be scheduled around the Teen Court schedule. The schedule is made a year in advance and given to all panel members. We view Teen Court similar to a varsity school sport or activity. You would not miss a football game, volleyball game etc. for a part-time job and still be on the team.

5. Can I take time off from Teen Court?

YES. If your schedule becomes too busy with school functions and work, you may take a leave of absence from the program. This will be worked out with the Coordinator.

It is better to take a leave or resign from the Teen Court than to be removed or just stop showing up.

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Donations can be mailed to: North County Teen Court, 141 W. Main St. Williamsville, IL 62693

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