

BENEFITS OF YOUTH COURT

- ***Youth can cut down the crime rate in Youth***
- ***Youth learn from their mistakes through early intervention***
- ***Parents or guardians are involved in the entire process***
- ***Youth court allows first time offenders the opportunity to keep their record "clean"***
- ***Confidential handling of cases***
- ***The program makes youth accountable for their actions***
- ***Youth court offers a speedy trial***
- ***Youth court is an after school activity***
- ***Youth court volunteers send a message that they will not condone illegal behavior in their community***
- ***Youth court offers self empowerment and teaches the values of being law abiding***



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HUNTINGTON YOUTH COURT

Justice for Youth, by Youth



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WHAT IS YOUTH COURT?

The Huntington Youth Court Program is run for youth by youth. Youth offenders under 16, who have committed their first misdemeanor crime, are given the opportunity to have their case heard by a jury of their peers. Volunteer youth perform the roles of prosecuting and defending attorney, judge, bailiff, and jury.

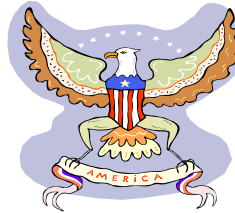
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

The goal of youth court is to prevent delinquent behavior through positive peer influence, strengthen self-esteem, instill motivation for self improvement, and enhance a sense of community involvement among youth. A positive educational experience is provided for both the offender and the youth court volunteers. Youth gain experience with the legal process, become familiar with the court system and learn about various career opportunities within the court system. Offenders also learn about career opportunities through the community service they perform. Counseling and parent education are also available through the youth court.



TYPES OF CASES

The cases are referred by local high schools and the Suffolk County Department of Probation to the Youth Court Director, who accepts cases meeting the criteria. Typical cases include: shoplifting, criminal mischief, vandalism and other misdemeanor offenses. Offenders have been arrested or charged with the offense and admit guilt to the crime. The youthful offender, with a parent or guardian, then meets with the Youth Court staff member for an initial intake, in which the rules and guidelines of the program are explained.



WHAT DOES THE JURY DECIDE?

The jury may impose a sentence that includes community service, written or verbal apology to the victim and/or parents, written essays pertaining to the crime, counseling sessions, or a jail tour. Offenders must also participate in a mandatory peer discussion group and mandatory jury duty for another case.

The Huntington Youth Court practices Restorative Justice principles when handing down a sentence. Restorative Justice is an approach that (1) holds the offender accountable for their offense, (2) includes the community in response to the offense, (3) develops the skills and competencies of the offender so they will lead a law abiding life and become productive members of society.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Membership requires any student age 14-18 years old to be willing to make a voluntary commitment for at least one year. Each member will successfully complete a ten week training program which will cover a wide array of topics such as the operation of youth court, the penal law, and sentencing issues. The training program will conclude with mock hearings and a youth court bar exam and Induction Ceremony which will prepare the youth for participation in the youth court proceedings.

TRIAL TEAM MEMBERS INCLUDE:

JUDGE: Presides over the sentence hearing and sentences the offender in accordance with the jury's verdict.

PROSECUTOR: Represents the interest of the people in the community. Investigates circumstances of the offense and makes a recommendation for sentencing.

DEFENSE: Represents the interest of the offender. Investigates the circumstances of the offense, presents mitigating factors, and makes a recommendation for sentencing.

BAILIFF/CLERK: Maintains accurate records of court proceedings, ensures smooth operation and administers oath.

JURY: Hears evidence during youth court proceedings and decides on an appropriate sentence.

