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Teen Court - Prevention Strategies that Foster Positive Youth Development for At-Risk Students

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Portage Township School's Teen Court

Our motto: Together, We Excel! The faculty and staff believe each child is unique, and it is our responsibility to provide the best education possible in an environment that is challenging, yet caring and inviting.

Different Names for Teen Court



- Youth Court, Peer Court, Student Court, Teen Court and Youth Peer Panel

What Is Teen Court ?

- The Teen Court process holds youth accountable, increases decision-making skills, and provides a hands-on experience to the judicial system.
- It helps youth listen effectively, analyze information fairly, manage and resolve conflict.
- It improves the capacity of youth to become responsible and productive citizens.
- It is a program that is expanding local juvenile justice diversion programs in which youth are sentenced by their peers in collaboration with an adult attorney/volunteer.

Volunteer Roles

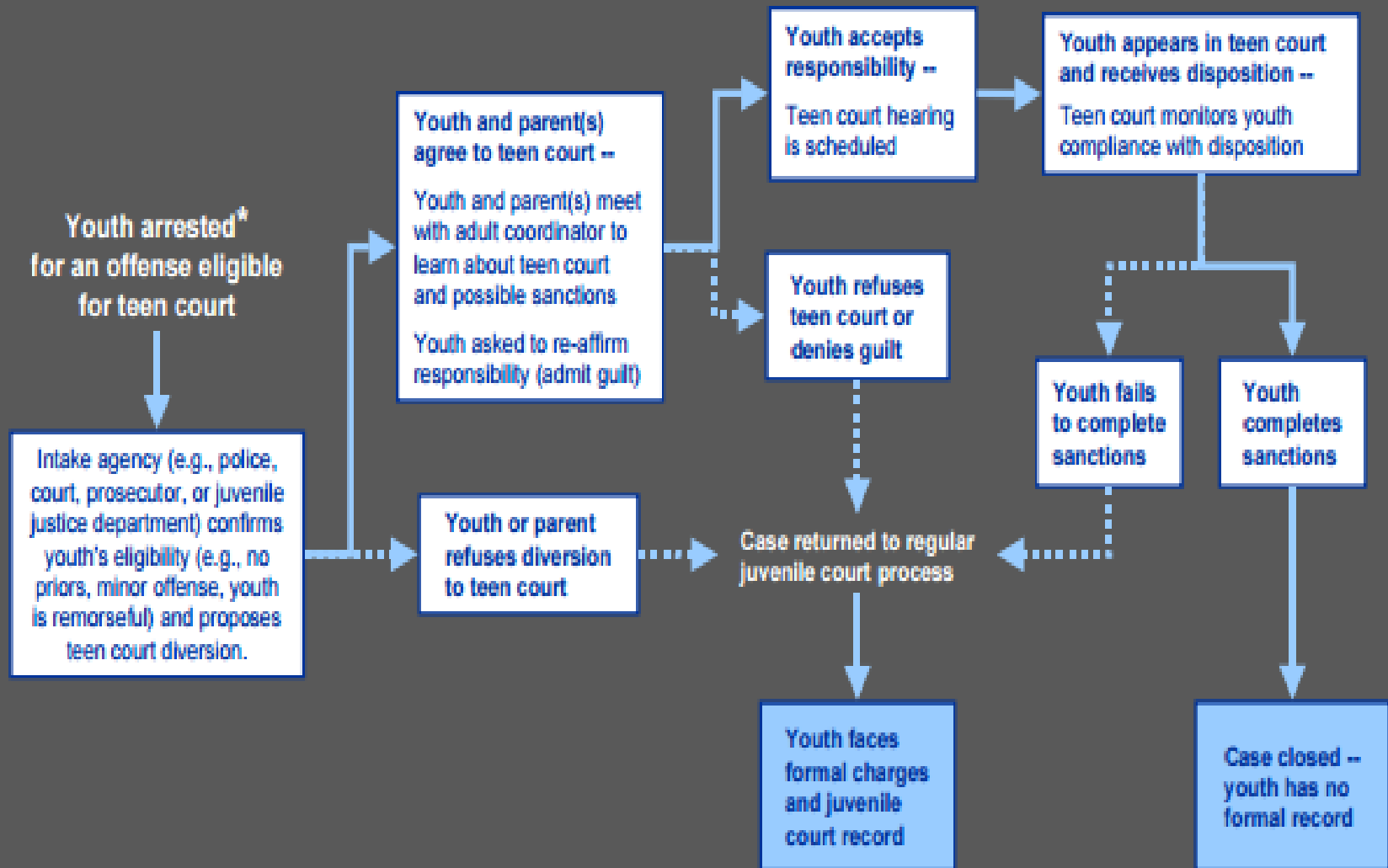
- Defense Attorney
- Prosecuting Attorney
- Clerk
- Bailiff
- Jury Foreperson
- Jurors
- Lawyer/Law Students



How Student Volunteers are Trained

- Recruit student volunteer from Middle & High School
- Student volunteers are trained by Attorneys, Law Students and other adults.

Typical Teen Court Process



School Teen Court Process

- Receive referral from school administration.
- Coordinator contact parent/guardian to set-up intake.
- Meet with parent/guardian and student about the expectation Teen Court requires.
- Coordinator, Parent and student decided whether or not Teen Court is appropriate.
- If accepted court date will be given at that time.

Why Teen Court in Schools?

- Serve as an education, prevention and early juvenile intervention program.
- Holds youth accountable for their action.
- Educate youth on the legal and judicial system.
- Provide a meaningful forum for youth to build competencies, practice, and enhance skills.



Why Teen Court in Schools cont.

- Offer an avenue for youth to provide service for and build ties to their own communities.
- Least expensive juvenile justice intervention program with strong volunteer support from youth and adults.
- Research and Data collection is yielding outstanding results.

WHY TEEN COURT IN SCHOOL CONT.

- Youth and adults volunteers there time to help our community.
- Middle & High school student volunteers are trained by Attorney's, Judges, Law students and adult volunteers.
- These programs are not one time service programs. There is follow-up from 6 months to 1 year depending on the program.

Common Elements

- Juvenile Diversion programs
- Primary low-level offenders
- Misdemeanor, non-violent cases
- Most require youth to admit to charge
- Most are voluntary participation
- Parental consent/participation
- Mandatory parental involvement

Types of School Offenses

- Battery
- Disruptive /disrespect behavior
- Tardies/Truancy
- Defiant Behavior
- Theft
- Academic Insubordination
- Tobacco



Sentencing Options

- Community Service
- Study Table
- Apology Letters
- Essays on the crime, offense or violation(s)
- Jury Duty in Teen Court
- Educational Workshops (Restorative Circle)
- Counseling is suggested

Sentencing Options cont.

- Restitution
- Alcohol/Drug testing
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Weekly updates
- Lunch detention

TOGETHER, WE EXCEL

1. School Board (approval to run TC in the school)
2. Juvenile Judge (approval to run TC in Porter Co.)
3. Judge's Courtroom (approval to use courtroom)
4. Porter County Sheriff Department (volunteer sheriff for security at the courthouse)
5. Portage Township School Principals (referrals)
6. Valparaiso Law School
7. Students (volunteers)



Obstacles You May Face

- Volunteers – Adult/Youth
- Parental Involvement
- Buy-In from teachers/principals
- Funds



Summary

Our District community believes in a strong commitment to education, and that dedication is very evident in the programs and opportunities available to our children. Portage's reputation for excellence in academics, the fine arts, and extracurricular programs is well known. Our focus on the whole child means students are educated to become successful, productive citizens who are critical thinkers and who exhibit strong moral character. Our goal is to help each child reach his or her fullest potential.

SUMMARY Cont.

Portage Township School Teen Court is one example of a successful Teen Court Program in Indiana. We have others Teen Court Programs that are just as successful with the local Judges, Director/Board, Non-profit, Sheriff, or School Board directing. There are countless other successful programs throughout the state. The most important point is that we are helping youth have a 2nd chance. I encourage you that if you do not have a Teen Court Program to take the lead and begin one. It only takes one volunteer and an active school district that believe in their youth and community to get started.

Questions/Answers

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