

How to Become  
a Youth Court Volunteer

Youth Court volunteers are rising freshman and high school students who have a desire to learn more about the legal system and contribute to reducing delinquent behavior in their community or having a passion for helping others and want to make a difference. Interested students should fill out a form on [www.SOUTHCOASTYOUTHCOURTS.ORG/youth\\_volunteers](http://www.SOUTHCOASTYOUTHCOURTS.ORG/youth_volunteers) or contact our office. The majority of volunteers accepted are high school students that have demonstrated commitment, dedication and maturity. Youth Court volunteers must take an oath of confidentiality. All aspects of the Youth Court program are designed to be strictly confidential. Volunteers will be required to complete a training session to learn the roles of prosecution, defense, bailiff, and clerk. Volunteers are eligible for community service hours, internship credit, and possible scholarships.

How to Serve  
on a Youth Court Jury

Impartial jurors are charged with the responsibility of determining the sanctions for each respondent's behavior. Youth Court jurors are students ages 12 through high school. Jury participation is voluntary. However, as part of their sanctions, respondents may be required to serve Youth Court jury duty. Jurors will be recruited in area schools, community organizations, and youth groups. Jurors will be selected randomly and will be notified in advance of their service date. Jurors must appear 1/2 an hour before the hearing to be screened for impartiality and briefed on procedures. Schools are encouraged to use the jury experience as a classroom assignment or extra-credit project.

If you are interested in jury duty or want to be a volunteer, sign-up and register at

[www.southcoastyouthcourts.org/  
youth\\_volunteers.html](http://www.southcoastyouthcourts.org/youth_volunteers.html)

South Coast Youth Courts  
Collaborating Partners

- City of New Bedford
- City of Fall River
- New Bedford Public Schools
- Fall River Public Schools
- G.N.B. Regional Vocational Technical High School
- Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School
- New Bedford Police Department
- Fall River Police Department
- New Bedford Department of Community Services
- Fall River Department of Community Development
- Bristol County Juvenile Courts
- Bristol County District Attorney's Office
- Offices of the South Coast State Representatives and Senators
- Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- Office of the Attorney General
- Greater New Bedford Inter-Church Council
- Bristol County Bar Associations
- University of Massachusetts Law School
- All of our Fall River and New Bedford Community Service Venues
- Surrounding Towns, Schools and Police Departments of Fairhaven, Dartmouth, Acushnet, Westport, Somerset and Swansea.

South Coast Youth Courts have ongoing community collaborations and we thank all of our partners for their time, energy and support.

New Bedford Office: 360 Coggeshall St., New Bedford, MA 02746  
Fax: 508-991-6233 Email: [Tswanbell77@gmail.com](mailto:Tswanbell77@gmail.com)

Fall River Office: 685 Pleasant Street, Fall River, MA 02712  
Fax: 508-324-2809 Email: [SCYCRomero@gmail.com](mailto:SCYCRomero@gmail.com)



The South Coast Youth Courts began with funding from a federal OJJDP Drug Free Communities Grant in 2000. Additional funding has been provided by the New Bedford and Fall River Public Schools, New Bedford and Fall River Police Departments, Cities of New Bedford and Fall River, Bank of America, Community Foundation of SE MA, HOPE Collaborative, MA Shannon Initiative, Bristol County District Attorney C. Samuel Sutter's Office, SAMHSA and other private funders. The opinions, findings, conclusions, recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the State or the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.



The 1st Youth Court in Massachusetts  
Established in 2002

A Juvenile Diversion Program  
Recognized by the American Bar Association and U.S.  
Department of Justice

New Bedford- 508-979-1580  
Fall River- 508-676-8511 ext 229

Website: [www.southcoastyouthcourts.org](http://www.southcoastyouthcourts.org)

# What are South Coast Youth Courts?

South Coast Youth Courts serve as a diversion from traditional court while also preventing what could possibly be the first stain on a juvenile's criminal record. South Coast Youth Courts seek to hold the offending youth (referred to as respondents) accountable for misdemeanor crimes and inappropriate behaviors by helping them to accept the harm they have caused and reconnecting them in a more positive way with their community. Youth Courts are nationally recognized juvenile diversion programs endorsed by the Department of Justice through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and have also been one of the fastest growing community courts in the country.

South Coast Youth Courts are true community collaborations comprised of schools, police, courts, youth volunteers and a host of community organizations. In Youth Court, offending youth can not contest the offense, rather, they are provided the opportunity to offer their view regarding the offense.

South Coast Youth Court respondents are offending youth ages 10 to 18, who are primarily first time offenders. Respondents must be referred by an authorized agency such as school, police or the courts. Sanctions are issued to each offending youth. Sanctions must be performed for successful youth court completion.

The offending youth are sanctioned by their peers. School aged students serve as prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys and other court personnel. Defending and Prosecuting Attorneys offer aggravating and mitigating circumstances in the courtroom. A volunteer adult, usually a lawyer or justice official, acts as the judge and presides over the hearing.

*"Youth court provides appropriate consequences coupled with support services that enable students to truly make amends for the harm they have caused, learn from their mistakes and then use the support services to become successful students in our schools and in our City. Youth court is a true community collaboration. By addressing issues of attendance, academics and behaviors, I am convinced that Youth Court has benefited students who might otherwise have dropped out of school. " - Mayor Jon Mitchell, City of New Bedford*



## Is Youth Court Effective?

The South Coast Youth Courts have an average compliance rate of 92%; that means the majority of offending youth successfully complete their Youth Court experience. Additionally, the recidivism rate for one and three- year post youth court is very low. We count CWO's in our recidivism rates so our youth are truly being diverted. Post one year recidivism is under 15% and post three-year recidivism is less than 30%. This means the majority of young people remain uninvolved with the police or the criminal justice system after completing youth court.

## What is the Youth Court Intake Process?

A referring agency (Police, Court, School) may decide that you are a candidate to participate in the South Coast Youth Court. The referring agency will give you a consent to participate form. A parent or guardian must be with you and is required to sign the consent form. The consent form authorizes the release of the incident report and supporting documents to the South Coast Youth Court staff. Youth Court staff will contact you for an intake appointment that will determine your eligibility. You must be accompanied by your parent/ legal guardian at the intake and agree to the rules and regulations of Youth Court as well as complete a general information form. Youth Court staff may determine that you are ineligible to participate and in that case they will refer your case back to the referring agency for further action.

## How do the hearings work?

Once your intake is complete, and you are deemed eligible, you will receive a hearing date and time for your Youth Court appearance usually within 2-4 weeks of your intake. You must appear at your hearing on time with your parent and speak with your peer defense team. They will review the facts of the incident with you and assist you on proper courtroom procedures. You will have an opportunity to review the jury list as well as the prosecution team names to ensure an impartial proceeding. You will be required to testify on your own behalf. Victims or witnesses may choose to offer verbal or written statements regarding the incident.

After hearing your case, the peer jury will deliberate and present tailored sanctions. These sanctions will include community service, and may include clinical assessment, apologies, essays, jury duty and participation in programs such as tutoring, support groups, and/or mentoring.

You will be assigned a case manager who will monitor your compliance throughout the 120-day sanction period. To prevent further punitive consequences you are required to complete all of the imposed sanctions. If you fail to complete the sanctions, your case will be referred back to the referring agency for further action.

## What is Drive Smart SouthCoast?

Drive Smart Southcoast is an initiative operated by SCYC as a 6 week diversion program serving juveniles between the ages of 16-18 within New Bedford, Acushnet, Dartmouth and Fairhaven areas who have been pulled over and cited for driving distracted. As cases are processed, young drivers will not only receive an educational class, but they will serve their community educating others on the dangers of distracted driving. They will also be responsible for supporting and promoting educational campaigns across our community to encourage teenagers as well as adults to be more responsible. Successful participation in the program will allow youth and their families to avoid the expensive fines and insurance premiums for a first time offense.