

## How to Become a Youth Court Volunteer

Youth Court volunteers are high school students who have a desire to learn more about the legal system and contribute to reducing delinquent behavior in their community. Interested students are required to complete an application. 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 scholarships.

## How to Serve on a Youth Court Jury

Impartial jurors are charged with the responsibility of determining the sanctions for each respondent's offensive behavior. Youth Court jurors are students ages 12 to 18. 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.nb-fryouthcourts.org](http://www.nb-fryouthcourts.org).

## South Coast Youth Courts Collaborating Partners

City of New Bedford  
City of Fall River  
New Bedford Public Schools  
Fall River Public Schools  
New Bedford Police Department  
Fall River Police Department  
New Bedford Department of Community Services  
Fall River Department of Community Development  
Bristol County Juvenile Courts  
Office of District Attorney C. Samuel Sutter  
G.N.B. Regional Vocational Technical High School  
Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School  
Office of the Attorney General Martha Coakley  
Greater New Bedford Inter-Church Council  
Bristol County Bar Associations  
Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction, Inc. (PAACA)  
C.D. Recreation of Fall River  
Senator Michael J. Rodrigues  
Senator Mark C. Montigny  
Representative Antonio F.D. Cabral  
Representative Carole Fiola  
Representative Patricia Haddad  
Representative Steve Howitt  
Representative Robert Koczera  
Representative Christopher Markey  
Representative Paul A. Schmid III  
Representative Alan Silvia  
Representative William M. Straus

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

## South Coast Youth Courts



New Bedford Office: 360 Coggeshall St., New Bedford, MA 02746  
(Housed at PAACA, Inc.)

Phone: 508-979-1580 • Fax: 508-991-6233

Fall River Office: 685 Pleasant Street, Fall River, MA 02721  
(Housed at Fall River Police Department)

Phone: 508-676-8511 ext. 229 • Fax: 508-324-2809

Website: [www.nb-fryouthcourts.org](http://www.nb-fryouthcourts.org)

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. Youth Court is also supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs federal grant #2011-DJ-BX-2235 as awarded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

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# South Coast Youth Courts



The 1st Youth Court in Massachusetts  
Established in 2002

[www.nb-fryouthcourts.org](http://www.nb-fryouthcourts.org)

A Juvenile Diversion Program  
Recognized by the National Youth Court Center



## 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 youthful offenders (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 do not contest the offense, rather, they are provided an opportunity to offer their view regarding the offense. The offending youth are sanctioned by their peers. High school students serve as prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys and other court personnel. Prosecuting and Defense attorneys offer aggravating and mitigating circumstances. A volunteer adult, usually a lawyer or justice official, acts as the judge and presides over the hearing.

South Coast Youth Court respondents are offending youth ages 8 to 17, who are primarily first time offenders. They are referred to Youth Court as an alternative to the traditional court system. 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.

## Is Youth Court Effective?

The South Coast Youth Courts have an average compliance rate of 94%; that means the majority of youth offenders successfully complete their Youth Court experience. Additionally, the recidivism rate for one and three- year post youth court is very low. Post one year recidivism is under 15% and post three-year recidivism is less than 35%. 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?

The South Coast Youth Court is an alternative to traditional prosecution. A referring agency 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 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 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 for your Youth Court appearance usually within 2-4 weeks. You must appear at your hearing on time with your parent or guardian. Prior to the hearing you will have an opportunity to meet 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 may include such things as community service, clinical assessment, apologies 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 to Juvenile Court.

youth court

intake process

hearings