

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 referring students for jury duty or wish to have your class participate in the jury duty experience, please contact the New Bedford Youth Court at 508-979-1580.

New Bedford Youth Court Collaborating Partners

New Bedford Public Schools
New Bedford Police Department
City of New Bedford Dept. of Community Services
Bristol County Juvenile Court
Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction (PAACA)
G.N.B. Regional Vocational Technical High School
Office of District Attorney C. Samuel Sutter
Office of the Attorney General Martha Coakley
Greater New Bedford Inter-Church Council
Southern New England School of Law
New Bedford Bar Association
New Bedford Housing Authority
Senator Mark C.W. Montigny
Representative Stephen R. Canessa
Representative John F. Quinn
Representative Robert M. Koczera
HOPE Collaborative
Youth Volunteers

New Bedford Youth Court is an ongoing community collaboration and we thank all of our supporters.

New Bedford Youth Court



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Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the US Department of Justice, EOPSS, and/or any other public or private funder.

New Bedford Youth Court



The 1st Youth Court in Massachusetts
Established in 2002

www.nb-fryouthcourts.org

A Juvenile Diversion Program
Recognized by the National Youth Court Center



What is New Bedford Youth Court?

The New Bedford Youth Court is a true community collaboration 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. The jury is comprised of student volunteers. A volunteer adult, acting as a judge, presides over the hearings.

The New Bedford Youth Court respondents are offending youth ages 8 to 16, who are primarily first time offenders. These youth are referred to Youth Court as an alternative to the traditional court system. Respondents must be referred by an authorized agency such as school, the police, or the courts. Sanctions are issued to each offending youth that must be performed for successful program completion.

Note: If English is not your primary language, bring a family member or friend to translate. If this is not possible, one will be provided upon request.

What is the Youth Court Intake Process?

The New Bedford Youth Court is an alternative to traditional prosecution. A referring agency may decide that you are a candidate to participate in the New Bedford 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 New Bedford 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.

Is Youth Court Effective?

As we finish our 7th year of operation, New Bedford Youth Court has processed over 750 cases with 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.

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. Youth Court hearings take place at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School in the evening. 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.