



401 East Pratt Street, Suite 1321
World Trade Center Baltimore
Baltimore, MD 21202

Significance of Youth Courts

The National Association of Youth Courts (NAYC) serves as a central point of contact for youth court programs across the nation, delivering training and technical assistance, and developing resource materials on how to enhance the operations of some 1,050 youth court programs in the United States and to help initiate programs where they do not yet exist. NAYC is affiliated with state-based associations and community-based programs which serve youth who benefit from early diversion and alternative sanctions as a result of chronic truancy, delinquent actions or other first time and minor offenses.

Youth court programs strive to nurture in youth a respect for the rule of law, help develop positive citizenship attitudes, encourage civic engagement, and promote educational success through a diversity of service learning opportunities, strategies and activities. Youth courts are structured to provide positive alternative sanctions for first-time offenders by providing a peer-driven sentencing mechanism that allows young people to take responsibility, to be held accountable, and to make restitution. Positive peer pressure is used in youth courts to exert influence over adolescent behavior.

In addition to imposing constructive sanctions for juvenile offenders, youth courts also offer a powerful set of civic opportunities for youth in the community. Youth volunteers actively learn the roles and responsibilities of the various parts of the judicial system. They act as law enforcement professionals, prosecuting and defense attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, jurors and even judges to gain experiential knowledge of the juvenile justice system. The youth respondents and volunteers acquire valuable understanding about police and probation officers, youth services workers, and court administration, paving a path for academic and career building opportunities.

Youth courts alternative sentencing results in reduced costs per case as compared to the traditional justice system and result in reduced recidivism rates. Expanding youth courts is an effective strategy for reducing juvenile delinquency, allowing young people to take responsibility for their actions in benefit to their communities and to learn community engagement skills.

Youth courts are predicated on their sensitivity to unique needs and the diversity of the people they serve - youth, families and community partners. Relationships with existing civic, educational, law enforcement, courts and faith sector organizations currently provide the prime outreach strategies for recruitment of youth court participants and community volunteers. NAYC seeks to develop strategic partnerships to expand existing youth courts and improve their sustainability. As a result of these partnerships, the nation's youth courts will further bolster the educational and economic futures of young people as well as promote the ideals of lifelong civic involvement.

Phone- (410) 528-0143

Fax- (410) 528-0170

www.youthcourt.net