

Teen Court Volunteer Manual

Teen Court of Sarasota County, Inc.
P.O. Box 48927
Sarasota, FL 34230
Tel: (941) 861-8460 Fax: (941) 861-8461
Email: fatc@verizon.net or sarasota.teencourt@verizon.net
website: www.flteencourt.net/sarasota



Honorable Paul Logan ~ Judge, 12th Judicial Circuit, Retired

STAFF:

Kathleen Self ~ Executive Director
John B. Halcomb~Program Services Director
Heather Todd ~ Client Coordinator
Ann Jackson ~ CLA/CP-Clerical Assistant
Tonia Miller ~ Bookkeeper

CLASS FACILITATORS:

Stephanie Feltz~Peer Circle~Venice
Steve Rinder~Peer Circle/Camp X-RAYD~Sarasota
Susan Krinsk~CO-OP

Teen Court is a Non-Profit Organization Developed by the Junior League of Sarasota, Inc.
In Conjunction With
Sarasota County Board of Commissioners
12th Judicial Circuit Court Administration

Welcome to Teen Court's Twenty-Sixth Year!

Dear Volunteer,

Florida's first Teen Court was implemented by the Junior League of Sarasota, Inc. in Sarasota County in 1988. The program, a public/private collaboration, serves as a community-based alternative to the traditional juvenile court system.

The Mission of Teen Court of Sarasota Inc. is to introduce area youth to and engage them in activities and services that promote feelings of self-esteem and self improvement when they develop a healthy attitude toward authority. All organizational activities instill and teach the benefits of law abiding behavior and civic engagement.

The Mission, made possible through the volunteer time contributed by local judges, attorneys, caring adults, and teens, provides a cost-effective, early intervention program that saves our community hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Teen Court is based upon the philosophy that a youthful violator is less likely to re-offend when a peer jury decides punishment. It is hoped that Teen Court will interrupt developing patterns of criminal behavior by promoting feelings of self esteem, motivation for self improvement and development of a healthy attitude toward authority. For the offender, as well as the non-offender who serves on the jury, Teen Court challenges youth to perform at their highest level of ability and places a high priority on educating young people regarding the responsibilities of an individual, a family member and a citizen. All participants are introduced to the positive benefits of community service, public speaking and mentorship in addition to exposure to law related education and courtroom proceedings.

Your interest and involvement in Teen Court is appreciated and needed. The 2014-'15 Volunteer Orientation will provide insight into this unique program. Mature and responsible students who want to make a difference in their community are welcome to participate. While it is absolutely necessary that you follow the rules of Teen Court, it is also very important that you enjoy helping others and working cooperatively to accomplish the goals of Teen Court.

Teen Court, a 501 (c) (3) organization overseen by a Board of Directors, is funded, in part, by a \$3 fee on local court costs and traffic tickets. The organization is dependent upon local community grants and private donations to support a myriad of critical intervention classes such as Camp X-RAYD & CO-OP. More information about how you can donate to help out can be found at our website: www.flteencourt.net/sarasota. Be sure to also "like" us on Facebook.

Teen Court Guidelines

Teen Court Volunteer Agreement/Release Form

The Teen Court Volunteer Agreement/Release form & Teen Court Dress Code must be signed by you and your parent/guardian and notarized. This confirms that you understand and agree to abide by the Teen Court Rules and Dress Code. Credit will not be given or participation allowed if the dress code is not followed. The courthouse is a place of serious business. It is important to be professional and conservative with your actions and dress. You may mail the Teen Court Volunteer Agreement/Release Form to the Teen Court office or bring it to the next Teen Court session. Also note that cell phones are not allowed. Credit will not be given for violation of these rules. Exceptions to the rules must be pre-approved with a Teen Court staff person.

Please note: There are **two sides** to the form and it **MUST BE NOTARIZED**.

Age Requirement

Mature and responsible 8th-12th graders~Younger students can participate as Clerk/Bailiff

Time

Attorney	4:30 PM
Jurors, Bailiff & Clerk	5:45 PM
Pick up time for both locations:	7:15 PM

Locations

<u>North County</u>	Criminal Justice Center, 2071 Ringling Blvd., 6th Floor
<u>South County</u>	South County Annex, 4000 South Tamiami Trail, 2 nd Floor

Schedule

<u>North County</u>	Wednesdays **<u>check website for schedule</u>
<u>South County</u>	Mondays, twice a month **<u>check website for schedule</u>

Please call 861-8460 or check website for schedule prior to attending

Staff is not responsible for a child dropped off at either location when there is no session

We honor the public school calendar holidays which means there are no Teen Court sessions when public school is not in session. Teen Court does meet regularly during the summer. We recommend you always telephone 861-8460 or check the website www.flteencourt.net/sarasota to confirm our schedule for both locations prior to attending. .

Volunteer Forms Must Be Notarized & Turned In To Receive Community Service Hours

Clerk, Bailiff or Juror: You must observe two sessions before you are able to volunteer as a juror, bailiff or clerk.

Teen Attorney: You must have served , at a minimum, four jury duties, attend specific trainings for that role and dress professionally (dress shirt, tie for young men; skirts, dresses, suits for young ladies).

How Does Teen Court Work?

Teenagers are provided the opportunity for hands-on participation to serve as teen attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, or jurors. The jurors actually determine the sentence for an at-risk juvenile who has admitted guilt to breaking a law or violating a school rule. The program's services are dependent on serious and respectful student volunteers. Juvenile clients are sent to Teen Court by law enforcement officers, school administrators, traffic court, juvenile court, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. All participants benefit from exposure to: legal education, community service, public speaking opportunities, and adult and peer role models.

To begin the Teen Court hearing:

The bailiff calls the courtroom to order as the judge enters the courtroom. The clerk reads the charge to the court. The teen attorneys, both prosecution and defense, make opening statements. The judge then calls the defendant to the stand and swears him/her to tell the truth. The teen attorneys help the jury to decide upon a fair and appropriate sentence by asking the defendant questions relating to the charge. The jury listens carefully to the facts. After each side makes a closing argument, the judge dismisses the jury to a deliberation room to determine the sentence of the defendant.

Sentencing works like this:

Each offender signs a 6-week contract to perform the following:

- 20-75 hours of Community Service
- 2- 8 Jury Duties and Peer Circle sessions
- Drug Screening is performed on all clients as an intervention tool
- \$100 Program Fee (includes Peer Circle classes)
- Any additional assignment by the jury, such as an apology letter or an essay related to the offense
- Camp X-RAYD~*Examine Reality About Your Decisions* is an additional 21 hours of services that are determined by Teen Court staff. This is an intensive experience for youth that are in need of more intensive classes i.e substance abuse reduction classes.
- CO-OP~Is s additional 9 hours of group discussion for youth dealing with bullying, fighting, or other challenges that require new ways to think about handling challenges they are facing.

Benefits for Teen Court's Clients

When the defendant successfully completes the sanctions, clients benefit from not having a conviction of the charge. While they will have some record of the incident/offense it will be considered a dismissed case. This means certain jobs, careers, and professional goals can still be reached due to the 2nd Chance. When the cases are referred from schools, Teen Court sanctions often replace suspension from school. Failure to comply with the Teen Court sanctions results in a juvenile court appearance, a conviction and, in most cases, probation.

Oath of Confidentiality

The importance of honoring the Oath of Confidentiality cannot be overstated. The business appearing in any court is a personal matter. Specific information in a Teen Court session which includes names, circumstances of the incident, and location of crime is considered confidential. The general lessons learned are the only aspects of a Teen Court session which may be shared with others. Failure to respect this Oath will result in dismissal from participation in the program.

The Oath of Confidentiality below is required to be taken at the beginning of each Teen Court session by **everyone** in attendance:

I solemnly swear or affirm that I will not divulge, either by words or signs, any information which comes to my knowledge in the course of a Teen Court session, and that I will keep secret all said proceedings, which may be held in my presence.

Rules

You are expected to act maturely and responsibly during the time you are in the courthouse. All volunteers are required to understand and abide by the following rules of the courthouse and Teen Court in order to participate:

- You are required to follow the Teen Court dress code. Please refer to the Volunteer Agreement/Release & Dress Code which needs to be signed by you and a parent/guardian and notarized and returned to Teen Court staff before you can participate. And/or receive credit for the community service hours performed.
- **NO Cell phones allowed** at Teen Court. Leave them in your car or at home. Phones will be taken to the Teen Court office to be picked up by the volunteer. The ability to record proceedings, the distraction of students texting in the hall way or courtroom, is not acceptable. Students riding the bus or who have an illness may speak with Staff and obtain an exemption from this rule.
- From the moment you arrive on the premise of the building you are a role model and are being observed by others. The credibility of Teen Court depends on you accepting responsibility for the role in which you have chosen to be come involved.
- Respect all participants at all times.
- No one is allowed behind the “Judge’s bench” area in the courtroom. This area is reserved for the adult judge. You should not be in the front area of the courtroom (past the bar) unless you are working on a case as juror, teen attorney, clerk, or bailiff..
- Sit only in chairs. Never sit on tables.
- Do not place your feet on furniture or the Bar that separates the audience from the front section of the courtroom
- Be willing to work as a team. This is not an individual endeavor for anyone.
- Do not discuss your personal opinion of the case,, the sentence or any part of the proceedings with parents, defendants, or other jurors once you have left the deliberation room. Do not discuss the cases in the hall area.
- If you move any furniture please be responsible and place it back where you found them.
- Be willing to talk with former defendants when you see them. Your continued interest can impact their involvement and success.
- Always enter the courtroom where the cases are presented in an orderly fashion. Jurors should enter single file and move to the end of the rows and take their seats. Sit still without turning or talking. Attorneys should sit quietly and wait for the case to begin.

Jury Duty

As a juror in Teen Court you are given the opportunity to participate in a very important part of our court system. Jury duty is both a privilege and a serious responsibility. You are required to base your verdict upon the information you hear in court and upon the law as instructed by the judge. You are obligated to perform honestly and conscientiously, without fear or favor.

Qualifications of Jurors: You must observe two Teen Court sessions before participating as a juror. Jurors are required to abide by the Teen Court Rules & Dress Code.

Types of Cases You Will Hear:

Misdemeanor offenses, traffic violations, and school rule violations are heard by Teen Court. Offenders have admitted guilt to the charges; therefore, the "trial" is for the purpose of hearing the facts and assessing a fair and rehabilitative consequence. Some low level felony crimes are referred by juvenile court.

Rules of Conduct on the Jury:

- Report at the proper date and time.
- Abide by the Oath of Confidentiality.
- Acknowledge if you know the defendant prior to his/her hearing. You are not allowed to be on the jury or in the courtroom if you know the defendant appearing.
- Listen to every question and answer.
- Do not discuss the case with anyone after leaving the courtroom.
- Control your emotions (laughing, facial expressions, etc.)

Conduct in the Jury Deliberation Room:

- You will be confined for approximately 30 minutes in a small deliberation room. The business of the jury shall be conducted in an orderly fashion.
- The selected foreman shall see that all jurors express their opinions and must be willing to oversee the discussion.
- Discussion should be limited to the case.
- Upon completion of the deliberation process you may visit QUIETLY.
- There is to be no bragging regarding inappropriate behavior while in the jury room.

Integrity of the Jurors:

In discharging your duty as a juror, conduct yourself in such a way that no one can question your participation. Your actions and demeanor, verbal and physical, should not arouse the distrust of anyone during the sessions. In case of any question regarding the hearing, the **Judge** or **Director** should be consulted. The Judge is always available to determine all questions of law pertaining to the case.

Foreman:

The Jury Foreman, elected by the jury members before deliberation begins, is responsible for supervising the jury as they deliberate. While maintaining order in the deliberation room the foreman is responsible for contacting an adult if the jury has any questions or problems. The foreman is responsible for maintaining the Verdict Form's confidentiality. When the judge asks for the verdict, the foreman shall stand to present the form to the bailiff. or read the verdict if instructed to do so.

Teen Attorney

The teen **defense attorney** is an **advocate for the client**. The client should be presented by the defense in the best possible light. While the defense attorney must zealously seek to help the client, it is important to never misrepresent the case. To prepare the case, the defense attorney will interview the defendant and should be familiar with the aggravating and mitigating circumstances regarding the charge.

The teen **prosecuting attorney** has the responsibility to seek justice and not simply be an advocate for the highest possible sentence. The prosecution should be familiar with both the aggravating and mitigating circumstances of the case. The prosecutor represents the State of Florida and should base his or her arguments on the facts of the case as presented in the docket/police report.

- ◆ **Teen attorneys rise** when the Judge enters and leaves the courtroom. **This is a sign of respect & indicates the formality of the proceedings.**
- ◆ **Teen attorneys rise when the jury enters and leaves the courtroom.** While the opposing attorney is questioning the defendant, you may object if you feel questions are improper. For example: If the prosecution asks the defendant if his brother is in jail for drug possession, the defense attorney stands and says, "Objection Your Honor, on the grounds that the question is not relevant." The Judge will rule on the objection either by sustaining (objection and grounds are correct) or by overruling the objection (objection and grounds are not correct). The defendant is then required to answer or ignore the question. The attorneys should never argue with each other, but should request of the Judge whether they can approach the Bench with necessary questions.

When questioning is complete, the prosecution delivers a closing argument, followed by the defense attorney's presentation of closing argument. The closing should be supported by evidence. The defense attorney can point out the facts to the jury which may influence them to consider a lighter sentence for their client..

- ◆ ALL Teen attorneys **will stand** for the reading of the verdict. It is your job to advise the defendant to stand with you.

A few important terms to know:

Advocate	Bench	Client	Aggravating
Mitigating	Objection	Overrule	Relevant
Sustain	Closing argument	Opening statement	

- Teen defense attorneys are expected to introduce yourself to the parent/guardian and explain who you are.
- Teen defense attorneys are responsible for directing your client to the table before his/her case starts.
- **ALWAYS STAND WHEN ADDRESSING THE JUDGE~****Instruct your defendant to stand with you while the jury exits and enters the courtroom and also during the reading of the verdict.
- **DRESS:** Remember you are the leaders in the court room. Business dress is required and should reflect a serious approach to the role you perform.
- ⇒ Young Men: Dress pants, dress shirt with tie is required.
- ⇒ Young Ladies: Dress pants, dresses and skirts of appropriate lengths & styles with **closed toe shoes**. See Volunteer Agreement/Release for details.

***Sincere Appreciation
to the following persons, organizations
and foundations whose concern, energy, and support have made
Sarasota County's Teen Court the success that it is today:***

Junior League of Sarasota Inc.
Chief Judge Andy Owens
Ed Brodsky, State Attorney
Larry Eger, Public Defender
Sheriff Tom Knight
Walt Smith, Court Administrator, 12th Judicial Circuit
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Bank of America Client Foundation
Community Foundation of Sarasota County
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Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice
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Sarasota County Bar Associations
Sarasota County School Board
Tandem Construction
United Way of South Sarasota County
United Way of Sarasota, Inc.
Wilson-Wood Foundation, Inc.

Our Dedicated Teen Court Board of Directors

Hunter Carroll Emma Joels Jesse Balaity
Mary Dougherty Slapp Evan Duke Lee Byron
Kent Hayes Tom Menchinger Nora Patterson
Janey Swift Kimberly Walker

With Special Appreciation to

- Judge Paul E. Logan-Retired, whose understanding that early intervention and prevention programs can deter a juvenile from further criminal behaviors was, & remains, the impetus for the development and implementation of Teen Court in Sarasota County in 1988
- Sarasota County Judge Manny LoGalbo,-Retired, was responsible for the implementation of Teen Court in South Sarasota County in 1990
- 12th Circuit Court Judge Robert Bennett-Retired, an ardent supporter and advocate of Teen Court.

