

Teen Court

The Alternative

Teen Court is a program that allows first time offenders between the ages of 10 and 17 a second chance, yet it holds them accountable for their actions. The Defendant must stand before a jury of their peers, plead guilty, and accept the sanctions given by the jury. Teen volunteers, ages 13 to 17 act as Defense Attorney, Prosecuting Attorney, Bailiff, Clerk and Juror. The only participating adult in the Courtroom is the Judge. Typical offenses include shoplifting, vandalism, minor battery, and disorderly conduct.

The System

Cases are referred to Teen Court through the Seminole County Sheriff's Office (Civil Citation) or the State Attorney's Office where a juvenile has been charged with a misdemeanor offense for the first time. To be entered into the Teen Court system, the youth must admit his/her guilt and be willing to accept the sanctions handed down by the Teen Court jury. The jury does not determine innocence or guilt, but rather evaluates the crime presented by both a Prosecuting and Defending Attorney and returns with a sentence that fits the offense, which includes mandatory service as a juror for future cases.

The Philosophy

Teen Court is based on the philosophy that a youthful law violator is less likely to continue to be an offender when a jury of their peers decides their punishment. Teen Court has proven that it does interrupt developing patterns of criminal behavior by promoting feelings of self esteem, motivation for self-improvement and a healthy attitude towards authority. Teen Court challenges the offenders as well as the volunteer teens to perform at their highest level. Teen Court helps the offender and the volunteer learn the responsibilities of being a good friend, family member, and citizen in today's society.

Dress Code

NO shorts, halters, backless dresses or tops, spaghetti straps, tube tops, miniskirts, muscle shirts, or clothing that shows your midriff can be worn. Males must have their shirts tucked in at all times. No sweat pants, baggy pants, or hats will be allowed. If you are not following the dress code, you will be asked to leave and will not receive credit for participation.

Other benefits

- Bright Futures Scholarship
Community Service hours
- Experiencing the Legal System in action
- Promotes community involvement
- Enhances public speaking skills

