

# HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT

## Volunteer Training Packet 2023-2024



**KEEP THIS PACKET FOR YOUR RECORDS**

# **HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT**

## **Training Agenda**

1. Teen Court Overview
2. Court Room Dress Code and Conduct
3. Confidentiality Agreement
4. Volunteer Requirements
5. Job Descriptions
  - Bailiff
  - Clerk of the Court
  - Jury Members
6. Jury Guidelines
7. Disposition options and descriptions
8. Teen Court Date and Announcement Information

# TEEN COURT OVERVIEW

Teen Court is a program that offers youth offenders (defined as respondents) an important second chance to learn from their mistake without the high cost of a criminal record.

It is a real justice program run by teens for teens, i.e., juveniles aged 13 through 17 who have committed a crime (generally a misdemeanor) appear before a jury of their peers. The crime is usually a first offense, and the respondent must admit involvement (guilt) since this is a disposition (sentencing) hearing only.

Teen Court is offered as a positive experience to divert a first-time youth offender away from a pattern of criminal behavior. Offenses generally include theft, vandalism, possession of alcohol, assault, etc.

In Teen court, volunteer teens perform the roles of the clerk and jury.

After hearing the case, the teen jury determines a disposition for the offense based upon sentencing guidelines. After careful consideration of the facts, the jury deliberates and decides upon a constructive disposition, including a minimum number of community service hours and serving on a teen jury. Also, the respondent may be assigned educational programs, essays and/or apology letters. Restorative justice principles are followed-what is best for the respondent, the victim, and the community at large.

The offender then has the chance to complete the disposition within 45 days and have the original charge dismissed. If the disposition is not completed, the case is sent back to the referring agency.

# HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT

## DRESS CODE, CONDUCT, and BEHAVIOR

These rules and guidelines apply to respondents as well as all volunteer participants in the courtroom. It is important to remember that you are participating in a court of law and that your manner of dress and your conduct must display the proper respect for the court.

### **DRESS CODE – Strictly Enforced! Please adhere to avoid being sent home.**

ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress pants.</li> <li>• Blouses and sweaters.</li> <li>• Collared shirts – button-up, polo or golf type shirt.</li> <li>• Ladies may wear dresses or skirts of acceptable length.</li> <li>• Appropriate shoes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Coats/jackets/sweatshirts must be left in your seat in the courtroom gallery. They cannot be worn when you are in the jury box.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No jeans.</li> <li>• No T-shirts.</li> <li>• No hats.</li> <li>• No shorts or cut-offs.</li> <li>• No pool type flip-flop shoes.</li> </ul> <p><b>LADIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NO TANK TOPS/SPAGHETTI STRAP shirts or other sleeveless spandex shirts.</li> <li>• No bare midriffs – shirt and pants/skirts must meet.</li> <li>• No spandex leggings unless worn with skirt of proper length</li> </ul>

### **CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR**

REQUIREMENTS	RESTRICTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive at the 4:30P start time.</li> <li>• Be courteous and respectful to all participants.</li> <li>• Always pay attention to the court proceedings.</li> <li>• Speak clearly and loudly.</li> <li>• Keep your voices down in the jury deliberation room.</li> <li>• Always address the judge as "Judge ____" or "Your Honor".</li> <li>• Remain in the courtroom once a hearing has begun.</li> <li>• Refrain from facial expressions, nodding/shaking your head or conduct that might indicate your agreement/disagreement with the court proceedings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No cell phones on in the courtroom or the jury deliberation room. No photographing, recording or text messaging at any time. Cell phones will be taken.</li> <li>• Cannot do homework or other work in the courtroom or jury deliberation room.</li> <li>• Cannot carry on private conversations in the courtroom or deliberation room.</li> <li>• Cannot display anger or lose your temper. Cannot bring food or drinks to court.</li> <li>• Cannot chew gum in court.</li> </ul>

Questions? Call 410-638-3045 for information.

# HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT

## CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

The importance of honoring the Confidentiality Agreement cannot be overstated. The business of appearing in any court is a personal matter. All aspects of a Teen Court session should be considered **CONFIDENTIAL**. Failure to respect this Agreement can result in dismissal from participation in the program.

At the beginning of each court session, the judge will ask everyone to stand and declare under oath the following statement.

**I solemnly declare that I shall keep confidential any information that comes to my knowledge in the course of a Teen Court case presentation, and I shall not identify, directly or indirectly, either audibly or in writing, any person participating as a respondent in the Teen Court program.**

# **HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT**

## **STUDENT VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attend a minimum of 5 out of the 10 scheduled court sessions. Sessions run from September through June. Attend a new volunteer training once and then attend the on-line mid-year training for all volunteers.
2. Honor confidentiality for all Teen Court sessions.
3. Participate with other Teen Court members in determining fair consequences for the respondent.
4. You must demonstrate the ability to treat each case individually with objectivity and without prejudice. You must have the ability to communicate with others and have the desire to work in a group process. You must understand your responsibility for mature behavior during all phases of your participation.
5. Participants must be a resident of, or attend school in Harford County, Maryland, and must be in grades 8 through 12.
6. A minimum time commitment for each session will be set by the coordinator.
7. You must abide by the Conduct, Behavior, and Dress Code instructions.

# **JOB DESCRIPTION FOR BAILIFFS**

The primary duty of the court bailiff in Teen Court is to assist the Judge and Teen Court Coordinator in maintaining order in the courtroom at all times. Specifically, the bailiff's duties are:

## ***Before Court Begins:***

1. Arrive to Teen Court 15 minutes early to meet with the coordinator and get respondent information.
2. Ask security to unlock Court Room 1 and 2 (or additional courtrooms as needed) once an adult for each room arrives.
3. Prepare courtroom for court session.
4. Greet and sign in the respondents' and their families upon arrival. Direct respondent and families where to wait/take seat.
5. Promptly at 4:55 - after checking with the Teen Court staff – check to make sure that the judge is ready.

## ***During Court Session:***

6. When the judge enters the courtroom, start the proceedings by announcing the judge and calling the court to order and follow Bailiff script provided.

## ***End of Case:***

7. The bailiff will collect the jury findings forms after each case, then excuse the respondent and Parent(s).

## ***End of Evening:***

8. Check both courtrooms for order. Return chairs and straighten up if needed. Check to make sure nothing is left behind. Ask security to lock courtrooms.

# **JOB DESCRIPTION FOR CLERK OF COURT**

The primary duty of the court clerk in Teen Court is to assist the Judge and the Teen Court Coordinator.

Specifically, the clerk's duties are:

## ***Before Court Begins:***

1. Prepare clerk of the court paperwork and become familiar with cases before the session begins.
2. Help check in all youth and adult volunteers.
3. Help distribute materials to jury forepersons and jury questions to jury members.

## ***During Court Session:***

4. Follow Clerk's script during court session.

## ***End of Case:***

5. Once signed by the Judge, hand the Jury Findings Form to Bailiff to be given Teen Court staff.

## ***End of Evening:***

6. After court assist Teen Court staff as needed & collect jury materials and return to storage box.

**REMINDER:** Every time you address the judge, you address him or her as "Your Honor."

# JOB DESCRIPTION FOR VOLUNTEERS

- As a juror on the Teen Court, you will have an opportunity to participate in a very important part of our democracy. Jury duty is a privilege and a serious responsibility.
- Jurors must arrive 30 minutes before court starts and check in with the Teen Court Staff.
- You must listen to the case without prejudice and render a fair disposition. You are required to base your disposition upon the evidence as you hear it in court, the judge's instructions, and the Disposition Guidelines. Remember, offenders have admitted to being *involved in the offense*; therefore, this procedure is for the purpose of *hearing the facts and assigning a fair consequence*.
- You are obligated to perform honestly and conscientiously, without fear or favor.
- If you are acquainted with the respondent, please advise a Teen Court Staff member or the judge to excuse you from the proceeding. Inform the Teen Court Staff that you are available to serve on another jury.
- Generally, the jury shall consist of a maximum of twelve jurors. If there are six jurors, four jurors shall agree or two less than the total number of jurors shall agree.
- Jurors must be residents of or enrolled in school in Harford County, Maryland, and be in grades 8 through 12.
- For cases involving a Peer Jury, the jurors will direct questions to the respondents rather than using teen attorneys.
- Teen court should focus on restorative justice. This means that instead of thinking in terms of punitive action (punishing the respondent) you should consider how you can hold the offender accountable for their offense. Think about how the offender has harmed the victims and how they can repair the harm. Think about what the offender needs to become a more productive member of society and involve the community in the disposition.

# **HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT**

## **JURY GUIDELINES**

Serving as a juror is a serious manner. As a juror, you have the duty and obligation to maintain yourself in a professional and responsible manner. It is by your judgment alone that another person will have to serve his or her disposition for an act of delinquency.

1. When the judge or coordinator asks if you know the respondent you must be truthful.
2. Proper decorum for a juror includes sitting up straight, attentiveness to the proceedings, and maintaining the dignity of the courtroom. Control your emotions (facial expressions, etc.). Do not talk during court sessions.
3. Do not talk during court sessions. Be mindful of creating other distractions such as movements, shuffling papers, etc.
4. Before court begins, the coordinator will appoint a foreperson. This individual acts as a spokesperson for the jury.
5. Once in the jury room, the foreperson will lead the discussion in determining the appropriate disposition for the respondent.
6. Please keep in mind when constructing any disposition that the respondent has forty-five (45) days for completion.
7. During deliberations if any questions arise, please contact the coordinator or a member of the teen court staff.
8. Discuss the aggravating and mitigating circumstances of the case. For example, the seriousness of the offense, was anyone injured, what was the amount of property damage, etc.
9. Foreperson should then begin by asking for disposition suggestions based upon the facts presented. All jurors should remain in his or her seat, pay attention, and not talk about anything else until agreement has been reached. Each juror should be consulted and freely give his or her opinion. Listen to other's opinions with an open mind. Continue to deliberate until an agreement or compromise has been reached.
10. Remember not to compare dispositions from one case to another, whether it is a case heard earlier in the evening, or (if you are a respondent serving jury duty) a case you were involved in.
11. Please keep restorative justice principles in mind. Instead of being punitive, think of the best interest of the offender, the victim, and the community and how the harm can be repaired? Think about how the respondent can become a more productive member of society and involve the community in the disposition.
12. After deliberation, return to the same seat in the jury box as you sat during the hearing.

# **DISPOSITION OPTIONS/INSTRUCTIONS**

TEEN COURT STAFF ARE AVAILABLE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS DURING THE DELIBERATION PROCESS.

**TEEN COURT JURY DUTY:** Maximum of 3-Please assess if respondent would be appropriate to serve on the jury.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS:** Maximum of 20 hours-Only assign if there is an opportunity for learning or reason to give back. Consider the time the respondent must volunteer as well as other circumstances such as grades or if the respondent currently has a job. Minimum age-15

**COUNSELING SERVICES:** Attend an evaluation and follow recommendations of a therapist.

**DRUG COURT OBSERVATION:** Attend and observe a District or Circuit Drug Court Session.

**DRUG TESTING:** Additional drug screens to monitor sobriety.

**FAMILY CONTRACTS-DRUG AND ALCOHOL and GOOD ROLE MODEL:** Family contracts to rebuild trust and to set appropriate expectations. See handouts for example.

**FORWARD THINKING-WHAT GOT ME HERE?**: Two 2-hour classes (separated by gender) Participants explore the consequences of their past decisions and learn to apply skills for controlling anger, handling negative peer pressure, working with authority figures, and strengthening family ties.

**SHOPLIFTING ABATEMENT CLASS:** 2-hour class that focuses on restorative justice, education, and impact on the community.

**VALUES PROJECT:** Written assignment on the importance of proper values and what behaviors do and do not reflect those values. See handouts for example.

**HANDWRITTEN APOLOGY LETTER:** (possibly to victim or parent)

**BOOK OR MOVIE REFLECTION:** Assign a book to read or a movie to watch and require respondent to reflect and compare to their own experience or situation. A list of books/movies in Teen Court Library is available.

**ESSAY:** Teen Court Reflection or another appropriate essay topic.

**LIFE PLAN (5/10/15) OR VISION BOARD PROJECT:** Goal/Life Plan as an essay or art project.

**OTHER APPROPRIATE OPTIONS:** This can be anything that the jury would suggest for the respondent to complete using his or her talents, i.e. painting a picture, writing poetry or a story, etc. This must be approved by the judge or teen court coordinator.

# HARFORD COUNTY TEEN COURT

## LOCATION DATES & ANNOUNCEMENT INFORMATION

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**COURT SESSIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR THE FIRST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH  
SEPTEMBER THROUGH JUNE**

**LOCATION:**

**BEL AIR DISTRICT COURT 2 SOUTH BOND STREET**

Please refer to the Harford County Teen Court Website  
<https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/498/Teen-Court>  
and Facebook page to confirm dates.

**CHECK-IN TIME IS 4:30 P.M.**

**PICK-UP TIME IS 7:00P.M. UNLESS OTHERWISE INFORMED**

Please ask a staff member at check-in if you have questions regarding dismissal. Cell phones are allowed in the jury room only and can be used before and after court to call for rides in the event of early dismissal.

**IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER**

WE FOLLOW THE HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL'S POLICY FOR CANCELLATION OF  
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES/ EVENTS.

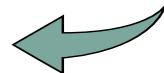
**IF HARFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED FOR THE DAY, OR HAVE EARLY DISMISSAL  
DUE TO WEATHER, TEEN COURT IS CANCELLED FOR THAT EVENING.**

THERE WILL BE AN ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING A RESCHEDULED DATE

### 2023-2024 TEEN COURT SESSION SCHEDULE

<b>9/7/2023</b>	<b>2/1/2024</b>
<b>10/5/2023</b>	<b>3/7/2024</b>
<b>11/2/2023</b>	<b>4/4/2023</b>
<b>12/7/2023</b>	<b>5/2/2023</b>
<b>1/4/2024</b>	<b>6/6/2023</b>

**TO REGISTER FOR  
COURT  
SESSIONS  
SCAN HERE**



**Get Teen Court  
reminders on your cell  
by texting:  
@HARCOTEN to 81010**

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