Benefits of Volunteering

Students who volunteer for the Nassau County Youth Court learn about civic responsibility, the law, and to develop public speaking skills.

In addition, every volunteer is trained by members of the Nassau County District Attorney's Office. Formal trainings are conducted twice a year and volunteers are supervised by an Assistant District Attorney every week.

Volunteers receive community service credit for their participation and have the opportunity to interact with students from across Nassau County.





High school volunteers speak at the annual conference of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges with the Hon. Judith Kaye and other distinguished Youth Court professionals.

www.nassauda.org

Positive Outcomes

The American Youth Policy Forum estimated in 2004 that up to 125,000 youth offenders are served in youth court programs every year, and that more than 80% of respondents complete their sentence successfully. In addition, another 100,000 young people volunteer every year.

Students who participate as respondents are given the chance to take responsibility for their actions and make a positive impact on their community. Additionally, parents are given the opportunity to open lines of communication with their children.

Youth Court also serves public resources by diverting cases that would otherwise crowd the juvenile court system and use up valuable taxpayer money.

By intervening early in a young person's contact with the justice system, Youth Court establishes a positive forum to resolve the case, provides access to appropriate services and enrichment activities, and most importantly, paves the way to a successful future.

For more information, please contact

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Madeline Singas
Acting District Attorney

Nassau County
Youth Court



An innovative approach to juvenile justice.

Education Intervention Prevention

About Youth Court



Madeline Singas
Acting District Attorney

The Nassau County Youth Court provides young people who have committed nonviolent crimes with the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, serve their community, and learn character and career-building skills.

To participate, offenders, referred to as respondents, must be 17 years old or younger and be willing to waive the traditional court process.

Respondents must admit to their crime and answer questions from a jury of other young people about why they did it and why it was wrong. Respondents learn that every action has consequences and that every consequence is a learning opportunity.

Youth Court also provides learning opportunities for the student volunteers who staff each hearing. Volunteers are trained to serve as attorneys, jurors and court personnel, and receive an education in the criminal justice system that can lead to academic and career-building opportunities.

It's about education, intervention, and prevention.

How a case gets started

Cases are referred to Youth Court from Nassau County Family and District Courts, the Department of Probation, and local police departments.

Every case is carefully screened to ensure that it is appropriate and then the respondent and his or her parents or guardian can volunteer for the program.

An Assistant District Attorney acts as judge and oversees the entire process to ensure that all participants act respectfully and the respondent is being treated fairly at all times.



In the courtroom

Each respondent, through his or her advocate, has the chance to present his or her case to the youth jury and judge. The respondent is also questioned by the community advocate and members of the peer jury.

After the hearing, the jury deliberates and imposes a fair and constructive sanction for their peer using restorative justice goals.

Common sanctions include community service, oral and written apologies, essays, jury duty, restitution, curfew, and tutoring.

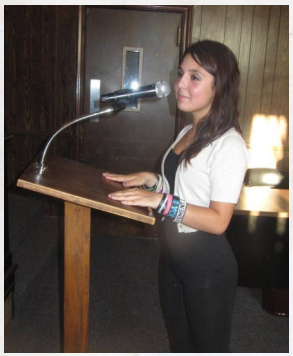
Once a respondent successfully completes the program, the case is dismissed or receives a favorable disposition.

Restorative Justice

In each case, respondents are linked to positive social activities that will benefit their community and provide the respondent with a new experience that will have a positive impact on him or her and potentially become a regular activity.

For example, a respondent who expressed an interest in a career in cooking was linked with a culinary institute to participate in a cooking exhibition. Other respondents have been linked to college professors, football coaches, modeling agencies, lawyers, and other community agencies to help them pursue their goals.

Partnerships



The Nassau County District Attorney's Office developed the Youth Court in partnership with the Nassau County Dept. of Probation, the Maurice A. Deane Law School at Hofstra University and the Family and Children's Association.

Hearing locations

- Maurice A. Deane Law School at Hofstra University, Uniondale, NY
- Hempstead Village Court
  99 Nichols Ct., Hempstead, NY