

Membership Requirements

Members of Youth Court consist of high school students who have successfully completed a multi-session training program. Areas of instruction include an overview of the criminal justice system, NYS Penal Law, sentencing issues, the consequences of crime, etc. The training program concludes with mock hearings to prepare members for participation in Youth Court proceedings. Youth Court members will assume the following roles on a rotating basis:

Judge: A panel of teen judges presides over the sentencing hearing, taking into consideration all the facts and evidence presented in court in order to recommend a fair and constructive sentence.

Defense Advocate: Represents the interests of the offender. Assists the offender throughout the hearing/court process.

Bailiff: Maintains accurate records of the court proceedings, administers oath, and ensures smooth operation of the court.

Youth Court members must commit to signing an ethics/confidentiality agreement, be available for case preparation and Youth Court hearings.



Town of Clarence

Youth Court Program



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**Dawn Kinney
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Clarence HS Youth Court
Liaison**

Support and partial funding provided by:
NYS Office of Children and Family Services

Erie County Youth Bureau

What is Youth Court ?

Youth Court is a voluntary alternative to the criminal justice or school disciplinary system for young people who have committed a crime or an offense. The goal of Youth Court is to intervene in early anti-social, delinquent and criminal behavior, and to reduce the incidence and prevent the escalation of such behavior. Youth Court strives to promote feelings of self-esteem, a desire for self improvement, and to foster a healthy attitude toward rules and authority. Youth Court also offers a law-related education program for young people who seek to become members of the court.

What Happens in Youth Court?

A youth, who has admitted guilt to a crime or school offense, appears for a sentencing hearing before a panel of peers. The panel is presented with evidence, deliberates and passes sentence. Sentences typically include community service and lifeskills education and focus on rehabilitative goals.

Who Participates in Youth Court Proceedings?

Youth Court proceedings involve an offender, and youth members in the roles of judge, defense advocate, and bailiff. Adults serve as Coordinators to oversee the operation of the court.

What Types of Cases are Heard in Youth Court?

Cases are generally referred by the NYS Troopers, Erie County Sheriffs, local courts and school administration. Typical cases heard in Youth Court may include petit larceny, various school offenses, and vandalism. Youth Court processes misdemeanors and violations under New York State Penal Law in addition to school offenses such as smoking/e-cigarette use, fighting, and vandalism.

What Does the Youth Court Decide?

The court may impose a sentence that includes community service, a letter of apology, restitution and lifeskills education. The court cannot sentence any youth to a detention facility or jail.

What Benefits are Obtained and What Rights are Waived?

By agreeing to appear in Youth Court, an offender obtains certain benefits, and waives certain rights that otherwise would apply in traditional criminal justice proceedings. Benefits include a decision by a panel of peers aimed at assisting the young person in desisting from criminal conduct, as well as an opportunity to participate positively in the criminal justice system. Rights waived in Youth Court may include the right to an attorney as well as to a trial for determination of guilt.



Coordinator

The Coordinator supervises and oversees the daily operations of the Youth Court. The Coordinator works with offender, families, youth members, school personnel, law enforcement agencies, and others in the community to ensure that Youth Court is effective in its mission to be constructive, rehabilitative, and educational.

**For further information, contact:
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