

# History of New Bedford Youth Court

In October 2002, New Bedford Youth Court became the first recognized Youth Court in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Currently there are over 1,050 Youth Courts operating nationally. Youth Courts are based on the principles of restorative justice and act as an alternative to traditional juvenile justice systems. Typical Respondents are first time offenders who have committed misdemeanor crimes and the youth court serves as a sentencing hearing for juvenile respondents. At this hearing respondents acknowledge the harm they have caused and agree to accept a set of sanctions determined by a peer jury. The ultimate goal of the sanctions provided by the peer jury is to help the respondent build necessary skills that will help them reconnect with their community in a more positive way.

The NBYC is overseen by Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction, Inc. (PAACA), a grassroots community based non-profit organization, dedicated to providing quality youth programming and prevention services. Additionally, NBYC is governed by a volunteer Advisory Board composed of 15 community organizations and agencies such as schools,

police, court personnel and other youth program providers. The advisory board assisted in the formation of the mission, governing by-laws and meeting regularly to address NBC's progress and growth. NBYC maintains a diverse funding portfolio that has allowed it to grow and continue to provide quality programming and service. These funders include support from federal, state and local programs such as the Executive Office of Public Safety Byrne's Grant Program, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Department of Education, City of New Bedford Invest in kids and more.

NBYC has successfully been hearing cases since October 2002. We average between 80 to 100 cases per year. Youth offenders range from 12 to 18. Some offenses include: school related acts, disorderly conduct, shoplifting, larceny and simple assault. Sanctions (or punishments) include community service, after school programming, tutoring, mentoring, self help support groups, clinical assessments, apologies, curfews and more.

NBYC has realized a significantly high compliance rate. This success can best be attributed to the following factors. Case managers assigned to each respondent who monitor their

compliance throughout the 120 day sanction period by working with the schools, providing school based visits, weekly communication with families and frequent interaction with the respondent. In addition, Youth Court has developed a wide range of constructive sanctioning that helps young people develop basic life skills, necessary tools and coping mechanisms that have shown to redirect their prior behaviors in a more positive way.

# History of Fall River Youth Court

Fall River Youth Court (FRYC) is a juvenile diversion program that began in 2009 as part of the South Coast Youth Court Initiative. FRYC and NBYC are practically identical programs that are modeled after the principles of restorative justice. Fall River Youth Court has its own set of bi-laws as well as an advisory board that mirrors many of the same types of members as the New Bedford program.

During the end of the second year and beginning of the third year, the South coast initiative underwent a huge financial crisis. Unfortunately, it became impossible to continue running both youth courts to the fullest extent. After a long push for extra funding, and unfortunately not meeting the financial goal, the decision was made to no longer accept new referrals in Fall River. In early 2012 South Coast Youth Courts received a major federal grant that would help Fall River move back into full operation, and we did so at full speed. Between March 2012 and December 2012 with an overwhelming welcoming back in the community, the program processed over 70 cases. Since that time, FRYC has begun its expansion of sanctioned programming

and service learning projects in the community. Fall River Youth Court currently serves Fall River, Somerset, and Swansea.

Fall River Youth Court has had a long Standing Relationship with the City of Fall River as well as the individual Neighborhood Associations, Ark Advocate groups, Salvation Army, CD Recreation, soup kitchens and others through our community service program. Fall River Youth court averse approximately 800-1,000 hours of community service per year to our local neighborhoods.

Throughout the last several years Fall River Youth Court has focused on creating positive relationships with surrounding agencies and programs such as the city of Fall over Fall River Police Department, Fall River Public Schools, Fall River Housing Authority, CD Recreation, local soup kitchens, Gifts to Give, and other agencies.

We continue to expand our efforts to provide meaningful training to local high school and college age students. Over 100 students have undergone several hours of training that allows them to be an attorney within our courtroom. Being a volunteer

Attorney provides hands-on experiences and public speaking abilities, while making a difference in a young person's life.