

How to Become

a Youth Court Volunteer

Youth Court volunteers are rising freshman and high school students who have a desire to learn more about the legal system and contribute to reducing delinquent behavior in their community or having a passion for helping others and want to make a difference. Interested students should fill out a form on www.SOUTHCOASTYOUTH COURTS.ORG/youth_volunteers or contact our office. The majority of volunteers accepted are high school students that have demonstrated commitment, dedication and maturity. Youth Court volunteers must take an oath of confidentiality. All aspects of the Youth Court program are designed to be strictly confidential. Volunteers will be required to complete a training session to learn the roles of prosecution, defense, bailiff, and clerk. Volunteers are eligible for community service hours, internship credit, and possible scholarships.

How to Serve

on a Youth Court Jury

Impartial jurors are charged with the responsibility of determining the sanctions for each respondent's behavior. Youth Court jurors are students ages 12 through high school. Jury participation is voluntary. However, as part of their sanctions, respondents may be required to serve Youth Court jury duty. Jurors will be recruited in area schools, community organizations, and youth groups. Jurors will be selected randomly and will be notified in advance of their service date. Jurors must appear 1/2 an hour before the hearing to be screened for impartiality and briefed on procedures. Schools are encouraged to use the jury experience as a classroom assignment or extra-credit project.

If you are interested in jury duty or want to be a

volunteer, sign-up and register at

[www.southcoastyouthcourts.org/
youth_volunteers](http://www.southcoastyouthcourts.org/youth_volunteers)

South Coast Youth Courts Collaborating Partners

City of New Bedford
City of Fall River
New Bedford Public Schools
Fall River Public Schools
G.N.B. Regional Vocational Technical High School
Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School
New Bedford Police Department
Fall River Police Department
New Bedford Department of Community Services
Fall River Department of Community Development
Bristol County Juvenile Courts
Bristol County District Attorney's Office
Offices of the South Coast State Representatives and Senators
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
OJJDP- Department of Justice
Office of the Attorney General
Greater New Bedford Inter-Church Council
Bristol County Bar Associations
University of Massachusetts Law School
All of our Fall River and New Bedford Community Service Venues
Surrounding Towns, Schools and Police Departments of Fairhaven, Dartmouth,
Acushnet, Westport, Somerset and Swansea.

South Coast Youth Courts have ongoing community collaborations and we thank all of our partners for their time, energy and support.

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Fax: 508-991-6233 Email: Tswanbell77@gmail.com

Fall River Office: 685 Pleasant Street, Fall River, MA 02712
Fax: 508-324-2809 Email: SCYCRomero@gmail.com



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The 1st Youth Court in Massachusetts
Established in 2002 in New Bedford

A Juvenile Diversion Program
Recognized by the American Bar Association and
U.S. Department of Justice

New Bedford- 508-979-1580
Fall River- 508-676-8511 ext 229

Website: www.southcoastyouthcourts.org

What are South Coast Youth Courts?

South Coast Youth Courts serve as a diversion from traditional court while also preventing what could possibly be the first stain on a juvenile's criminal record. South Coast Youth Courts seek to hold the offending youth (referred to as respondents) accountable for misdemeanor crimes and inappropriate behaviors by helping them to accept the harm they have caused and reconnecting them in a more positive way with their community. Youth Courts are nationally recognized juvenile diversion programs endorsed by the Department of Justice through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and have also been one of the fastest growing community courts in the country.

South Coast Youth Courts are true community collaborations comprised of schools, police, courts, youth volunteers and a host of community organizations. In Youth Court, offending youth can not contest the offense, rather, they are provided the opportunity to offer their view regarding the offense.

South Coast Youth Court respondents are offending youth ages 10 to 18, who are primarily first-time offenders. Respondents must be referred by an authorized agency such as school, police or the courts. Sanctions are issued to each offending youth. Sanctions must be performed for successful youth court completion.

The offending youth are sanctioned by their peers. School aged students serve as prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys and other court personnel. Defending and Prosecuting Attorneys offer aggravating and mitigating circumstances in the courtroom. A volunteer adult, usually a lawyer or justice official, acts as the judge and presides over the hearing.

"Youth court provides appropriate consequences coupled with support services that enable students to truly make amends for the harm they have caused, learn from their mistakes and then use the support services to become successful students in our schools and in our City. Youth court is a true community collaboration. By addressing issues of attendance, academics and behaviors, I am convinced that Youth Court has benefited students who might otherwise have dropped out of school."
- Mayor Jon Mitchell, City of New Bedford



Is Youth Court Effective?

The South Coast Youth Courts have an average compliance rate of 92%; that means the majority of offending youth successfully complete their Youth Court experience. Additionally, the recidivism rate for one and three-year post youth court is very low. We count CWO's in our recidivism rates so our youth are truly being diverted. Post one year recidivism is under 15% and post three-year recidivism is less than 30%. This means the majority of young people remain uninvolved with the police or the criminal justice system after completing youth court.

What is the Youth Court Intake Process?

A referring agency (Police, Court, School) may decide that you are a candidate to participate in the South Coast Youth Court. The referring agency will give you a consent to participate form. A parent or guardian must be with you and is required to sign the consent form. The consent form authorizes the release of the incident report and supporting documents to the South Coast Youth Court staff. Youth Court staff will contact you for an intake appointment that will determine your eligibility. You must be accompanied by your parent/legal guardian at the intake and agree to the rules and regulations of Youth Court as well as complete a general information form. Youth Court staff may determine that you are ineligible to participate and in that case they will refer your case back to the referring agency for further action.

How do the hearings work?

Once your intake is complete, and you are deemed eligible, you will receive a hearing date and time for your Youth Court appearance usually within 2-4 weeks of your intake. You must appear at your hearing on time with your parent and speak with your peer defense team. They will review the facts of the incident with you and assist you on proper courtroom procedures. You will have an opportunity to review the jury list as well as the prosecution team names to ensure an impartial proceeding. You will be required to testify on your own behalf. Victims or witnesses may choose to offer verbal or written statements regarding the incident.

After hearing your case, the peer jury will deliberate and present tailored sanctions. These sanctions will include community service, and may include clinical assessment, apologies, essays, jury duty and participation in programs such as tutoring, support groups, and/or mentoring.

You will be assigned a case manager who will monitor your compliance throughout the 120-day sanction period. To prevent further punitive consequences you are required to complete all of the imposed sanctions. If you fail to complete the sanctions, your case will be referred back to the referring agency for further action.

What are the benefits of going to SCYC?

- I will be engaged in positive programming.
- I will be connecting with adult mentors.
- I will be able to see the process from the other side.
- It will reconnect me back to the community by developing better relationships.
- People are holding me accountable to make better choices and decisions.

"I am grateful that I was given the opportunity to not have a criminal record for making a mistake in middle school. I can now see how that would have affected my future. I couldn't see it then." --- Joey