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## *What is Teen Court?*

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Teen Court is a "peer court" for first time misdemeanor and traffic offenders. The program is conducted by volunteer teens who are trained in courtroom protocol, judicial process and the responsibilities of the various court personnel. The teen volunteers, along with a judge and adult volunteer coaches, conduct court hearings for various misdemeanor criminal cases each week. Offenses include charges such as petit theft, affray, battery, criminal mischief, trespassing; and traffic infractions such as careless driving. Defendants receive a sentence from a jury of their peers, that must be completed within a certain time period. Those who successfully complete the program have their cases dismissed.

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## *Why Have a Teen Court?*

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Teen Court is an opportunity for teens to avoid the formal court system while also being held accountable for their actions. Defendants are taught about the consequences of illegal behavior, the judicial process and the legal system. They learn how their peers feel about crime and what they believe to be fair and appropriate consequences. At future hearings, defendants have the opportunity to experience the other side of the process by participating as jurors and deciding the sentences of others. All defendants are encouraged to become regular Teen Court volunteers.

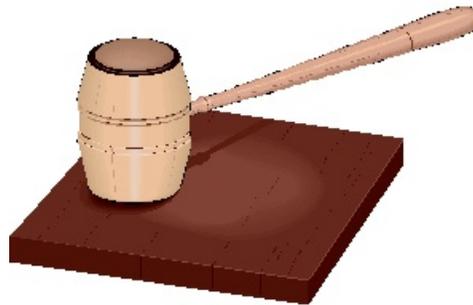
Teen volunteers have a unique opportunity to experience the inner workings of the courtroom. With guidance from adult professionals and other volunteers, they become aware of the complex issues surrounding behavior, laws, and the community. In addition, the Teen Court process provides an excellent training ground for the development of analytical and verbal skills. Defendants must be first time offenders charged with a misdemeanor offense, traffic citation, or school infraction that could result in a misdemeanor charge.

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## *Who is Eligible for Teen Court?*

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The child must be between the ages of 12 and 18 and their charge occurred in Escambia County, Florida. Defendants must admit guilt, voluntarily agree to cooperate with the program, and waive their right to a speedy trial. Referrals to Teen Court are accepted from schools, state attorneys, local law enforcement agencies and judges.



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## *How Does it Work?*

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The defendant agrees to participate and signs the agreement and waiver of speedy trial.

- Teen Court schedules the defendant for the next available hearing and sends him/her a notice to appear in court.

- The defendant meets with his/her teen attorney prior to the hearing to discuss the case and provide pertinent information for his/her defense.

- The defendant and parent attend the hearing in which the child will testify (along with any other witnesses) and be sentenced by the peer jury.

- An intake meeting is held with the child and parent to go over requirements and deadlines for completion; one requirement being participation as a juror at future Teen Court hearings.

- The defendant is given a deadline in which to complete the sentence and submit verification to the coordinator. If the defendant fails to complete the program or has a new law violation, his/her case will be returned to the referral source for probable formal prosecution.

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## *What Type of Sentences are Given?*

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Jury members are given sentencing guidelines which include minimum and maximum sentence requirements. Sanctions may include:

- community service work hours
- community service projects
- apology letters to victims
- research projects/essays
- restitution
- educational classes
- jail tours
- court observations
- civic activities
- curfew

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## *What are the Results?*

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Although Teen Courts have not been researched extensively, recidivism studies indicate that participants are much less likely to have repeat offenses than teens in the traditional court system. Escambia County Teen Court is one of many successful programs throughout the State of Florida. Each year hundreds of youth in our community are served by this unique program *for teen - by teens*.

## TEEN VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Teens between the ages of 13 and 18 are needed to volunteer with the program. Each teen must attend orientation and training, and agree to participate for a full school year. Volunteers are asked to attend Teen Court hearings weekly or bi-weekly, as needed. Please contact the Teen Court office for further information and/or an application.

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## ADULT VOLUNTEERS

Attorneys, professionals, parents, citizens and other adult volunteers are needed to coach the teens, assist with management, develop additional resources for the youth, etc. If you are interested in volunteering with Teen Court, please contact the Teen Court office for further information and assistance.

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## WHERE & WHEN

Teen Court hearings are scheduled on a weekly basis; one or two evenings each week between the hours of 4:30 and 8:30 p.m. The hearings are held in a courtroom at the Theodore Bruno Juvenile Justice Center, 1800 St. Mary Avenue, Pensacola, Florida.

### Appropriate Courtroom Attire Required

1. No bare feet, flip-flops, shower shoes or house slippers.
2. No halter tops, sheer blouses, half shirts, tank tops or muscle shirts.
3. No clothing with inappropriate sayings, logos or pictures
4. No beachwear or shorts of any kind.
5. No hats, caps, hair curlers or head covering of any kind.
6. No costumes or articles of clothing that could be considered night club attire.
7. No sunglasses

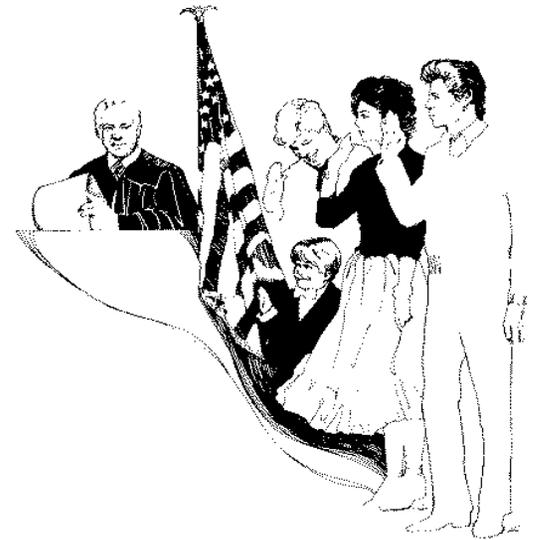
*"The Circuit Court in and for Escambia County  
Florida is now in session."*



*"Do you promise to tell the whole truth and nothing  
but the truth so help you God?"*



# ESCAMBIA COUNTY TEEN COURT



*ADMINISTERED BY  
Court Administration  
First Judicial Circuit of Florida  
Family Court & Juvenile Services*

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