

## WHY DO WE NEED A TEEN COURT?

Teen Court is designed to provide a community based alternative to the formal court process. It represents a more positive alternative to the juvenile justice system, and focuses on youth development and accountability.

Young offenders learn to take responsibility for their actions. The program represents a way for juveniles to actively participate in an informal court process and learn from their mistakes.

Juvenile cases addressed by this court are handled on a timely basis and free up time and funds for the Circuit Court system to handle more serious offenses.



## West Virginia Teen Court Associate Membership

WVTC A Associate Membership is open to any person or organization engaged in an allied field, volunteer of a Teen Court program, or Teen Court operating outside of the State of West Virginia. Associate membership is FREE of charge.

### Benefits of Membership:

- Networking with other Teen Court staff members
- Receiving continuing training
- Web site space on the TCA web page
- Support and education
- Educating legislators regarding Teen Court legislation
- Professionalism and Credibility

For more information visit: [WVTeenCourt.org](http://WVTeenCourt.org)



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## WEST VIRGINIA Teen Court ASSOCIATION

Working Together for Youth in West Virginia



*Giving First Time Offenders  
a Second Chance*

[WVTeenCourt.org](http://WVTeenCourt.org)



Teen Court is a unique “second chance” justice program for youth between the ages of 11 and 18 who are alleged to have committed a status offense or an act of delinquency which would be a misdemeanor if committed by an adult. Upon successful completion of the program charges against the defendant are dismissed.

In addition to the obvious benefit of interrupting a developing pattern of inappropriate behavior, the Teen Court program helps to reinforce self-esteem, provide motivation for self-improvement and promote a healthy attitude toward authority.

Teen Court addresses responsibility for one’s behavior and accountability to one’s community and peers, and enhances respect for the judicial process. Each participant in Teen Court, whether a defendant, juror, bailiff, teen attorney, or adult volunteer; is involved in a positive and meaningful way.

## How Does Teen Court Work

Cases are referred, for offenses that occur primarily within the school and local community, by the circuit court if the court finds the youth a suitable candidate for the program.

Youth who are accepted into the program and appear before a teen jury. They are represented by a teen “defense attorney.” The prosecutor is also a teen “attorney” and both attorneys are assisted by adult attorney mentors. Each teen attorney makes an opening statement, the defendant testifies and is cross-examined. Evidence is considered. An adult judge presides and the teen jury deliberates and reaches a verdict and determines the sentence which includes mandatory community service and jury duty in future Teen Courts. Upon completion of the Teen Court sentence the Municipal Court charges against the juvenile are dismissed.



### Eligible Offenses for Teen Court Include:

- Minor traffic violations
- Misdemeanors such as public intoxication, shoplifting, criminal damage to property under \$300, vandalism, disorderly conduct
- Minors in possession of alcohol or simple possession of marijuana
- Simple assaults
- Others as identified

*Teen Court sentences are designed to fit the offense and involve restitution, community service, and prevention education.*

*The defendant may accept the sentence assessed by the teen jury, or reject the sentence and elect to go before the Circuit Court.*

## How Are the Teen Jurors, Bailiffs, and Attorneys Selected?

Volunteer students from grades seven through twelve from local county schools are selected to serve on Teen Courts. School administrators and teachers may also nominate teens for participation in Teen Court. Teens may also nominate themselves. Parents/guardians must consent to the teens’ participation. Mandatory training sessions are held each semester for all interested teens. Teens appointed as attorneys are assigned an adult attorney mentor to assist them in trial preparation. Previously sentenced teens are added to the peer jury pool.



### A Typical Sentence Could Be Any of the Following:

- Teen Court Basic Training
- Apology (written, oral, or both)
- Community Services
- Research Paper
- Prevention or education program
- Restitution
- Other