

## Kitsap County Youth Court Goal

Our goal is to reduce recidivism among youths in Kitsap County, increase youth's awareness of the laws and consequences for criminal activities and teach students the many facets of law and justice career opportunities.



## Significance of Youth Courts

Youth court programs strive to nurture in youth a respect for the rule of law, help develop positive citizenship attitudes, encourage civic engagement, and promote educational success through a diversity of service learning opportunities, strategies and activities. Youth courts are structured to provide positive alternative sanctions for youth by providing a peer-driven sentencing mechanism that allows young people to take responsibility, to be held accountable, and to make restitution.

Positive peer pressure is used in youth courts to exert influence over adolescent behavior. In addition to imposing constructive sanctions for juveniles, youth courts also offer a powerful set of civic opportunities for youth in the community—volunteers.

Youth courts alternative sentencing results in reduced cost per case as compared to the traditional justice system, and result in reduced recidivism rates.

Any further questions  
concerning Youth Court may be  
directed to:

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For general information on youth courts,  
please visit the following websites:

**National Association of Youth Courts at:**  
[www.youthcourt.net](http://www.youthcourt.net), or

**Washington State Association of  
Youth Courts at:**  
<http://wsayc.blogspot.com/>



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<http://www.kitsapgov.com/juv/>

# YOUTH COURT

Diversion Program



**SUPERIOR COURT OF KITSAP COUNTY**

Juvenile and Family Court Services

## Welcome to Youth Court!

Youth Court is a Diversion program where juveniles are prosecuted, defended and sentenced by their peers. The program offers unique opportunities to all participants to both learn about the consequences of criminal behavior and to make positive contributions to our community.

Youth court provides a meaningful court experience for juvenile diversion youth charged with misdemeanors. It also provides the youth of our community alike, the ability to participate in a community service project that directly affects their peers.

The intent of Youth Court is to give teens the opportunity to weigh the effects of criminal behavior in the community and to have a voice in determining the community's response to that behavior. All Youth Court participants deal with issues of the rights and responsibilities of individuals, decision-making in a diverse society and the role of citizens in our system of justice.

Youth Court is founded upon conviction that teens are capable of thoughtfully and responsibly representing community interests, defending and imposing a fair and just sentence upon their peers. Youth Court is a process by which peer pressure can exert a positive influence on

teen behavior and thereby produce a meaningful and substantial effect upon the defender.

Youth Court offenses concern misdemeanors and do not include weapons or sexual assaults. The juvenile must first admit to the offense, as in traditional diversion, but then goes before a jury of students who determine a just and appropriate sentence after a trial.

The jury is composed of student volunteers who have gone through training as to the Youth Court process and may include previous youth who have successfully completed their sentences. Students are also trained to serve as advocates in the case both to prosecute and to defend the juvenile and to present the case to the jury. Other students serve as judge, clerk, and bailiff, and in other capacities as needed.

Sitting judges, commissioners or volunteer attorneys from the community serve as mentors for the student advocates. Teachers in community schools coordinate the student volunteers through the Kitsap County Juvenile Court (KCJC).

## Volunteering for Youth Court

Students wishing to volunteer to serve in Youth Court may do so through the designated contact person at their school or may contact KCJC probation staff directly.

Parents, victims and others with direct knowledge of the offense and/or the youth may also participate in the process by providing information to the Youth Court advocates.

As a volunteer, you have the option to be a judge, prosecution advocate, defense advocate, bailiff, court clerk, or jury member.

You could also earn community service credits through your school; be a part of our community while gaining experience in the juvenile justice system; meet other students in your community with similar interests; and demonstrate your leadership skills and capabilities.

Youth Court is open to parents and the public. We highly encourage members of the community to attend and observe Youth Court.