ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
POLK COUNTY TEEN COURT

"Where Professionalism is a Priority"

P.O. Box 9000 • Drawer J-111
Bartow, Florida 33831-9000

Stephen S. Willis	Olivia Reynolds	Susan Strickland	Lindsey Escobar	Rebel Worth
Manager	Administrative Assistant	Coordinator	Coordinator	Coordinator
863-534-4344	863-534-4656	863-534-4634	863-534-4176	863-534-4938
swillis@jud10.flcourts.org	oreynolds@jud10.flcourts.org	sstrickland@jud10.flcourts.org	lescobar@jud10.flcourts.org	rworth@jud10.flcourts.org

Application Instructions

This packet contains general information about Polk County Teen Court. Also enclosed are the forms needed to become a member of Teen Court. Prospective volunteers and their parents should thoroughly read the enclosed information to become familiar with Teen Court guidelines as well as what is required of them. Those wishing to become members will then need to fill out and sign the three enclosed forms. The first form, the Oath of Confidentiality needs to be signed by the prospective volunteer only. The second, the Release Agreement, requires both the volunteer and a parent's signature and must also be notarized. The third form is a basic questionnaire that should be filled out to the best of the prospective volunteer's knowledge. All replies must be complete and accurate. The application forms can be handed in when attending a Teen Court session or they can be mailed or emailed to the following address:

Polk County Teen Court
Post Office Box 9000
Drawer J-111
Bartow, FL 33831-9000
teencourt@jud10.flcourts.org

Prospective volunteers and parents are invited to attend and observe any currently scheduled Teen Court session. Observation is required prior to becoming an active volunteer in the program. Any questions can be answered when observing Court. Those wishing to observe should report no later than 5:30 p.m. Teen Court holds sessions in Bartow, at the main Polk County courthouse located at 255 North Broadway Avenue, Bartow Florida 33830 on the red side, 8th floor.

What is Teen Court?

Teen Court is a juvenile prevention program for offenders who have committed a misdemeanor or minor felony offense. Juvenile defendants (through age 17yrs) who admit guilt and some degree of responsibility in the offense, are eligible for the program. Defendants in Teen Court have agreed to have their case heard before the Teen Court jury and to accept and complete that jury's verdict. If the defendant does not wish to accept the verdict, or fails to complete it in a timely manner, then the case is rejected and sent to the traditional juvenile court system for prosecution.

Why Have a Teen Court?

Teen Court is based on the philosophy that juveniles judged by a true jury of their peers are less likely to continue their unlawful behavior. With the help of teen jurors and attorneys, defendants in Teen Court achieve a true understanding of the consequences of breaking the law and are held completely accountable for their actions. Additionally, Teen Court provides a valuable learning opportunity for teenagers in Polk County. The students who serve as volunteer attorneys, clerk, bailiffs, and jurors are given a unique insight into the legal system and the inner workings of a courtroom.

Who Can Volunteer?

Any student currently enrolled in grades nine through twelve, including those students who are home-schooled, can volunteer in Teen Court. All Teen Court volunteers are expected to maintain satisfactory grades and have a clean academic record. Program volunteers must also be willing to attend Teen Court as often as they are able, and all volunteers are required to sign and abide by the Teen Court Oath of Confidentiality and Release Agreement.

What are the Advantages of Volunteering?

Teen Court volunteers receive training from various members of our criminal justice system. Members of the State Attorney's and Public Defender's offices, private attorneys, and circuit and county judges are all actively involved in the volunteer training. These individuals provide our volunteers with instruction in courtroom procedure, how to question a witness, how to construct an argument before the court, grounds for objections, legal terms, and how to evaluate a case's aggravating and mitigating circumstances. So, service in Teen Court provides the volunteers with an understanding of our legal system and helps to expose them to possible careers in law or criminal justice. As volunteers, students will learn to both present and evaluate cases before the court, enhancing their confidence, public speaking skills, and developing active listening skills.

By attending Teen Court volunteers also receive community service hours. All volunteers sign in with Teen Court staff at the beginning of each session. Hours are updated weekly and maintained on a database. Volunteers may request copies of their hours at any time-they can be sent to the student's home address, school, or be picked up by the student at a court session. While the number of sessions scheduled each year will vary, as will the duration of each session, volunteers who attend consistently can earn as many as fifty hours of service each calendar year. Teen Court sessions are held year-round, so a volunteer can even earn hours during the summer.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEEN COURT VOLUNTEERS

I. Preamble

Teen Court membership is a privilege, not a right. That privilege can be lost if you fail to act in a responsible manner and within the confines of the law. As a teen court member, you are always expected to serve as a role model for your peers. You therefore must maintain high standards of conduct and encourage other members to do the same. You should be temperate and dignified and refrain from all illegal and morally reprehensible conduct. Because of your position, even minor violations of law may tend to lessen public confidence in the entire teen court program. Since teen court is designed to promote law-abiding behavior, your behavior must be consistent with that purpose.

Listed below are several Rules of Conduct, which you must follow. If you fail to conduct yourself in conformity with these rules, you shall be deemed guilty of misconduct, which will be subject to disciplinary action which can include removal from the teen court program.

II Rules of Conduct

As a member of teen court, you must abide by the following rules:

1. You must not engage in illegal conduct.

2. You must not engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

3. You must reveal any false statements, testimony or other evidence used, or any other fraud perpetrated, in any teen court proceeding.

4. You must maintain confidentiality of the teen court proceedings.

5. You must not violate the rules and regulations adopted by your school district.

6. You must participate free of bias or prejudice toward any other person's age, race, sex, religion, national origin, or disability.

7. You must appear promptly and be prepared for all teen court training sessions and court appearances, unless excused.

8. You must perform your role as effectively and competently as possible.

9. You must not engage in undignified or discourteous conduct during Teen Court sessions.

10. You must not ask any questions that are intended to harass or degrade a witness.

11. You must not let any outside influence, such as other members, parents, fellow students or your own self-interest, affect your actions and decisions in how to proceed.

12. As a defense attorney, unless an offender permits, you must not reveal the confidence or secret of an offender or use such confidence or secret to the disadvantage of an offender.

13. You must treat with courtesy and consideration all people involved in Teen Court proceedings.

14. You must not knowingly fail to disclose or exchange evidence which you are required by the teen court training to reveal to your opponent.

15. A prosecutor must not communicate with the offender in the case. (Except, of course, during cross-examination.)

16. A teen court member serving as a prosecutor or defender, other than during the performance of your role during a court proceeding, must not communicate with a juror about the case under consideration.

17. You must abide by all your obligations and responsibilities as specified in the teen court training.

18. A teen court member must dress appropriately when participating in a teen court proceeding.

19. You must notify the teen court director immediately if you are arrested, convicted of a crime or suspended from school.

20. You must report to a teen court staff member conduct of other members you believe to be in violation of these Rules of Conduct.

21. You must cooperate with Teen Court staff in any investigation involving a violation of these Rules of Conduct.

DRESS CODE

To maintain a professional and respectful environment, all Teen Court volunteers are expected to follow the established dress code when appearing for service.
Volunteers who are not in compliance with the dress code will not be permitted to serve that evening and will not receive community service credit for that session. It is each volunteer's responsibility to ensure they meet these expectations prior to arrival.
The purpose of the dress code is to ensure that all volunteers present themselves as positive, professional role models to both defendants and their families.
The following items are not permitted:

- Shorts
- Tank tops or tube tops
- Hats or headgear of any kind
- Torn or distressed clothing
- Skirts shorter than mid-thigh length
- Sleeveless shirts
- Shirts that do not extend below the waistline
- Clothing or jewelry displaying offensive, distracting, or inappropriate language or imagery (including drugs, weapons, or gang-related content)
- Bare midriffs
- Sagging jeans or pants

We appreciate your cooperation in upholding these standards and contributing to a respectful and professional Teen Court environment

Polk County Teen Court Prospective Volunteer Questionnaire

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION AND SUBMIT ONLY THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS

Name: _____ DOB: _____

What are your parent/guardian(s) names?

_____

What is your current mailing address:

_____

_____

Phone #: _____ Email Address: _____
Parent Email Address: _____ Current GPA: _____
Current School: _____ Grade: _____
Anticipated Graduation Date: _____

Are you now, or have you ever been, enrolled in Honors-level, AP, or IB courses?
Yes No

Have you ever received a Saturday Work Detail, In School Suspension, Out of School Suspension, or been sent to an alternative education institute?
Yes No

If yes, please explain the punishment, the reason it was given, and the grade level in which you received it.

_____

_____

_____

Have you ever been, in any way, involved in any criminal offense, or violation of any law or ordinance, regardless of its outcome or disposition?
Yes No

If yes, please give a description of the charge(s) and its disposition.

_____

_____

_____

Have you ever worked in or had any experience with the Criminal Justice system?

Yes No

If yes, describe the nature of your experience.

_____

_____

_____

Why do you want to participate in the Teen Court program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

To the best of your knowledge, is the above information correct and up to date?

Yes No

_____ _____

Prospective Volunteer's Signature Teen Court Staff

_____ _____

Date Date

TEEN COURT VOLUNTEER'S AGREEMENT

I affirm, as do my parents/guardians, by affixation of signature below before a Notary Public, that we understand and agree to the following conditions and responsibilities which are associated with my participation in Teen Court:

1. Members must be compatible with Teen Court's purpose of promoting goodwill and maintaining a crime free lifestyle and serve as a role model to youthful offenders.
2. Members must be neat in appearance and adhere to the dress code of the Court. Refer to Dress Code.
3. Members will give special attention to their own community responsibilities while serving as a member of Teen Court and shall agree to hold each offender accountable and responsible for their actions.
4. Members must comply with the Oath of Confidentiality
5. I solemnly swear or affirm that I will not disclose, either by words or signs, any information that comes to my attention, in the course of a Teen Court session, and that I will keep confidential all said proceedings which may be held in my presence, so help me God.
6. Members of Teen Court are accepted through application and the right to participate in Teen Court may be revoked by the Judge, Director, Coordinator, or Assistant Coordinator for any violation of the philosophy or rules of the Teen Court Program.
7. Volunteers must submit to random drug/alcohol testing at request of Teen Court.

IT IS THEREFORE AGREED that the undersigned do hereby compromise and forever release, acquit, discharge, indemnify and covenant to hold harmless the Teen Court Program, its employees and officials, the City and County in which Teen Court is operational from any and all causes of action, claims, liability, demands, damages, costs, loss of service, medical expenses and compensation, on account of or in any manner growing out of any and all known and unknown personal injury, property damage, or any other type of damage, which the undersigned may hereinafter have, individually and /or as the parent/guardian or custodian of the minor child, which may result from participation in the Teen Court Program.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian (Signature) Teen Court Volunteer (Signature)

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian (Print Name) Teen Court Volunteer (Print Name)