

The Jury



Holland Teen Court works with two local schools to train and implement peer juries. Holland High School and Holland Christian High School have active teachers who are committed to working with a group of students from their school in order to train them for the role of peer jurors. The training is ongoing, including basic legal knowledge, mock trials and rotating participation as jurors in the monthly sessions.

Peer jurors play a vital role in the Teen Court process. The peer jury does not determine innocence or guilt, but the appropriate sentence that the defendant must complete and a due date. As a juror, the student is required to demonstrate respect for the process and the court by following proper protocol. Dress, behavior and language must be presented in a professional manner.

Throughout the year, each peer jury group will learn, train and practice the procedures utilized in Teen Court. The participating teacher from each school is responsible for ensuring thorough understanding and mastering of the critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, and procedures necessary for Teen Court.

The peer jury, in addition to being a juror, fulfills three specific job responsibilities. These individuals are selected prior to the hearing, with ample time to practice.

1. Court Clerk: Responsible for pronouncing the hearing and the presiding Judge. The Court Clerk is also responsible for procedural pronouncements "all rise," at the specified time.
2. Bailiff: The bailiff escorts the jury in and out of the courtroom. The bailiff also escorts the defendant and the parents into the courtroom.
3. Foreperson: Responsible for maintaining order among the jurors, assisting the jury in reaching a unanimous decision, polling the jurors and announcing the verdict to the parties.

The function of jury questioning is crucial. Jurors are taught to ask questions in order to obtain information that will assist them in making a fair judgment. Sample questions are a part of the jury training, and cover a variety of spectrums including: The Incident, Family, Social, School, Parents and Feelings. Peer jurors are trained to be determinant about their questioning. If the wrong questions or not enough questions are asked, the process will not work. In addition to questioning the defendant, the jurors also have the opportunity to question the parent(s) to obtain ample information.

During deliberation, jurors are instructed to use only information that they obtained during the hearing. The sentencing must be in proportion to the offense. Relative seriousness of the offense, attitude and overall behavior of the minor should be the primary concern. The jurors utilize a standard sentencing guideline in determining which elements they will select (see Sentences). The peer jury returns to the courtroom to present the sentence to the defendant and parent, with final approval of the presiding judge. Back in the classroom, most participating teachers

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conduct a re-cap analysis of the hearings with the peer juries.

Holland Teen Court currently works with two area high schools for peer jury training. Jury members are selected either on a teacher's recommendation, or on a volunteer basis. The jury member must work with the school's Teen Court teacher to participate in the initial and ongoing training. The most successful jury members are those who have an interest in the legal system or who have an interest in helping fellow peers.

The process of Teen Court is one that demands utter respect and a professional and mature attitude. Jurors are required to follow the court rules and act in a serious manner.

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