

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What exactly is Teen Court?*

Teen Court is a diversion program that strives to help juvenile offenders take responsibility for their actions, increase awareness of the law and promote community involvement by providing volunteer opportunities to both youth and adults.

2. *How long has Teen Court of Tallahassee been around?*

Leon County's Teen Court program was established in 1992 but the first hearing was not held until the Spring of 1993. The first Teen Court in Florida was held in Sarasota in 1988.

3. *What do the volunteers get from coming to Teen Court?*

Volunteers gain community service hours, and insight into how the law works and how it applies to everyone, no matter their age.

4. *What do the defendants get from coming to Teen Court?*

Most of our defendants are really good kids that may have made a bad choice. Teen Court gives them a second chance to have a clean record.

5. *What is the most rewarding outcome of your job in Teen Court?*

The most rewarding thing is seeing our defendants complete the program successfully. Statistics show that defendants that complete the Teen Court program are less likely to re-offend than those put through the traditional courts. As far as success stories for jurors, Teen Court can help a volunteer in the future. It might spark an interest in the court system and law related fields such as law enforcement.

6. *What happens if a defendant does not complete the sanctions given by the jury?*

If a defendant chooses not to complete the sanctions, then he or she fails the Teen Court program and the case is returned to the State Attorney's office. Usually they will have to proceed through the regular juvenile court and they will lose the opportunity to have their criminal record expunged.

7. *What would you say to someone who is interested in volunteering in teen court?*

Our volunteers not only are obtaining service learning credit, but they are also learning about the legal system, gaining experience with public speaking and negotiating, they are able to network with a lot of top members of the community (Our attorneys, judges and bailiffs that preside over our hearings), and Teen Court is a wonderful asset to any scholarship, college, or job application!

8. *What are the "Officer" positions?*

Officers are the volunteers that service as teen attorneys, clerks and bailiffs. These roles are primarily for High School Volunteers. Sometimes we will have middle school bailiffs.

9. *How long do volunteers have to train to become an officer?*

To become a teen attorney you must be in high school and have served on a jury at least 3 times. Then you will "shadow" the current attorneys until you are comfortable with the job and then we will ease you into the role by giving you one job at a time (opening statements for a few days, then questioning, closing, etc.) The time is deferent for everyone depending on their comfort level, maturity, and speaking skills.

10. *How can you help others through Teen Court?*

Volunteering is important because it is a way to give back to the community. In Teen Court, you are not only giving back by helping juvenile offenders put their bad choices behind them and have a fresh start, but you are also learning a lot about the legal system at the same time!