



YOUTH SERVICES OF SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Youth Peer Court (YPC) is an alternative to the traditional municipal court system. The program offers eligible youth an opportunity to receive a meaningful sanction from a jury of their peers. Practices used in YPC are based on the Restorative Justice philosophy.

YPC is for youthful offenders between the ages of 12 and 16, who have pled guilty or no contest to ordinance violations such as theft, damage to property or disorderly conduct. 8th to 12th grade students serve as volunteer jurors, and adult community members sit on an advisory board for each court.

Cases are referred to YPC by the Municipal Court Judge in each jurisdiction served. YPC is a voluntary program and the defendant must enter a guilty or no contest plea prior to participation. Following the youth's appearance at YPC, offenders have 90 days to complete their sentence. If the sentence is completed to the satisfaction of

the court, the juvenile does not have to pay a fine and they will not have a municipal court conviction record. In 2007, the program served Sun Prairie, Cottage Grove, Middleton, DeForest/Windsor, and the Allied-Dunns Marsh neighborhood in Madison. Youth Peer Court operations will begin in the Village of Oregon in February of 2008.

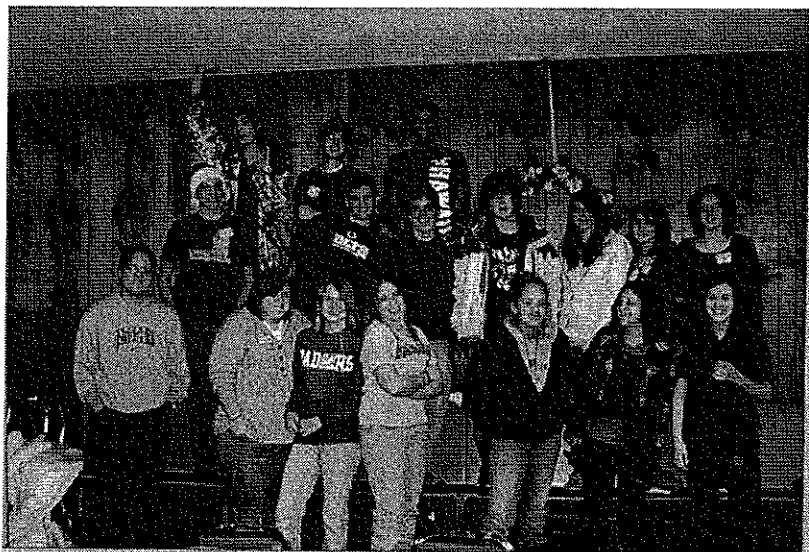
VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers (center photo) are critical to the success of this program. YPC requests a one-year commitment from all volunteers. Recruited from

the middle and high schools of the participating communities, youth volunteers receive 6-8 hours of jury member training. Topics discussed during training include Restorative Justice, cultural issues, listening skills, building consensus, confidentiality, and sentencing options.

Volunteers also

participate in mock trials. Training is provided by YSOSW staff and other professionals from the community.



PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Each Youth Peer Court program is tailored to meet the needs of the community in which it operates. Steering committees made up of representatives from each community meet regularly with the YPC Coordinator. The purpose of the committee is to review program and community needs, evaluate outcomes and provide guidance for program activities.

Each case referred is screened by the YPC Coordinator and scheduled for the next available court date. Each case takes 20-30 minutes to hear and process. All terms of the sentence are explained in an agreement signed before the

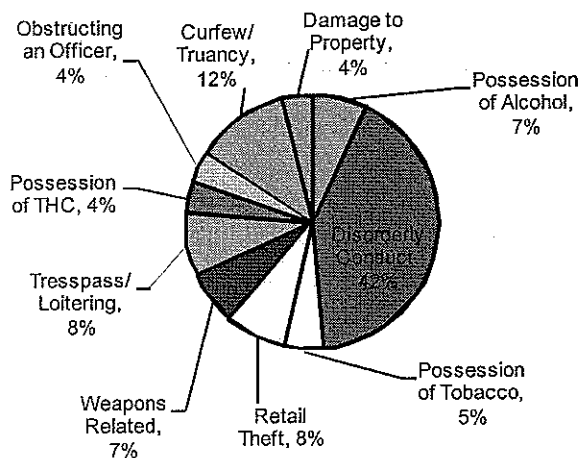
Youth Peer Court Program 2007 Funders

City of Madison
City of Middleton
City of Sun Prairie
Village of Cottage Grove
Village of DeForest
United Way of Dane County
Evjue Foundation
American Family Insurance

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defendant leaves court. Criteria used by the jury in determining a sentence include: the abilities of the defendant, the needs and rights of the victim, and whether or not the sentence promotes positive youth development. The defendant then has 90 days to complete the sentence with progress toward completion monitored by the Youth Peer Court Coordinator. In the event that a defendant does not complete the sentence, he/she is referred back to the Municipal Court Judge for disposition in the traditional municipal court system. Program history indicates that more than 80% of defendants successfully complete their YPC sentence.



SENTENCING RESULTS

Youth Peer Court volunteers are provided with guidelines for sentencing by the Municipal Court Judge and the Program Coordinator. However, they are also encouraged to be creative and to individualize each sentence. During 2007, there were 329 different sentence activities imposed. These sentences included 420 hours of community service, 61 apology letters, 12 AODA evaluations, and 96 essays written about a variety of topics related to the offenses. The program also collected \$100 in restitution for a victim.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Each juvenile is given an anonymous evaluation to submit after completion of their sentence. 100% of the participants returning the survey stated that

they were satisfied with their Youth Peer Court experience in 2007. Following their 90 days of peer court supervision, none of the participants who responded had re-offended, and all stated that they felt their Youth Peer Court experience helped them become more responsible community members.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

Case Statistics

Defendants Referred:	171
Cases carried over from 2006	20
Number of cases open at end of year:	41
Successfully completed cases:	98
Unsuccessful cases:	22
Success rate:	81%

Average age of Offenders:	15.1
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Volunteers

New Volunteers Trained:	25
Total Youth Volunteers:	59
Total Adult Volunteers:	35

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Race of Offenders

Caucasian	57%
African American:	37%
Asian:	1%
Hispanic/Latino:	3%
Bi-racial	2%

Sex of Offender

Female:	42%
Male:	58%

**Contact the
Youth Peer Court Program**

Sheri Gatts
Program Coordinator
tel: 608.245.2550 x 213
fax: 608.245.2551
sherigatts@youthsos.org
www.youthsos.org

Youth Peer Court 2007 Year End Report

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin, Incorporated

Youth Peer Court

Program Overview

Youth Peer Court (YPC) is an alternative to the traditional municipal court system. Designed for first time youthful offenders, Youth Peer Courts provide eligible youth ages 12 -16 with an opportunity to receive a meaningful sanction from a jury of their peers and have their municipal court record expunged. The YPC's operated by Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin (YSOSW) use the principles and practices of Balanced and Restorative Justice.

Each jurisdiction in which a YPC operates has a steering committee which includes the Municipal Court Judge and adult volunteers from the community. Steering committees determine the offenses eligible for Youth Peer Court disposition, the YPC model to be used in their community, and general operating guidelines for their YPC. Each Youth Peer Court also has a group of youth volunteers, ages 14-18, who serve as jurors for the court. All YPC jurors receive 6-8 hours of training prior to participating in their first YPC session.

Youth Peer Court is a voluntary program and each youthful offender wishing to participate in the program must first enter a guilty or no contest plea with the municipal court having jurisdiction over their case. Once this plea has been entered, the Municipal Court Judge may refer the case to Youth Peer Court. Common offenses referred for YPC disposition include curfew and truancy violations; retail theft; trespassing; and disorderly conduct.

Cases referred for YPC disposition are screened by the YPC Coordinator and scheduled for the next available court date. Each case using the Youth Juror Model takes 20-30 minutes to process while cases using the Circle Conference Model take 50-60 minutes each to process. Each youthful offender participating in YPC has the opportunity to explain the circumstances of their case to a jury of their peers. Once the facts of the case have been heard, the jury deliberates and then provides the offender with their sentence. All terms of the sentence are explained to defendants and each youth signs an agreement that outlines the conditions of their sentence. Sentences are determined based upon several criteria including the abilities of the defendant; the needs and rights of the victim(s); and the restorative justice and youth development value inherent in the sentence.

Once a sentence has been determined, offenders have ninety (90) days to satisfactorily complete the sentence. Those youth who successfully complete their YPC sentence will have the charges expunged from their record. Those youth who fail to complete their YPC sentence are referred back to the municipal court for disposition of their case in the traditional manner. Program history indicates that more than 80% of YPC defendants successfully complete their sentences.

Research conducted by the Urban Institute found that Youth Peer Court participants have a 20 – 40% lower recidivism rate than youth participating in the traditional municipal court process.

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin currently operates Youth Peer Court programs in the following municipalities:

- City of Madison – Allied Drive neighborhood
- Cottage Grove
- DeForest
- Middleton
- Oregon
- Sun Prairie

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Casey Behrend, CEO
608-245-2550 Ext. 212
casey.behrend@youthsos.org