



Teen Court Juror Packet

City of Santa Clarita Teen Court Program

Developed by L.A. County Court and Sheriff's Department in 1995, Teen Court addresses misdemeanor crimes committed by juvenile offenders.

Juvenile offenders are questioned and sentenced by a jury of their peers from local high schools. Offenders are sentenced to community service and restitution, if warranted.

Who is eligible for the Teen Court program?

Minors who commit minor offenses are screened for suitability and must meet certain criteria to be eligible.

The offender must be:

- Between the ages of 13-17 years.
- Have no prior criminal convictions.
- Reside within the Santa Clarita Valley.
- Have no known affiliations with a gang.

The offense cannot be of an extremely violent nature. The safety of anyone associated with the Teen Court program is the top priority.

What are the benefits of the program?

The Teen Court Program offers convicted juvenile offenders the incentive of having no incarceration or formal probation, and there is no conviction on their record if the sentence is completed within a six-month period.

How Does the Teen Court Work?

How does Teen Court work?

The court will be conducted by a Judge Pro-Tem and will be staffed with a Bailiff and Court Clerk. As many as four cases may be heard during each session and there will be separate juries for each.

If the jury convicts the offender of the offense, they will impose a sentence. However, the Judge Pro-Tem will monitor the sentence, but will not interfere unless the sentence is extremely unreasonable or impractical.

The sentence may consist of the following:

- Community Service. (20-120 hours)
- Restitution (if there is a monetary loss to the victim).
- Drug/Alcohol treatment.
- Counseling.
- Essay/letter of apology.
- Serve as juror for at least one Teen Court session (recommended).

The jurors:

Jurors will be at least 13 years of age and cannot be associated or acquainted with the suspected offender. Jurors in all cases will be compelled and counseled to maintain the highest degree of integrity and decorum in their case dealings. Jurors are reminded they bear a heavy responsibility in deciding the guilt or innocence of the suspected offender. Jurors maturity and good judgment are essential in making the Teen Court program effective and to hopefully help the offender take responsibility for his/her actions and deter them from repeat offenses. The jury changes for each case. A new set of jurors is selected and hears a case while the previous jury deliberates. One juror is chosen as Foreperson to deliver recommendations

The process:

The Court Coordinator presents the case and charges to the jury, reviews the suspected offender's school records and arranges and verifies the minor complies with the jury's recommendations. The parents or guardians may be present at the hearing and are assisted if there is a language barrier. The following is the hearing format:

- The Bailiff swears in the suspected offender.
- Court Coordinator reads the charges and a detailed description of the offense.
- The Judge Pro-Tem asks the suspected offender if the charges are correct.
- The suspected offender can accept the charges with an explanation or deny the charges, telling his/her side of the story.
- Jury is allowed to ask the suspected offender and parent's questions to get background information.
- The Judge Pro-Tem excuses the minor, clarifies the charges and the law to the jurors before they begin deliberating.
- Jury returns when deliberations are complete. Foreperson reads the decision and recommendations.
- The Judge Pro-Tem orders recommendations, with modifications, if necessary.

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What Can I Expect as a Teen Court Juror During Court Proceedings?

As a **Teen Court Juror**, you are given the opportunity to question the accused offender and his/her parents. Creative questioning is encouraged. Below are some examples of questions which you may want to ask. Some will only apply to certain offenses and they are only intended to be suggestions.

Questions for the accused offender;

- Why did you do it?
- Have you ever done this type of thing before?
- Will you ever do it again? If not, why not?
- Did you act alone? If not, whose idea was it?
- Looking back, what would you have done differently?
- Do you attend school regularly? How are your grades? What if any problems do you have in school?
- What have you learned from this experience?
- What punishment did you receive at home?
- Did you think it was enough, fair, reasonable?
- What punishment do you think you should receive today?

Questions for parents;

- Did you know your son/daughter had this problem?
- Did you punish him/her? If so, what was the punishment?
- Does your son/daughter have problems at school? How are his/her grades?
- Do you know his/her friends? If so, are there any he/she will be restricted from?
- Do you have problems with your son/daughter at home?
- How does your son/daughter respond to your instructions?
- Are there other children in the home? If so, have you had any problem with them?

For offenses related to theft/burglary;

- Did you intend to steal something when you went into the store?
- Did you have money to pay for the merchandise?
- Was the merchandise returned to the store undamaged?
- If property was stolen from a person was it returned or was restitution paid?
- Have you stolen before? If yes, how many times and what did you steal?
- How do you think you would feel if someone stole something from you?
- How do you feel about people that steal?

For offenses related to drug/alcohol use;

- Why did you use drugs/alcohol?
- How often do you use drugs/alcohol?
- Do your friends use drugs/alcohol?
- Do you intend to stop using drugs/alcohol?
- Do you buy drugs from your friends?
- How do you get money to buy drugs/alcohol?
- Have you ever taken money or sold items from your house to buy drugs/alcohol?
- Have you ever tried to stop using drugs/alcohol?

For offenses related to assault/battery:

- Who instigated the incident?
- Who threw the first punch?
- Is this the first time you have ever been in a fight? If not, tell us about the other time(s).
- How long has the problem between you and the other person been going on?
- How could you have resolved the conflict without fighting?
- How will you handle contact with this person in the future?
- Do you have a problem controlling your temper?

For offenses related to vandalism/malicious mischief:

- Did you know the victim/owners of the property?
- Did you do this as a result of conflict with the owner of the property?
- Had you planned to do this or was it a spur of the moment idea?
- Was restitution paid?

Deliberation

During deliberations, you will have the responsibility of determining a fair and appropriate sentence for the offender. Remember, creativity is encouraged. Here are some examples of sentences which may be imposed. All conditions of court supervision will be monitored by and are at the discretion of the Teen Court Coordinator.

- Six months court supervision
- Community service: 20-120 hours
- Attend some type of counseling such as Vital Intervention Directional Alternatives (VIDA), ACTION, or other as directed by the Teen Court Coordinator
- Write letters of apology: victim, parents, etc.
- Stay away from the location of the offense unless accompanied by a parent
- Serve on at least two Teen Courts as a juror
- Write an essay that applies to the offense committed by the participant
- Do not associate with companions (only if the case has multiple participants)
- Pay court fee

Dress Code and Code of Conduct

VERY IMPORTANT

As a **City of Santa Clarita Teen Court Juror**, it is very important to remember you are in a real court of law and will have a significant impact on the life of one of your peers. **As such, a certain demeanor is required. Below is a list of things to remember in order to maintain the integrity of the Teen Court and its participants.**

DRESS CODE: The Teen Court sessions are held at City Hall. If you come to City Hall afterschool, it is your responsibility to bring a change of clothes if you plan on being a Teen Court Juror. If you are not in compliance with the dress code you will be asked to leave the court room.

Boys

- Collared shirt – short sleeve or long sleeve (tucked in)
- Slacks (dress pants) or jeans (dark blue or black)
- Tennis shoes or dress shoes
- No hats, beanies, earrings or facial piercings

Girls

- Collared shirt/blouse – short sleeve or long sleeve (no cleavage showing)
- Slacks (dress pants) or dress jeans (dark blue or black)
- Skirts (**skirt must be knee length or longer**). If your dress or skirt does not come down to the knee, then wear slacks or jeans, and a collared shirt/blouse.
- Tennis shoes (white or black) or dress shoes.
- No facial piercings

Your demeanor as a Teen Court Juror should be mature and professional.

- Sit up straight and listen to what is being said.
- No books, radios, or newspapers while inside the courtroom.
- No unnecessary talking.
- No laughing while questioning the offender.
- No chewing gum or eating while inside the courtroom.
- No horseplay.
- Speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard by all in court.
- Turn off or put your phone on vibrate. No texting.
- Refrain from facial expressions (i.e. rolling your eyes, glaring)



Notice of Confidentiality

As a Teen Court Juror for the Santa Clarita Community Court (CC) & Teen Court (TC), you cannot discuss specifics of any case outside Community Court & Teen Court proceedings. All proceedings are confidential. If you feel you cannot honor this confidentiality you cannot participate in the City of Santa Clarita Community Court & Teen Court Program. In addition, you are to advise Community Court & Teen Court staff if you know or have any type of conflict with a minor. In these instances, you will be assigned to another case.

I, _____ (print name), solemnly swear that I will not divulge, either by words or actions, any information which comes to my knowledge in the course of a Community Court & Teen Court case, and I will keep confidential all said proceedings which I may have knowledge of.

This form is effective from _____.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

CC & TC Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____



Teen Court Agreement Form

DATE: _____

I, _____ would like to participate as a juror in the Teen Court program. I have read and understand the Teen Court program court process and juror instructions. I am giving the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department permission to check my criminal history and school records to determine my eligibility as a juror. I have talked with my parent/guardian about the program and have their permission to participate.

Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Address _____

Cell Phone Number _____

Email _____

School _____ Grade _____ Teacher _____

STUDENT SIGNATURE

PARENT/GUARDIAN PRINT NAME

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE