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The mission of the Buffalo/Pepin County Teen Court is to join together as a council of professional and community members to find ways to enhance positive youth and family development in both counties. The Teen Court will serve to modify behavior of youthful, first-time offenders by combining positive peer pressure and involvement within our counties, families, schools, and religious organizations to promote youth development and restorative justice.

Buffalo/Pepin County Teen Court: Frequently Asked Questions



What is Teen Court?

Teen Court offers eligible youth an alternative to appearing in Juvenile Court. They have an opportunity to receive a meaningful consequence from a jury of their peers.

Why a Teen Court?

Teen Court offers eligible youth an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions. It provides positive peer pressure with community based consequences.

Who is eligible?

The Buffalo/Pepin County Teen Court will serve youth ages 10-16 years who commit first time violations of offenses such as:

- Disorderly Conduct
- No Valid Driver's License
- Damage to Property/Vandalism
- Shoplifting/Retail Theft
- Trespassing
- DNR/Park Offenses, Littering, Curfew, or ATV violations
- Possession of Alcohol, Tobacco, Marijuana, or Vaping
- Truancy
- Unlawful Use of a Technology

Referrals for Teen Court will come from the Court, Human Services, Law Enforcement or the School.

How Does Teen Court Operate?

1. The offender appears before a panel of three to five teen judge panelists.
2. Panelists will be from a local school district, excluding the offender's school.
3. Panelists have received specialized training in court procedures.
4. A parent or legal guardian is required to attend the session with the offender.
5. Offender must admit the violation offense.
6. Panelists discuss the offense with the offender to determine why the offense occurred and determine the most effective consequences.
6. Panelists may question parents.
7. Panelists decide the consequences which may include essays, community service, apology letter or other innovative sanctions.
8. A coordinator monitors the offender's performance of the sentencing guidelines.
9. Offender pays a small fee towards the cost of Teen Court.
10. All procedures are confidential.
11. If offender successfully completes the work, the case is closed without the offender receiving a conviction record.
12. If offender is unsuccessful in completing sentence the offender will be returned to the referring agency.

Who benefits from Teen Court?

- ⇒ Youth are given an opportunity for a real second chance to prove that mistakes can be turned into positive choices. When juvenile offenders successfully complete their Teen Court sentence, they will have their case dismissed.
- ⇒ The juvenile becomes responsible for his/her actions.
- ⇒ Community service-learning projects will be more meaningful to the youth and their respective communities.
- ⇒ The community is able to see teens being held accountable for their actions.
- ⇒ Teen judge panelists gain a sense of responsibility and they encourage peers to stop behaviors that reflect all teens. They also have the opportunity to participate in the juvenile justice system and examine possible career opportunities.
- ⇒ Adult volunteers are given the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our youth.