

# Midtown Community Court: Documented Results

The Midtown Community Court, established in 1993, is designed to re-think the judicial response to misdemeanor offenses such as prostitution, illegal vending, graffiti, and possession of marijuana. The goal is to reduce both crime and incarceration. To achieve this goal, Midtown sentences offenders to community service to pay back the neighborhood in which they committed their crime and provides them with social services to address their underlying needs.

## Caseload

In 2015, the Midtown Community Court heard 19,646 cases (8,448 misdemeanor cases and 11,198 summonses). The most frequent misdemeanor charges were trespassing, panhandling, stolen property, and marijuana drug possession.

## Sentencing

Research indicates that, as compared with the downtown criminal court, the Midtown Court decreases the use of jail (10 percent vs. 18 percent) and time-served sentences (4 percent vs. 21 percent) in cases disposed at arraignment.

## Compliance and Accountability

In 2015, 78 percent of defendants at Midtown completed their community service mandates. This is a notably higher rate than is believed to apply to defendants who were processed at the downtown criminal court.

## Community Restitution

In 2015, defendants at the Midtown Community Court completed over 24,842 hours of community service, the equivalent of over \$179,974 of labor. This included painting over graffiti and cleaning the courthouse and the streets of Times Square.

## Cost Savings

Research estimates that the Midtown Court saves an average of \$1.2 million annually. These savings result primarily from reduced costs of pre-arraignment detention (i.e., due to reduced arrest-to-arraignment time) and reduced use of jail as a primary sentence.

## Workforce Development

Midtown's onsite job training program UPNEXT enrolled 237 participants in 2015. Additionally, 66 participants were placed in jobs during the year. The average wage for program graduates who were placed in jobs was \$10.75 an hour.

## Adolescent and Young Adult Diversion Programs

In 2012, the Midtown Court became the sole site in Manhattan for handling cases involving 16- and 17-year-old defendants through the Adolescent Diversion Program. A pilot program initiated by former New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, the Adolescent Diversion Program seeks to address the unique needs of adolescent defendants in criminal court by offering social services and alternative dispositions that eliminate the consequences of adult criminal convictions.

Building on the program's success, Midtown launched the Young Adult Diversion Program in 2016 to provide similar resources for 18- to 20-year-olds.

### **Human Trafficking Intervention Court**

In recognition that many individuals, mostly women and girls, arrested for prostitution-related offenses may be victims of trafficking and other forms of violence, former Chief Judge Lippman created the Human Trafficking Intervention Court program. The program began in October 2013 in 11 counties in the state; the Midtown Community Court is the Human Trafficking Intervention Court site in Manhattan and handles all prostitution-related offenses in the borough. The program aims to help individuals safely exit the sex trade by identifying victims of sex trafficking, linking individuals to social services, and reducing or eliminating the consequences of criminal conviction for victim-defendants. In 2015, the court served over 320 such individuals.

### **Public Support**

A survey reported that the majority of respondents (64 percent) would be willing to pay additional taxes to support a community court like the Midtown Court.

### **Recognition**

The Midtown Court has received several awards, including the 2010 Serving Youth Opportunity Award from the New York City Employment & Training Coalition and the 2007 Golden Scroll Award from The Broadway Association. Both awards recognize the court's commitment to public safety through community involvement.

### **Further Reading**

(Available at [www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org))

Frazer, M.S. 2007. Examining defendant perceptions of fairness in the courtroom. *Judicature*, 91(1):36-37.

Hakuta, J., Soroushian, V., and Kralstein, D. 2008. *Testing the Impact of the Midtown Community Court: Updating Outcomes a Decade Later*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

Henry, K. and Kralstein, D. 2010. *Community Court Research: 2009 Update*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

Karafin, D.L. 2008. *Community Courts Across the Globe: A Survey of Goals, Performance Measures and Operations*. Open Society Foundation for South Africa.

Rempel, M., Hyntnen Lambson, S., Cadoret, C. R., and Walker Franklin, A. 2013. *The Adolescent Diversion Program: A First Year Evaluation of Alternatives to conventional Case Processing for Defendants Ages 16 and 17 in New York*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

Sviridoff, M., Rottman, D., Ostrom, B., and Curtis, R. 2000. *Dispensing Justice Locally: The Implementation and Effects of the Midtown Community Court*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

Sviridoff, M., Rottman, D., Weidner, R., Cheesman, F., Curtis, R., Hansen, R., and Ostrom, B. 2005. *Dispensing Justice Locally: The Impacts, Cost and Benefits of the Midtown Community Court*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

### **For more information**

Visit: <http://www.courtinnovation.org/project/midtown-community-court>

E-mail: [info@courtinnovation.org](mailto:info@courtinnovation.org)