

Neighborhood Courts

An Initiative of the Office of District Attorney George Gascón



Neighborhood Court is an alternative to Criminal Court. Instead of charging cases for criminal prosecution, the District Attorney’s Office can refer certain misdemeanor cases to Neighborhood Court, and a panel of volunteer “adjudicators” will hear the case. There are ten Neighborhood Courts across the city.

Adjudicators are residents who volunteer to hear the cases. They have been trained in restorative justice and problem solving. They are NOT defense attorneys, prosecutors, or judges. They are residents, merchants, students, parents and retired people.

At Neighborhood Court, the adjudicators decide how to resolve the case. Adjudicators hear from the offender and the victim (in cases where there is a victim), and discuss the impact of the crime on the community. To resolve the case, adjudicators issue “directives,” like community service or restitution, to repair the harm caused by the incident.

The hearing is confidential. It is not a Criminal Court proceeding. It is a discussion with residents in a community setting designed to address crime through a restorative approach that solves problems.

Going to Neighborhood Court is voluntary. Anyone who is eligible can go to Neighborhood Court instead of Criminal Court. If an eligible candidate would prefer Criminal Court, the case can be sent there.

Neighborhood Courts have the potential to benefit participants, communities and the criminal justice system. Participants who successfully complete Neighborhood Court directives will have their case dismissed. Communities have the opportunity to resolve incidents locally, directly address the harm caused, and enhance neighborhood cohesion. Neighborhood Courts resolve cases quickly and reduce the burden of low level cases on the criminal justice system.

The Neighborhood Courts initiative is a partnership between the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office, Community Boards and San Francisco Pre-Trial Diversion, Inc.

For More Information:

If you would like more information about Neighborhood Courts, please call (415) 575-6328, or visit www.sfdistrictattorney.org. You can also email Jackson Gee at jackson.gee@sfgov.org.