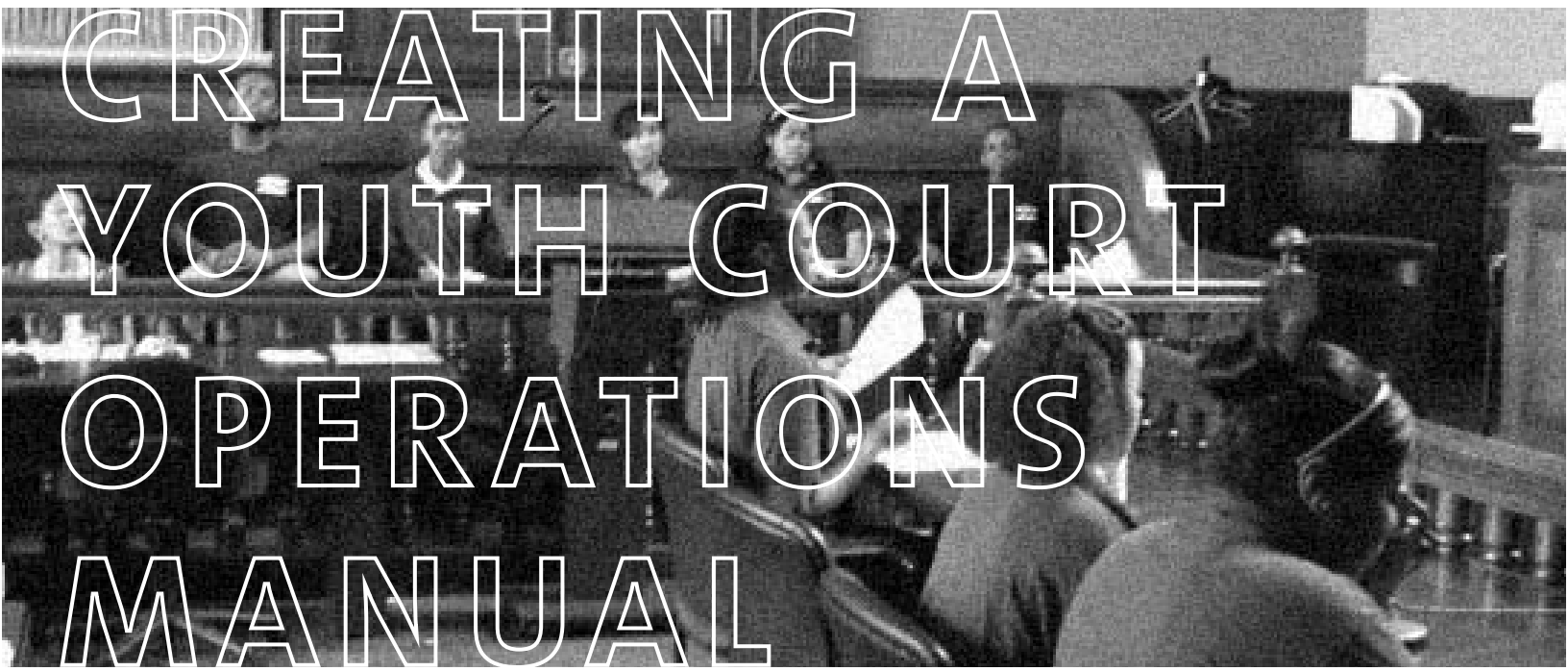


CENTER
FOR
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INNOVATION



CREATING A
YOUTH COURT
OPERATIONS
MANUAL

A Guide for Practitioners and Planners

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was written by Nancy Fishman and Dory Hack at the Center for Court Innovation. Funding for this project was provided through a grant from The New York Bar Foundation. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not represent the official positions or policies of the supporting organization.

The authors would like to thank the following for their contributions to this publication: Matthew Bond, Beth Broderick, and Melissa Gelber at the Center for Court Innovation; Deb Holland, co-president, Association of New York State Youth Courts; Violet Palombo, Director, Colonie Youth Court; Steve Todisco, Program Coordinator, Livingston County Youth Court; Stacey Whiteley, NYS Mock Trial Program Manager, Law, Youth and Citizenship Program, the New York State Bar Association; and the Association of New York State Youth Courts.

March 2012

CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

The winner of the Peter F. Drucker Award for Non-Profit Innovation, the Center for Court Innovation is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how the justice system can solve difficult problems like addiction, quality-of-life crime, domestic violence, and child neglect. The Center functions as the New York State court system's independent research and development arm, creating demonstration projects that test new approaches to problems that have resisted conventional solutions. The Center's demonstration projects include the nation's first community court (Midtown Community Court), as well as drug courts, domestic violence courts, youth courts, mental health courts, reentry courts and others.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Youth courts operate on very limited budgets and typically with only one or two dedicated staff members. Staff turnover can mean the loss of crucial institutional memory and experience. At the same time, there is increasing interest in promoting the credibility and quality of youth court work and in launching new youth court programs. The Center for Court Innovation produced this guide to creating an operations manual with the hope that it would help existing youth courts document, standardize, and maintain the high quality of their programs and help planners of new youth courts develop all of the policies and procedures necessary for a successful program.

The most useful operations manual is one that works as a living document for your program, a guide that is used and modified as needed on an on-going basis, and benefits from the accumulation of experience that comes from those who work with the program regularly. Keeping a record of how things are done, where key documents are kept, who the key contacts are at partner organizations, and other operational details suggested by this guide will ultimately save staff time and help ensure consistency and quality in the program, to the benefit of the young people who are served by it and the partners who rely upon it, as well as the staff.

This guide lists policies and procedures related to a wide range of youth court operations, including recruiting, training, and daily management of members; establishing and maintaining referral relationships with law enforcement agencies, courts and schools; screening and assessment of potential and accepted respondents; and establishing and tracking community service hours and sanction completion. While youth courts vary in their structures and practices, our goal is to identify the types of policies and procedures common to all youth courts and provide specific examples. We have used a fictional youth court for this purpose, but the examples are rooted in the policies and practices that inform the Center's own youth courts.

The body of this document is laid out as an operations manual (referred to as the "OM" in the text) would be, listing and describing the variety of information that should be included in each section. Sample content follows these descriptions in shaded boxes. Practitioners looking to create their own operations manuals can use the section headings and follow the guidelines to document their programs' operations.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on *Creating a Youth Court Operations Manual*. Please send your comments and questions to:

Youth Justice Programs
Center for Court Innovation
520 8th Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10018
youthcourts@courtinnovation.org

Available as downloads at www.youthcourts.org:

- PDF of the complete document, with explanations and examples
- Microsoft Word file of operations manual outline only, without explanations or examples

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING AND MAINTAINING AN OPERATIONS MANUAL

Creating an operations manual from scratch may appear to be a daunting task for both new and existing programs. Following are some suggestions to help you develop and maintain a useful resource for your program:

- The operations manual does not need to be written in a formal style or with perfect formatting. The most important characteristic of an operations manual is clarity, so that someone picking it up for the first time has the best opportunity to understand how the program works. Bullet points and notes are fine.
- Don't attempt to compose a complete operations manual document in one sitting, and don't aim for a document that is publication- or even distribution-ready. Begin with information you already have in written form, such as in emails or memos among staff, reports to a board or funders, written directions to volunteers or materials for youth participants. Using the outline version of this guide (visit www.youthcourts.org to download a copy), cut and paste what you have, or include links to external documents.
- For sections that you don't already have in written form, clarify whether the knowledge exists but is not yet documented or the topics haven't yet been considered or encountered by the program. If the knowledge exists but is not written down, add to the document as you have time. If topics haven't yet been fully addressed, decide what areas are relevant or useful to the functioning of your program, and use the outline to prompt development of those areas.
- Add sections or subsections to cover processes that are not in the guide. This guide is not intended to be all-inclusive. Document what's important to your program.
- To keep your operations manual up-to-date, set up a practice that is manageable and sustainable for your program. Ideally, staff would update the manual anytime there are changes to operations or programming. Alternatively, review the operations manual on a quarterly, biannual or annual basis, noting any changes that have come into effect. At a minimum, review the content prior to any staff transition, so that the knowledge of departing staff is retained and new staff can be best prepared to assume responsibilities.
- If you are creating a new program, this guide can help you think through the decisions you'll need to make to have an operative program. Use the outline to document these decisions as they are made; revise as needed once the program begins to run and practices change.

The sample text included in this guide is intended be illustrative; it is not intended to serve as a model for operational decisions, though you may find them to be helpful. There are several resources available to help programs develop and refine their operations, including:

- **National Association of Youth Courts** www.youthcourt.net
- **American Bar Association** www.americanbar.org (search: Youth Courts)
- www.youthcourtraining.net, a project of OJJDP and the National Association of Youth Courts
- **Association of New York State Youth Courts** www.nysyouthcourts.org
- www.youthcourts.org, provided by the Center for Court Innovation

OVERVIEW OF YOUTH COURT BASICS AND VARIATIONS

While all youth courts (also referred to as “teen courts” and “peer courts”) share some basic principles and structure, programs vary depending on a variety of factors, such as sponsoring organization or agency, program goals, resources, and partnerships. Below we’ve highlighted some of the key components of youth courts and the most typical variations. This guide to creating an operations manual uses a specific fictional youth court as an example, but keep the following variations in mind when describing your program.

◆ Roles for participating youths

Youth courts engage young people in two ways: as **members** and as **respondents**. **Members** (also referred to as “youth volunteers”) are youths who go through a training program and qualify to serve in the various roles on the youth court. Members are committed to attending hearings, participating in the program regularly and serving for a minimum period of time which may or may not be extended. In a school setting, where youth courts can either be part of a class or an extracurricular activity, members may be all students enrolled in a particular class, or may be students who volunteer to participate outside class. Some youth courts have a second, larger pool of youth who constitute a jury pool; jury pool members generally go through a shorter training or orientation and only serve in a juror capacity.

Respondents are those young people whose cases are referred to the youth court for a hearing. These youths typically interact with the youth court immediately before, during, and after the hearing until they have completed their assigned sanctions. Youth court cases can come from a range of sources and can involve a variety of offenses. Some youth courts also connect respondents and/or their families to services in the community and may continue their relationship with the youth for a longer period of time.

◆ Youth court models

Within some basic parameters, the youth court model is a flexible one. Youths have a primary role in presenting and hearing cases and the youth court’s fundamental approach should be restorative in nature, focusing on positive peer interactions, allowing the respondent to redress any harm done to the community and providing opportunities for positive youth development for both members and respondents. Beyond these basic features, the structure of youth courts vary. In all youth court models, adult staff train, supervise and manage the youth court members and are responsible for ensuring respondents complete assigned sanctions.

There are four basic youth court models:

Peer jury: In this model, youth court members assume the roles of jurors, judge, and advocates for the youth and the community. In some uses of this model, members also act as bailiff and advocate for the victim. The advocates present the case, but the jury conducts primary questioning of the respondent, deliberates and assigns sanction(s). Fifteen to 20 members participate in a single hearing and rotate through the roles on different cases. A key feature of the peer jury model is the use of consensus decision-making when determining sanctions.

Youth judge: As in the peer jury model, youth court members assume the roles of jurors, judge and advocates, but, in this model, the advocates conduct the questioning of respondents (similar to a conventional court). Jurors listen to the testimony, deliberate and assign sanction(s).

This model allows for use of a larger jury pool of youth court participants who are not fully trained members, and requires a smaller number of fully trained members to be present at each hearing. The model also allows jury duty to be one of the sanctions for respondents.

Tribunal: In this model, youth court members serve as advocates and judges. The advocates present the case to a panel of judges, usually three or four, who may question the respondent. The tribunal approach allows a youth court to function with a smaller number of members and without a jury or jury pool.

Adult judge: In this model, youth court members serve as advocates and jury members and an adult, often an actual sitting judge, serves as judge. The adult judge presides over the hearings and approves of any sanctions recommended by the jury.

Youth courts typically use one model for all hearings. However, some youth courts will make use of a different model as circumstances dictate – for example, a peer jury youth court might use the tribunal model if there are not enough members present to form a jury.

◆ Terminology

Along with variations in model used, youth courts use different names for the roles young people play in the youth court. In this guide, we use the terms “youth advocate” and “community advocate” to refer to the youth court members who assume the roles played by attorneys in a traditional court hearing. Other courts may use different names for these roles, such as “youth attorney,” “youth defender,” or “youth prosecutor.” Your OM should reflect the terminology you use.

◆ Referrals and cases

Youth courts run by community or public agencies typically hear low-level offenses referred by the justice system (police, probation, or courts) as well as violations of school disciplinary codes referred by schools. Community-based courts develop and maintain referral relationships with the agencies or entities that refer cases. School-based youth courts hear cases of disciplinary violations that would otherwise result in detention, suspension, or other sanctions; cases can be referred by teachers, deans, school safety officers and others in the school community. A youth court doesn't need to identify every type of offense that qualifies, but it does help to identify any types of cases that the court will not hear.

YOUTH COURT OPERATIONS MANUAL GUIDE

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

◆ Goals

Youth courts typically serve as both early-intervention programs for young people charged with low-level offenses (“respondents”) and as leadership development programs for the youths who serve on the court (“members”). Specify the overall goals of the program. These goals can be the basis for other written material that you might distribute, including brochures, presentations, and grant proposals. Identifying the goals in the OM will help ensure consistency in how the program is presented to the community, regardless of who drafts the materials or represents the program. You may also want to identify goals specific to respondents, members, and, if your court includes this separate component, the jury pool.

EXAMPLE

The primary goal of the Rowland Youth Court¹ is to use positive peer pressure to ensure that young people who have committed minor offenses pay back the community and receive the help they need to avoid further involvement in the justice system. The youth court also seeks to provide a reliable and fair diversion option for the justice system agencies that refer cases to the program.

We work to achieve this goal through the following:

- **Service**
 - For Members and Jurors: Our goal is to teach the value of civic duty through volunteering and service to our community.
 - For Respondents: We ask respondents to repair the harm done to the community through service projects. We work closely with our partners to ensure that young people are exposed to the value of volunteering and the importance of voluntary service to one's community.
- **Accountability**
 - Our goal is to teach respondents the importance of accepting one's role in a situation; of accepting the things within one's control; and of being accountable to the community and to themselves. The focus is on reflection and choice.
- **Professionalism**
 - Our goal is to teach members job readiness skills such as interviewing skills, performance reviews, conduct at a workplace, public speaking, and notice (re: conflicts, absences, etc.).

¹ As noted in the Introduction, examples throughout this guide describe a fictional youth court. The content of your manual will look different, and the text here is not intended to cover all possible variations.

- **Leadership**

- For Respondents: Our goal is to assist respondents in making better choices for themselves in the future. Although we specifically offer a decision making workshop, every interaction with a respondent emphasizes ownership of choice and opportunity for reflection.
- For Members: Our goal is to develop leadership skills in the young people we work with through a bi-annual training program and on-going development efforts such as giving and receiving constructive feedback among peers.

◆ **Budget and funding**

Include the basic annual expenses and revenue for the program, including some guidance as to how these numbers are generated. It may not be appropriate to include a detailed budget, because you may not want, for example, salary information in one of the program's more public documents, but provide at least the building blocks of the budget. Also indicate where past funding proposals, reports and budgets are stored and include a current schedule of reporting requirements for any funding sources either in the OM or as an easily updateable Appendix.

EXAMPLE:

Electronic files can be found in C:\Budget as follows:

- \Funding: proposals, reports and current schedule of reporting requirements
- \Expenses: up-to-date budget worksheet and vendor payment forms

Expenses (based on FY 2010)	Annual amount/notes
Program operations	
Facility rental	Rent @ \$XX per month, lease through 20XX
Utilities	Heat, water and gas provided in kind. Phone and internet: Verizon @ approx. \$XX per month
Equipment (purchases and maintenance)	Copier rental @ \$XX per month
Staff	
Program Coordinator	FT @ \$XX/year
Assistant Coordinator	PT @ \$XX/year
Youth court program supplies	
Refreshments for members (during trainings and hearings)	Est. \$XX per month, from Costco. Annual membership fee provided by org.
Youth court T-shirts	Shirts are \$xx/each if we order over 15.
Hearing accessories: judge's robe, gavel, flags, signage	Donated/not needed
General office supplies (e.g., pens, paper)	Annually \$XX
Printing costs (e.g., training curriculum, hearing documents, intake forms)	Annually \$XX
Printing and postage for community outreach materials (e.g., newsletters, articles, event invitations)	Annually \$XX
Materials and resources for milestone events (e.g., member graduation)	Graduation: \$XXX Holiday event/induction: \$XX not including in-kind donations
Incentives for member participation	2 Field trips @ \$XX/trip Community Advocate challenge awards: \$X/award if not covered by donated goods Holiday event awards: \$X/award if not covered by donated goods
Transportation assistance	Annually \$XX for public transportation
Funding for FY 2011	Annual amount/notes
Institutional support from parent organization	\$XX annually
Government grants (federal, state, local)	\$XX to be used in FY 2011
Government agencies (e.g., law enforcement, court system, probation services, school district)	\$XX, renewed annually based on MOU
Elected officials	\$XX received in FY 2011, have to reapply every year
Individual giving (through fundraisers or other initiatives)	Approximately \$XX raised through annual bake sale

◆ Staff

List specific roles and responsibilities for all paid and volunteer staff. Given limited resources, clearly identified responsibilities allow program coordinators to identify opportunities to maximize the use of paid staff, adult volunteers, and partner support. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are especially important when working with volunteers who are likely to work with the program on a part-time and short-term basis. If you have written job descriptions, include these as an Appendix. If your program does not have designated staff, you don't know yet what you will be able to fund, or staffing is flexible depending on current funding, list the tasks that must be accomplished by any staff person or volunteers.

EXAMPLE

Program Coordinator (Full-time):

The Youth Court Coordinator coordinates and manages all aspects of youth court operations. As such, the coordinator is responsible for recruitment, training, and selection of youth court members, and the coordinator facilitates, documents and manages all youth court referrals and sanction compliance. The coordinator:

- Supervises and manages youth participants and adult volunteers;
- Recruits youth court members and ensures a full hearing calendar;
- Facilitates a 40-hour training course for youth court members;
- Conducts intakes for respondents and families;
- Ensures a high sanction completion rate by organizing community service projects and partnerships; and coordinating, monitoring and tracking sanction quality and compliance;
- Reports outcome and sanction compliance to referral sources;
- Serves as a liaison with community partners such as local schools, police precincts, community members, and social service agencies;
- Generates and sustains community support for the youth court, such as by making public presentations;
- Oversees program evaluation, statistical reporting, and administrative office management; and
- Assists in planning and implementation of related youth programs and services.

Assistant Coordinator (Part-time):

- Assists in the daily operation of the youth court;
- Assists with the recruitment of participants for youth court training and membership;
- Assists with the training of members and, together with the youth court coordinator, facilitates and organizes the 40-hour youth court member training;

- Assists in the recruitment of community volunteers as guest speakers;
- Conducts outreach to parents and youth who are referred to the youth court ;
- Assists in developing and coordinating community service projects, workshops and other programming for respondents;
- Closely monitors and tracks compliance of respondents and prepares compliance reports for referring agencies ;
- Manages hearing and training schedules;
- Provides support for youth court members during trainings and hearings;
- Assists in the coordination and planning of special events ;
- Assists in conducting outreach to community based organizations to support the function and growth of the program ; and
- Performs other tasks and functions as assigned by the youth court Coordinator.

◆ Data collection and management

Data collection will be referenced throughout the OM, but it is helpful to list in one place all of the tools used and any manuals or directives for their use. There are two forms of data collection to describe: data collection used to track and manage program operations (e.g., referrals, membership, case outcomes) and data collection used to evaluate the program (e.g., surveys, interviews).

Operational data:

Track a minimal set of data elements for all referrals and cases. In addition to tracking information to assist with case management, record data that directly relate to your programs' goals and objectives. Also describe your program's data retention policy. Maintaining records for an appropriate period of time ensures the accountability of the youth court. Youth courts also have a duty to maintain the privacy of and protect respondents, parents, and members.

EXAMPLE:

We use two Excel spreadsheets to track program data. We have created an instruction sheet which is located in C:\Program Management\Data\Data entry instructions.doc.

- Referrals, cases and respondents: C:\Program Management\Data\Respondent Tracking Sheet.xls. This file includes all case data, including referral sources, types of offenses,

sanctions assigned, and sanction monitoring. It is updated after every referral and intake; immediately post-hearing when sanctions are assigned; and as sanctions are completed.

- Members: C:\Program Management\Data\member Tracking Sheet.xls. This file includes information about trainees as well as members. Once trainees become members, it is used to track their attendance and lateness, role assignments and community service hours.

We retain all case records for six years after the case is closed or three years after the individual involved turns 18, whichever is later (this is based on N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 8, apps. H, I, J, and K). Twice each year we review all case files and shred all documents which do not meet this criteria.

File cabinets must be locked whenever staff are not in the office (including when stepping out to conduct an intake with a respondent). Never leave case, respondent or member information unattended.

Evaluation data:

If the program administers any evaluation tools for members or respondents, such as surveys for members, respondents and parents, describe these tools and include copies of the tools as an Appendix. Include any directions on how to administer these tools as well as any protocol for entering the data into a spreadsheet or other data collection program.

EXAMPLE:

The Rowland Youth Court uses the following evaluation tools:

- Member survey: C:\Evaluation\Member survey.doc. We administer this survey the first day of training and the last day of training. It takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey tracks changes in members' attitudes about the police, the court system, and laws, as well as in measures of civic engagement and feelings of efficacy. Instructions for survey administration, including how to assign anonymous IDs, are in C:\Evaluation\Member survey instructions.doc. Tally survey responses after every training cohort using C:\Evaluation\Member survey data.xls.
- Respondent and Parent/Guardian surveys: C:\Evaluation\Respondent survey.doc and C:\Evaluation\Parent survey.doc. Give the respondent and parent/guardian these surveys immediately following hearings and collect before they leave. The surveys are designed to measure whether respondents and parents/guardians thought the process and sanctions were fair, whether they understood the process, and whether they would recommend youth court to other young people and families. Tally survey responses every quarter using C:\Evaluation\Resopndent survey data.xls.

◆ Reporting requirements

If the program reports on its activities to any sponsoring organizations, partners, or funders, provide details on how often and what information is included. Include where reports are kept.

EXAMPLE:

RYC has the following reporting requirements:

- Rowland County Department of Youth and Families: Every quarter the RYC provides the following data: number of cases broken out by case type and referral source, number of completed community service hours, number of members, and completion rate.
- Department of Probation and Police Department: Annually, the RYC provides the following data upon request to these two referral sources: number of cases broken out by case type, number of completed community service hours, and completion rate.
- Youth First Foundation: As this foundation supports civic engagement and leadership development, the RYC provides data on the volunteer members including number of members, number of returning members, number of training hours provided, results from member survey, and number of community service hours completed by members. We also provide anecdotal information about post-youth court activities of members, such as college enrollment and career ambitions.

◆ Websites and social media

Youth courts are increasingly using websites and social media to promote their programs, communicate with members and publicize their work to a wider audience. Describe all sites that are used by the program, the intended audience for that site (e.g., youth court members only, referral partners, the general public), where account information (including passwords) is stored, and policies for publishing information online.

EXAMPLE:

The RYC uses the following Internet sites to share information about the program:

- www.rowlandyouthcourt.org: This site contains basic program information, an online application process, news about current activities and contact information for staff. Currently, the Program Associate is responsible for maintaining the website and handling all technical issues. All technical information about the site, including how to upload content, is located in C:\Website\Technical information.doc.
- <http://www.facebook.com/RowlandYouthCourt>: This page is intended for the general public and youth court members and alumni. We use this page to post information about activities, youth court news, and links to articles and websites that are related to youth court work or would be of interest to members. New members are told about the page and are invited to "Like" the Rowland Youth Court on Facebook. We encourage members respond to our posts via the "Comment" feature. We have set up

our page so that an email is sent to the Program Associate whenever someone adds a comment to our page. As policy, we delete any postings that compromise a respondent's or member's privacy, that are disrespectful in any way, or are in any way inappropriate. Staff then speak to the poster and discuss the decision to delete the posting, giving the youth the opportunity to rewrite their post. To date, we have not had any problems with members or others posting inappropriate content to the Wall. We do not tag individual youths in the photos we upload. Facebook account information is located in C:\Facebook\Account information.doc.

◆ Press and publicity

Outreach to press:

Program publicity can raise awareness of the youth court and help generate support. Good opportunities for garnering interest from press are events (e.g., graduations, guest speakers, special community service activities) and the opening or expanding of a program (e.g., a youth court begins to get cases from local courts). Include instructions on how to contact press in advance of an event, a contact or distribution list, and sample documents such as a press release. Also include what staff should do if a reporter contacts the youth court outside of a scheduled event/invitation seeking information about the program or a specific case.

EXAMPLE:

RYC notifies its press contacts prior to every graduation once the keynote and guest speakers have been announced. We also notify press when planning a special community service day, such as when members and respondents worked together with the Parks Department to clean up Rowland Park. To conduct outreach to press, follow these steps:

- Draft a press release (see C:\Press\Sample press release.doc) that includes a description of the event, any notable features of the event, and the cell phone number and email address of the Program Coordinator.
- Review the press contacts list to confirm that the names, email addresses and fax numbers are up-to-date. This can be assigned to a youth court member who would like to earn some community service hours or make up for missed session time. (C:\Press>Contact list.xls)
- Send the press release by email or fax to the contact list at least two weeks before the event.
- One day prior to the event, send a short email to the contact list reminding them of the event.

Occasionally RYC will field a request from a reporter who would like to do a story on the youth court.

- In general, we allow reporters to observe and write about hearings. Before agreeing to the request, let the reporter know the policies (see below) regarding publishing only first names of youths and no

photos of respondents. Also request to see a copy of the piece before it is published. While reporters have no obligation to agree to this, we have found that, when we explain this is to protect the privacy of the youth, reporters are often willing to comply.

- Once the date has been set with the reporter, inform members to ensure there will be maximum attendance and participation. Review media releases to confirm which members can be interviewed and photographed.
- When scheduling hearings for that day, explain the circumstances to the respondents, and offer them an alternative hearing date if they do not want a reporter at their hearings.

Media policies and waivers:

Youth courts are responsible to two groups of youth when press attend: members and respondents. Specify program policies for each group. Typically, respondents' privacy is protected to a higher degree than that of members. For example, you may decide that only respondents' first names should be given to reporters, and they should not appear in photographs. In addition to outlining your program's policies, include the releases that members and respondents (and their parents/guardians) must sign in order to be interviewed or photographed. These releases can also give your program permission to use any media the youth participates in, such as reprinting photographs online.

EXAMPLE:

RYC media policy for members and respondents:

- Members are given the Media Release Form (C:\Press\Media Release Members.doc) when they join the youth court. On this form, members and parents can agree to interviews, photographs, or neither. Keep these signed forms on file for reference; these forms still apply once members have left the program, so do not discard them.
- Respondents are not asked to sign a release form unless there is press coverage the day of their hearings (C:\Press\Media Release Respondents.doc). It is RYC policy to instruct reporters to not take photographs of respondents and to not use respondents' last names or identifying information. If you suspect a reporter is not respecting this request, intervene and remind the reporter that the invitation to cover the hearing is contingent on respecting these rules.
- If a reporter wants to interview a respondent, parent, or member, a staff person **MUST** be in attendance. Staff must intervene if they suspect a youth or parent is uncomfortable during the interview.
- Members and respondents are not permitted to give reporters their personal contact information. If a reporter would like to follow up

with a youth, instruct him/her to contact the youth through the program.

- Once members/respondents have signed media releases, we can use any photos and written materials in any form. We do not need to seek additional permission for future publication, even after members have graduated the program.

YOUTH COURT MEMBERS

◆ Criteria for membership

Include any age or grade requirements, residency or other geographic restrictions or preferences, academic standing requirements, skills, or any other baseline criteria for membership. This does not include attendance and participation requirements for maintaining good standing.

EXAMPLE:

Aside from age (14 to 18 years old), there are no other specific requirements for youth court participation. Trainees can begin the training at 13 years old if they will turn 14 during the course of training. Preference is given to youth who reside or go to school within the youth court's catchment area.

RYC first recruits young people to participate in the training program. Youth who successfully complete the training program are then eligible to serve on the youth court. Participating in the training does NOT guarantee youth court membership.

◆ Recruitment

General guidelines:

Include overall guidelines or tips for the recruitment process, such as diversity goals for recruitment, general yield rate based on past experience (e.g., accept 40 applicants to training if you want to have 15 new members), and overall messaging.

EXAMPLE:

We try to maintain a group of 20 active youth court members. Youth court members may stay in the program until they turn 19, decide to leave, or are asked to leave the program due to a problem with their participation. Twice during the year (fall and spring) the RYC recruits and trains new members. The number of new members will depend on the number of projected vacancies. Strive for a yield rate of 40 training candidates, with at least 30% being former youth court respondents. During recruitment, keep the following in mind:

- Set clear expectations from the onset that youth court training and membership are serious commitments. Reiterate that the court hears real cases and that the members' decisions will impact their peers' lives (particularly if recruiting amongst youths familiar with moot court or similar programs).
- Invite current members to help with recruitment. Ask them to invite friends to apply, to give presentations at information sessions, and to help contact relevant organizations. It is worthwhile for prospective applicants to hear from experienced youth court

members about their service and how participation has affected their lives.

- During every intake and post-hearing meeting with respondents, remind them that if they successfully complete all sanctions, they will be eligible to apply to become a member of the youth court.

Timeline and work plan:

Detail the tasks that will need to be completed for recruiting new youth court members, with approximate standard deadlines. For example, starting from the date you plan to begin training your recruits, how many weeks in advance will you need to begin each recruitment task in order to accomplish all tasks in time to begin training. The tasks may include revising any recruitment materials, posting or mailing the application, contacting potential recruiting sites such as schools, classes or clubs, and scheduling presentations, conducting presentations, holding interviews or orientation.

EXAMPLE:

The following bullet points outline the basic steps required in the six weeks prior to the start of training:

- **4 to 6 weeks** before the first day of training: Contact schools and other potential sources for trainees and discuss recruitment strategies. Solidify plans for classroom visits, information tables, or other meetings. (*Note: see Recruitment Strategies below.*)
- **3 to 4 weeks** before the first day of training: Begin recruitment presentations and flyer and application distribution. Hold information sessions to promote the program in classrooms, after-school programs, and community-based organizations. During these sessions, talk about the program, how it helps the community and young people, and how participation benefits members. All distributed materials should include the application deadline and instructions for submitting applications. At all presentations, collect names and contact information for all interested youths. If possible, put the application and any pertinent information online. Distribute information cards with a link to the online material. Advertise the opportunity on websites and social networking sites. Send application information to all former respondents who have had cases since the previous membership drive who successfully completed all sanctions.
- **3 weeks** before the first day of training: Follow up by telephone with youths, including former respondents, who have expressed interest in the youth court but have not yet submitted applications.
- **2 weeks** before the first day of training: Application deadline. Review applications and invite applicants to a group interview. Host a group interview to gauge applicants' public speaking skills, ability to work in groups, and interest in the program.

- **1 week** before the first day of training: Select applicants for training. Mail each applicant an acceptance letter and the packet of paperwork to complete and bring to the first day of training.

Application for youth court membership:

Include a copy of the application as an Appendix to the manual. Indicate where copies of the application are kept, both physically, if applicable, and electronically. Detail what the goals of the application are, and what information is critical, should a new version be developed.

EXAMPLE:

The application describes the program and communicates the professional expectations related to the youth court. Applicants must explain why they want to join the program and what unique skills they will bring to the court. The application includes one essay question about applicants' interest in the youth court, in addition to short-answer questions on their skills and experience, particularly working with groups. See the Appendix for a copy of the youth court application. The application is also in C:\Recruitment.

RYC distributes the application in hard copy, by email, and online by allowing applicants to fill it out through our website.

Recruitment strategies:

List the recruitment strategies associated with each partner or group from which you recruit, such as any relevant contact names and numbers/emails for schools or organizations (which can also be compiled in a spreadsheet or listed in an Appendix). Community-based youth courts, for example, often recruit from local high schools, each of which may have a preferred approach to distributing and collecting applications, hosting presentations, and identifying students. School-based youth courts may use assemblies or activity fairs. Youth courts also use online bulletin boards, listservs, social media and other strategies to spread the word about the program and disseminate application materials, and each of these may have specific instructions, which should be included in the OM. Contact names and processes may have to be updated on a regular basis.

EXAMPLE:

School Partnerships:

Schools have different styles of working with the Rowland Youth Court; some details are:

- Fannie Lou Hamer Academy allows RYC staff to distribute youth court flyers and applications to students during lunch periods. Schedule appointments with Mr. Angelo Crespo.
- Baccalaureate School for Global Education has an after-school community service club (the hours of which do not conflict with the RYC schedule). Contact Mr. Peter Wilson about presenting to the community service club (and potentially other clubs). Mr. Wilson

recommends recruiting in early September, before students commit to other after-school activities.

- Rowland Charter High School has been a source of many RYC members for years. However, underclassmen typically have longer school days and are unable to make it to Rowland by 4:30pm. Contact Mr. John Dufour about speaking to juniors and seniors about the youth court during lunch.

Department of Probation:

The Rowland Youth Court encourages former respondents and other youths involved in the justice system to apply for youth court membership. In addition to calling former respondents, recruit probation-involved youths by presenting at the Department of Probation. Contact Ms. Roland or Ms. Henley at the Rowland Department of Probation to arrange such presentations.

Community-based organizations:

The local branches of the Rowland Public Library, the two local YMCAs, and the Newsome Houses community center typically allow us to post flyers – we are always looking for similar opportunities. In addition to posting flyers, ask about opportunities to speak directly with youths to pitch the program. We have sometimes been able to present to youth at the afterschool program at Newsome.

Selection process for training class:

Detail the mechanism for choosing members to participate in the training for youth court, and any selection criteria. For some courts, those selected for training will automatically be considered youth court members if they successfully complete the training; for others, there is a further selection process that occurs after the training, either based on achieving certain training goals (or passing a test) or based on the number of member slots available relative to the number in the training class. Include details on how orientation sessions or group interviews are conducted, as well as the process for individual interviews, if these are used.

EXAMPLE:

Evaluating applicants

First, review all applications. Invite any applicants that meet age criteria and have completed the application to a group interview. Information about the group interviews, including the agenda and all needed materials, are located in C:\Recruitment. Hold the group interviews at the same time a regular training session would begin, to reality-test whether applicants can fit the program into their schedules. At the end of the group interviews, let applicants know that they will be notified by phone whether or not they are selected to participate in the training class. Conduct one interview for former respondents, one for at-large applicants, and one make-up interview for applicants who missed their initial appointments. We let former respondents know that we do not share their history with the youth court with other applicants or continuing members, but that continuing members may

recognize them. It is up to them whether or not to disclose they have been before the youth court. However, we find that nearly all former respondents share this information through the course of the training by choice.

Selecting trainees

Try to have a diverse group in terms of ages, race/ethnicity, schools, and neighborhoods. Select enough trainees to yield enough members to fill vacancies on the youth court. For example, if you anticipate needing to fill ten spots on the youth court, accept at least twenty applicants for training.

Notifying applicants and required documents

Call selected applicants and congratulate them on being accepted to the upcoming training class. Confirm applicants' addresses and mail them each a congratulatory letter and the Trainee Packet, which includes all necessary paperwork, to complete and bring to the first day of training.

C:\Training\Forms\Training Packet.doc. The day before training begins, contact all trainees to remind them.

◆ **Training**

Timeline:

The OM can provide direction on how to develop a timeline for implementing a full training, based on the curriculum being used. If there are options—for example, doing all lessons after school vs. doing some after school combined with a Saturday session—you can break these down as well.

EXAMPLE:

RYC training lasts about two months, with training sessions held two afternoons per week for two hours each day, for a total of 30 to 40 hours. Below is the most recent schedule:

Training Day	Topic covered	Guest Speaker
Day 1 – Monday, 10/17	Introduction to RYC; Expectations of Program	
Day 2 – Wednesday, 10/19	Overview of Juvenile Justice System	Hon. Elise Whitman, Family Court
Day 3 – Monday, 10/24	Overview of Restorative Justice	
Day 4 – Wednesday, 10/26	Reaching the Respondent	Jessica Kaymon
Day 5 – Monday, 10/32	Precision Questioning & Role of the Juror	
Day 6 – Wednesday, 11/2	Critical Thinking & Objectivity	
Day 7 – Monday, 11/7	Sanctions, Consequences & Deliberations	RYC Alumni

Day 8 – Wednesday, 11/9	Hearing Walk-Through; Role of Judge & Bailiff	
Day 9 – Monday, 11/14	Role of the Community Advocate	Brett Trevors, Assistant District Attorney
Day 10 – Wednesday, 11/16	Role of the Youth Advocate (Intake Interviews & Questioning)	James Bradshaw, Attorney, Legal Aid Society
Day 11 – Monday, 11/21	Role of the Youth Advocate (Statements)	
Day 12 – Monday, 11/28	Public Speaking & Review of Advocate statements	Officer Stanis
Day 13 – Wednesday, 11/30	Mock Hearings	
Day 14 – Monday, 12/5	Review Session	
Day 15 – Wednesday, 12/7	RYC Bar Exam	
Friday, 12/9	Grade Bar exams & RYC Decision Meeting	
Wednesday, 12/21	RYC Holiday Party with new & returning Members	
Tuesday, 1/3	Day 1 of Cohort 6 – team building activities	
Thursday, 1/5	Cohort 6 begins hearing cases	

Curriculum:

Indicate what curriculum is being used, and where it can be found. It may also be helpful to indicate when and how it was developed and any other background that might be relevant to someone considering revising it. If portions of it are copyrighted by another program or group, or some sections have been copied from published sources, note this (even if it's indicated in the curriculum itself). Also indicate where there is room or need for modification in the length or content of the training based on circumstances.

EXAMPLE:

RYC uses the Center for Court Innovation’s Youth Court Training Curriculum. A copy of the curriculum is in C:\Training\Training Curriculum.

We try to use the curriculum as written. However, we sometimes change the order of sessions based on availability of guest speakers. For example, we try to have an ADA participate in the “Precision Questioning” session and will work around the speaker’s availability. In some cohorts, we find that we need to deviate from the curriculum temporarily to focus on team-building activities, such as more ice breakers and group projects. If this happens, just pick up the curriculum where it left off after the focus on team-building.

Trainers and guest speakers:

Youth courts vary in how training is accomplished. Some, for example, use their own staff; some combine staff with guest speakers on particular topics; and some partner with law schools or other groups to deliver the training. Spell out who does the training, any experts that may be called in and how to reach them, and how particular training partnerships work. Include any other protocols for training staff or volunteers.

EXAMPLE:

The Rowland Youth Court typically uses the following guest speakers during training. Contact each speaker about two months before the training begins to inquire about interest and availability:

- James Bradshaw, Attorney, Legal Aid Society
- Brett Trevors, Assistant District Attorney
- Hon. Elise Whitman, Family Court

Materials:

Indicate whether there are materials that will need to be copied and distributed, or created for the curriculum, and how far in advance these should be prepared.

EXAMPLE:

Each staff member should get a copy of the curriculum, and review each session plan before it takes place. Prior to each session, copy the relevant handouts (alternatively, make all copies at once before the training begins).

One month prior to the start of training, place an order for folders, pens, name tags and binder paper for the training group.

At the first training session, distribute folders and blank paper to the participants. Instruct participants to put their name on their folders; they will use these folders to manage handouts distributed throughout the training. At the start of every session, distribute the handouts that will be used that day.

Jury pools:

Some youth court models employ a jury pool, in which youth who have not gone through the full training program serve as jurors for youth court cases. If your youth court uses a jury pool, spell out how participants are recruited and how they are trained.

EXAMPLE:

RYC has a jury pool of approximately 20 members each year. We use the jury pool to engage younger volunteers, youth who can't make the full-time commitment to youth court, and former respondents who want to

participate between their case and the next full training cycle. Jury pool recruitment starts after the training is complete.

Youth can apply to be in the jury pool at the start of 8th grade. We recruit jury pool volunteers through posters at local schools and through current members – we ask all court members to recruit one or two jurors as part of their commitment to the program.

Jury pool volunteers go through a 4 hour training which focuses on precision questioning; we give this training about once a month, or as needed. If jury pool volunteers want to take on other roles in the youth court, we encourage them to enroll in the next full training class.

We try to have 1-2 jury pool members participate in each hearing, more if we know in advance that we will be short on members for a hearing.

◆ Selection criteria

Youth courts may accept all youths who complete the youth court training process, or may select from those who have completed the training based on a final test, interview or other mechanism. Spell out how decisions are made, and by whom. If there are different groups of members, such as provisional members, or jury pool members, include the criteria for their selection.

EXAMPLE:

We select members based on the following:

- Bar exam: In the final session trainees take the Bar Exam (C:\Training\Bar Exam.doc and \Bar Exam answer key.doc), which tests their knowledge of youth court roles, offenses, referral sources, sanctions, and other pertinent information. Trainees are given two hours to take the test and must answer at least 75% of the questions correctly to be considered for membership.
- Participation: Trainees must be active participants in the sessions to the best of their abilities (for example, participating in group discussion, raising hands to answer questions, being engaged in the work). If we do not feel that someone is participating, we try to find out why, and provide some guidance on how to participate more. We note whether that trainee tries to improve his/her participation. If a trainee is disruptive to the program, consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether that trainee should be dismissed.
- Attendance: Trainees must attend 75% of all sessions. If a trainee is missing sessions, we try to find out why, and try to help him or her address those challenges. If a trainee misses too many sessions, consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether that trainee should be dismissed.

If a trainee cannot satisfy the above criteria, but demonstrates a commitment to the program, we can offer a “probationary membership.” Probationary members are held to the same standards as full members, except that they only serve as jury members. The probationary member

contract states that a probationary member may earn full membership depending on his/her performance for a set period of time (typically three months). To help a probationary member learn all youth courts skills, we have senior members mentor him/her during mock and real hearings. See the Appendix for examples of both full and probationary member contracts.

Jury pool members are selected based on their participation in the 4-hour jury pool training and their demonstration understanding of precision questioning, being unbiased, and the deliberation process. We don't use the Bar Exam for jury pool members; we try to include all youth who participate in the jury pool training if they demonstrate effort and positive engagement with the material.

◆ Member participation and attendance policy

Contracts and other paperwork:

Most youth courts require members to sign member contracts, obtain parental consent, and complete other paperwork (e.g., health forms, media release consent forms, emergency contacts). Specify what each 'member packet' should contain, where the forms are located, when the forms should be given out and expected back, and what to do if any of the forms are not returned, especially if there is an impact on members' ability to participate. The member contract, if used, should specifically detail the expectations for attendance, participation, and behavior, as well as the grounds for dismissal. If some sort of incentive is being offered, the contract should clearly state how incentives are to be earned or forfeited.

EXAMPLE:

Youth who are selected to participate in the RYC training program or jury pool are sent the "Trainee Packet" which includes the following documents/forms (C:\Trainees\Forms):

- Acceptance letter
- Consent to Participate, Rules and Regulations, Waiver of Liability
- Emergency Contact/Medical History and Permission to Provide Emergency Treatment
- Interview and Image Release Consent Form
- Youth Court Member Confidentiality Agreement

Participants must bring in all signed forms within the first week of training (participants 18 years old and older do not need parent/guardian signatures). All forms except for the Interview and Image Release Consent Form are required for participation. Parental consent is not required for youth 18 years old or older. No additional paperwork is required when a trainee becomes a full youth courts member.

Incentives:

Many youth courts offer members incentives to encourage diligent and consistent participation, such as community service credit or course credit for school, or the opportunity to earn commendations or rewards for attendance, progress, or participation. Clearly spell out what the incentive policy is and how incentives are to be earned or forfeited, and what the relationship is between expectations like attendance and any incentive system.

EXAMPLE:

For members whose schools require community service or volunteer hours, the RYC provides certificates of hours completed. The certificate templates are in C:\Members\Forms\cs certificates. On a monthly basis, the RYC provides awards for perfect attendance, most improved member, and "MVP." Except for attendance, we make sure we rotate these awards among the members, and some months we add other commendations. In addition to certificates for these awards, we usually give small gift cards, donated tickets to movies or events, or other token gifts if we have them. Award templates are in C:\Members\Forms\commendation templates. The folder has a simple spreadsheet that tracks who received what in each month, and we also add this information to the member tracker.

Attendance policies:

Detail the youth court's policy on excused and unexcused absences, the consequences for missed sessions, and the number of sessions that may be missed before a member's standing to participate in youth court is affected in any way.

EXAMPLE:

The overall goal of our attendance policy is to keep all members in the program through clear and consistent expectations and consequences.

Members are allowed to miss four youth court sessions without any penalty if they give staff notice at any time prior to start of session. If a member misses more than four sessions, or fails to give advance notice more than once, we meet with the member and discuss what is behind the participation problem. Whenever possible, we try to work out an agreement that encourages better participation; for example, we ask the member to commit to attending every session for the next two weeks. This is considered a "first warning."

If attendance continues to be a problem, we meet again with the member or talk by phone. The member gets one more opportunity to improve his/her attendance – if the member does not demonstrate any improvement staff can dismiss the member from the program. Whenever possible, the emphasis is on effort and relative improvement.

Ongoing expectations for participation and behavior:

Indicate what, if anything, is expected of members aside from attending youth court sessions. These can include general expectations about regular participation in sessions, as well as

guidelines for proper behavior. This can also address a youth court uniform policy if there is one. Specify what the length of a 'term' is for members and how many terms a member may serve.

EXAMPLE:

Each youth court term is six months. Members in good standing may serve for multiple terms up until they graduate high school (or turn 19 if in a GED program). Members are expected to:

- Attend every youth court session;
- Follow the Code of Conduct;
- Be respectful of other members, respondents, parents and staff;
- Attend at least one additional youth court event each month (trips, community service days, interviews, or other events); and
- Maintain the Oath of Confidentiality.

Grounds for dismissal or other disciplinary actions:

List reasons for and types of disciplinary actions. Grounds for disciplinary action may include behavior within or affecting the youth court (e.g., failing to maintain regular attendance, repeated disruptive behavior, failure to maintain confidentiality) or behavior outside the youth court (e.g., arrest, school suspension for certain infractions, chronic truancy). List the consequences that may apply, such as a hearing before the youth court, review by a youth steering committee, probation, temporary suspension, or dismissal from the program. Clarify which types of violations have pre-determined or default consequences and which involve more discretion on the part of staff. Include any responsibilities of staff as mandated reporters and how that is communicated to members.

EXAMPLE:

Through the signed member contract, every member agrees to abide by program rules and regulations ("Code of Conduct"), which include the following prohibitions:

- Any activity that is illegal under local, state, or federal law.
- Behavior that could be interpreted as discrimination or harassment, criminal or otherwise.
- Activities that pose a significant safety threat to others, including, but not limited to, carrying a weapon, fighting, and making threats.
- Activities which program staff determine to pose a danger to program members or staff.
- Possessing or using tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs during any RYC activity or on any property belonging to, controlled, or possessed by RYC, its agents, employees, officers, directors, or affiliates.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs during any RYC activity or on any property belonging to, controlled, or possessed by RYC, its agents, employees, officers, directors, or affiliates.

- Any sexual activity during any RYC activity or on any property belonging to, or controlled or possessed by RYC, its agents, employees, officers, directors, or affiliates.
- Getting arrested.
- Any other activity or behavior that RYC staff may reasonably conclude is inappropriate or illegal.

Emphasize to members that, should they face any of the above situations, the best action they can take is to report this to youth court staff immediately. Our first goal will be to help the member. Additionally, we see this as a demonstration of taking responsibility for his/her actions and may reduce the disciplinary sanctions.

In all cases, responses will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Program Director. Possible responses include: a hearing before the youth court, probation (with clearly defined expectations of improved behavior), or dismissal from the program.

Also, as explained to members in their contracts, all youth court staff are “Mandated Reporters” – if you suspect that a member is in immediate danger of hurting him/herself or others, or is being harmed by an adult, you are required to report the concern to the appropriate agencies. Contact the Program Coordinator immediately if this situation arises.

◆ Data tracking for members

Youth courts often find it helpful to maintain records on members’ attendance, participation, and progress. These records assist in documenting the work of the youth court overall (for grants and similar purposes) and also for managing the participation of individual members. Records of members’ performance and the roles they’ve taken on can help staff provide regular feedback to members, write recommendations if requested and document accomplishments like volunteer hours or other leadership activities. Whatever the method used to maintain records of this kind, specify where and how these records are kept and who is responsible for maintaining and updating them. Also specify the confidentiality requirements pertaining to these records: who, other than staff, can see them or request information from them.

EXAMPLE:

Use the member tracking sheet (C:\Program Management\Data\member Tracking Sheet.xls) to record information about members, beginning from when they start as trainees. The sheet captures basic contact information for the trainee/member as well as parents or guardians. On an on-going basis we record attendance and lateness each week, roles played, community service hours performed, and monthly commendations earned. The Assistant Coordinator updates the tracker on Fridays with data from the past week. We use this information for grant reports, to write individual letters of recommendation, and to complete documentation for school community service credit.

◆ Graduation and term completion

Ceremony:

Youth courts often hold ceremonies or events to honor the achievement of members who have completed a certain period of youth court membership and/or induct new members into the court. Indicate when ceremonies for youth court members are typically held (e.g., once a year, at the end of every term), and provide as much guidance on the planning protocols as possible. This can include time lines for planning, location and contact information for event space, sample certificates, programs and invitations, invitation lists and any standard rituals.

EXAMPLE:

Graduation/Induction ceremonies:

- Purpose is to recognize the accomplishments of current/departing members and welcome new members.
- When: June and December, after training and selection.
- Location: In our space or at a free community space. See C:\Events\Locations.doc for a list of options.
- Program: Brief presentation by staff, recognition of members who accumulated the most community service hours, speech by current/departing members, certificate ceremony for departing members, and certificate ceremony for new members. (C:\Events\Graduation\Program.doc)
- Food/beverages: We provide a causal dinner with beverages. Staff usually provide desserts they have made themselves. See C:\Events\Caterers.doc for catering options.
- Guest list: (C:\Events\Graduation\Guest list.doc)
 - Youth court participants and their family members;
 - Referral sources (representatives from the Department of Probation, the Rowland Police Department, and schools that refer cases);
 - Sanctions partners;
 - Local officials;
 - Community members;
 - Press contacts;
 - Current and potential funders; and
 - Representatives from schools whose students are graduating from or being inducted onto the youth court.
- Basic timeline: (C:\Events\Graduation\Work plan.xls)
 - Two months in advance:
 - Identify location, date and time
 - Secure keynote speaker
 - One month in advance: Invite guests by mail (C:\Events\Graduation\Invite.doc)
 - Identify youth speaker

- Hire caterer/identify volunteer bakers
- Two weeks in advance:
 - Follow up with invitees by phone and email
 - Finalize script
- One week in advance:
 - Rehearse with members
- One week post event:
 - Send thank you letters to keynote speaker and distinguished guests (C:\Events\Graduation\Thank you.doc)

Transitioning:

If new members will be integrated into an existing court with returning members, spell out any strategies used for managing the transition, such as assigning peer mentors, team building exercises, and any policy for new members taking on particular roles on the court.

EXAMPLE: PEER MENTORING PROGRAM

At the start of every cohort, we match a returning member mentor to one new member. Sometimes we also create smaller teams that consist of both new and returning members. We have members prepare for cases and debrief in their small groups or pairs.

For the first few hearing nights in a new cohort, new members only serve on the jury, while returning members perform the major speaking roles. As new members become more accustomed to youth court proceedings, they should begin “shadowing” returning members in other roles. For example, a new member shadowing the bailiff should walk around with him as he greets the respondent and guardian, communicates with the members about when the case will commence, and escorts everyone into the courtroom. During the course of the hearing, the new member sits with the bailiff and takes note of how he performs the role. The bailiff (returning member) should offer the new member tips about performing the role and explain all of the steps in detail. A new member shadowing the youth advocate should sit in on the intake interview and then observe the rest of the hearing. As new members become more confident in the roles, reverse the shadowing. That is, have a newer member perform one of the major roles, while a more experienced member observes and offers assistance as needed.

CASE REFERRALS

◆ Referral sources

List all of the agencies and schools that make case referrals to the youth court. For each referral source, detail what the status of cases are that are referred to youth court; the complete protocol for referrals, including what is explained to the youth and family members, when, and by whom; and any key personnel involved, with contact information. Specify if there are any source-specific timelines for hearing referred cases.

EXAMPLE:

The Rowland Youth Court accepts referrals from the following sources:

Rowland County Department of Probation: The youth court accepts “adjustment,” “supervision,” and PINS cases from the Department of Probation. Probation refers adjustment cases to youth court with the goal that the respondent completes his sanctions before the 60 days expire and that the respondent will comply with all youth court sanctions. Youths who are being supervised by probation officers (referred to as “supervision” cases) have typically been arrested multiple times. A probation officer may refer a supervision case to youth court for a specific incident or for chronic behavior (such as missing school or probation meetings). As with adjustment cases, youths on supervision complete youth court sanctions as a condition of their probation cases. Probation officers send referrals by fax to the youth court.

- Contact: Officer John Lynch, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Rowland Police Department: The Rowland Police Department (RPD) refers juveniles who have been arrested for misdemeanors or violations. The officers can also refer cases to the youth court when officers stop youths for inappropriate behavior but do not formally arrest and process them. RPD refers these cases directly to the youth court via a faxed referral form. Officer Ann Smith is the primary contact for youth court referrals; she trains the other officers in identifying juveniles that are appropriate for youth court. RYC receives faxed referrals on an on-going basis.

- Contact: Officer Ann Smith, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Schools: The most common referrals from schools are for fighting, insubordination, violating school policies (e.g., cell phones, uniforms), and truancy. The schools send referrals by fax. We reach out to the main contact at the beginning of every marking period to confirm that the school will continue to use the youth court and to find out how we can increase referrals. We get referrals from the following schools:

- The Grand Street School, Dean Graf, XXX-XXX-XXXX
- Fannie Lou Hamer Academy, AP James, XXX-XXX-XXXX
- Lincoln Community School, AP Kyle, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Courts: RYC receives referrals from court for 16-17 year olds who have committed misdemeanors or violations. Typically, successful completion

of youth court sanctions is a condition of an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal (ACOD). The youth court receives referrals from the Rowland Town Justice Court and the Rowland County Criminal Court. The judge instructs the defendant to contact the youth court directly; during intake, staff complete the referral form by gathering the necessary information directly from the defendant.

- Frank Misonton, Town Clerk's office, (Rowland Town Justice Court), XXX-XXX-XXXX
- Janet Campillo, Clerk, Rowland County Criminal Court, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Enter all referrals into the Respondent Tracking Sheet (C:\Program Management\Data\Respondent Tracking Sheet.xls). File all open referral sheets in the file cabinet under "Open Referrals." Individual referral sheets will be refilled as screening progresses.

◆ Eligibility criteria

Address any criteria pertaining to the youth, such as age or grade, residency, or number of prior offenses, as well as criteria pertaining to the offense. As it may be impractical to list every type of offense eligible to be heard by the youth court, instead specify any exclusion criteria: for example, all misdemeanors except those involving gang activity or sexual offenses. List any other requirements, such as that participation in the youth court be voluntary on the part of the youth and the youth's parent or guardian, and that the young person accept responsibility for his or her actions as condition of coming to youth court.

EXAMPLE:

- Respondent age range: The Rowland Youth Court officially accepts referrals for youths from the ages of 10 to 18. When working with a respondent younger than 12, staff should be aware that the process can be more intimidating. Additionally, staff can make accommodations to standard sanctions to make them more appropriate for a younger respondent.
- Offense types: The youth court hears cases of assault, larceny, robbery, vandalism, possession of graffiti instruments, possession of marijuana, harassment, possession of alcohol, disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, criminal mischief, trespassing, truancy, and possession of a weapon (box cutters, knives, etc.). Other offenses may be accepted for youth court hearings at the staff's discretion.
- Acceptance of responsibility: A respondent must accept some level of responsibility for the offense to participate in the youth court process. The respondent's story need not match the referral source's story exactly, but the respondent must admit to being involved in the incident.

- Previous youth court participation: Most referrals to youth court are for “first time offenders.” RYC will accept respondents who have been previously arrested if sent by the referral source, but the RYC will not accept a referral for a youth who had previously been a youth court respondent and failed to complete assigned sanctions.
- Disqualifications: The youth court does not accept cases involving offenses of a sexual nature or respondents who identify as gang members. Staff should also screen out young people who are unable to fully participate in the hearing process (e.g., for emotional, mental health, or developmental limitations). Even if the youth court cannot hear a case, staff should offer the youth and family referrals to appropriate services.

◆ Data tracking

Youth courts vary in their approach to tracking cases that are referred to, and then accepted by, the program. Because data tracking is a very important part of maintaining the quality and consistency of a youth court, and is valuable for building relationships with partners and for securing funding, the OM should clearly spell out how all data pertaining to cases is to be maintained. If the program uses a spreadsheet, for example, the OM should specify when cases are to be entered, when they get updated, and, if possible who is responsible for doing so. If there are detailed instructions on using the spreadsheet or other data system, they can be included in the Appendix or elsewhere and referenced in the OM.

EXAMPLE:

Use the Respondent Tracking Sheet (C:\Respondents\Tracking.xls) for ALL referrals. Key points to update the spreadsheet are:

- Upon receiving a referral;
- After efforts to contact the respondent/parents;
- Upon scheduling a hearing;
- After the hearing to record sanctions;
- After contacting the respondent to remind him/her of scheduled sanctions; and
- As sanctions are completed, or the case is closed unsuccessfully.

SCREENING AND SCHEDULING CASES

◆ Outreach to youth and parent/guardian

The process for enrolling a youth as a respondent in the youth court varies widely, and may vary for a particular program depending on the source of the referral. For example, youth referred directly from court may be screened by youth court staff in the courthouse, while youth referred by the police or probation may have to be called by youth court staff, and youth referred by schools for school-based youth courts may be screened by staff shortly after the incident. Youth courts differ as well in the extent to which parent or guardian consent is sought or required. Specify the process for reaching out to potential respondents, including where it takes place (e.g., in the courthouse, by phone) and when, and when any necessary consents are signed. For some courts, for example, oral consent may be obtained over the phone in order to schedule the case, but written consents are signed when the young person appears for his or her hearing. It may be helpful to include sample scripts for outreach to youth and families, to make sure that the process is made clear and the benefits and limitations of youth court are fully and accurately described by whoever is doing the outreach.

EXAMPLE:

After receiving a referral, contact the youth and parent by phone. Cover the following points in the conversation:

- Introduce yourself and explain the youth court's connection to the referral source. For probation and court referrals, emphasize that successful completion of youth court will have a positive effect on the case.
- Highlight the positive elements of youth court (i.e., "Participating in this process will speak favorably for closing your child's probation case").
- Explain the expectations that will be placed upon the respondent and family (i.e., "Your child may be asked to do community service or complete other sanctions").
- Explain that the youth court does not determine guilt or innocence but that the process is intended to help the respondent reflect upon the experience and avoid similar pitfalls in the future.
- Emphasize that it is not a fact finding court, and that the young person must accept responsibility for the incident to participate in a youth court hearing.
- Ask if the youth consents to participate in the youth court. (Verbal consent is sufficient until the youth appears for his/her hearing, at which time the youth and parent/guardian provide written consent.)

If the youth agrees to participate in youth court:

- Schedule the hearing.
- Confirm the respondent's address and explain that you will mail a letter with a reminder of the date and time of the appointment and

will call the week of the hearing to remind them about the process and check in about directions and any new details.

- Explain that you will try to arrange a phone conversation between the respondent and the youth advocate who will be representing the respondent on the day of the hearing. Create a paper file folder with the respondent's name and referral name. Insert the referral form. Write the hearing date on the cover of the respondent's file folder. Notify the referral source of the hearing date.
- Mail the respondent's family a letter with the date and time of the scheduled hearing, directions to the youth court and additional information about the youth court. The letter template is saved in C:\Respondents\Templates.

If the youth does NOT agree to participate in youth court:

- File the referral form in "Non-consenting Referrals."
- Notify referral source.

Update the Respondent Tracking Sheet (C:\Respondents\Tracking.xls) with all attempts to contact the respondent/parent and the hearing date, if scheduled.

◆ Screening

In addition to confirming that the case and the youth meet all eligibility criteria, the youth court may take other steps to determine whether or not the case is appropriate for youth court. This may include confirming that the youth does, in fact, accept responsibility for the actions that led to the referral, as well as an assessment of whether the young person has the capacity to appear at a hearing of his or peers. Specify what the goals of any screening process are and how the process is designed to address them. For example, if you want to make sure that the young person accepts responsibility for his or her actions (whether or not he or she agrees entirely with the account provided by the referring agency), specify what questions the screener needs to ask to determine that. If there is a specific screening tool or questionnaire, reference it and include in the Appendix. List specific acceptable reasons for declining a referral and the process for reaching back out to the referral source if a case is not accepted for youth court.

EXAMPLE:

As per the Intake Form in the Appendix, staff should answer the following questions to determine eligibility for youth court, using information gathered during the scheduling phone call and at intake:

- Does the parent/guardian consent to youth court?

- Does the youth consent to youth court?
- Are there any factors that may make this case inappropriate for Youth Court, such as:
 - Gang-related
 - Sexual incident
 - Other
- Are there any factors that may make this youth inappropriate for Youth Court, such as:
 - Does not accept any responsibility for incident
 - Unable to participate in hearing or sanctions due to cognitive or psychological issues
 - Unable to participate in hearing or sanctions due to scheduling/commitment conflicts, such as employment, travel distance or court obligations
 - Other

◆ Scheduling hearings

Describe what happens after a case is accepted by the youth court. How are scheduling decisions made? How many cases are scheduled for any one youth court session? Note if the scheduling initiates entry of the case information into a data tracking tool, and/or the creation of a hard copy case file, how respondents are notified of their hearing dates (and how contact information is confirmed), and any process for reminder calls, emails, or texts.

EXAMPLE:

If the youth court can accept the case, schedule him or her for the next available appointment that also works with the family’s schedule. RYC can hear up to 4 hearings in one session. For probation referrals, attempt to schedule hearings to allow the respondent time to complete any sanctions before the adjustment date (some probation officers provide an adjustment date on the referral forms). Hearings ideally should be scheduled at least a few days after initial phone conversation (to ensure that the letter mailed home reaches the family in time) but no more than about three to four weeks in the future.

◆ Preparation in advance of hearing

Preparing docket:

Spell out the process for assigning roles to youth court members, including how far in advance roles are assigned and the basis for role assignments. Also include any process for creating docket sheets and packets of information for respondents.

EXAMPLE:

Assign the youth advocate in advance of hearings, to allow the youth advocate to conduct a pre-hearing interview by phone the session before the actual hearing. All other roles are assigned the day of the hearing.

Prepare the docket as follows:

- Pull the respondent's file folder.
- Insert an Intake Form (C:\Respondents\Intake form.doc)
- Insert Respondent Consent Forms (C:\Respondents\Respondent consent form.doc)
- Insert a Sanction Assignment form (C:\Respondents\Sanction assignment form.doc)

Advance outreach to respondents:

If either the staff or members of the youth court begin working on the case in advance of the hearing, detail what must be done, and what may be done if time or resources permit. For example, perhaps the youth assigned the role of advocate for the respondent obtains a case file early and tries to talk to the respondent in advance of the hearing by phone or in person, in order to prepare. Specify what information the advocate will receive in advance and in what form. Also indicate if any additional screening or advance paperwork is completed by youth court staff.

EXAMPLE:

At the youth court session immediately prior to the hearing date, have the assigned youth advocate call the respondent from the youth court office to start the pre-hearing interview. In this phone conversation, the youth advocate should ask about and address any of the respondent's concerns and begin gathering the information needed to making opening and closing statements on the respondent's behalf. Youth advocates should focus on the basic information (e.g., "What school do you attend?" "Do you help with any chores around the house?") and avoid asking about the incident during this phone conversation.

HEARINGS

◆ Before the hearing begins

Courtroom set-up or usage requirements:

While some youth courts have access to an actual courtroom, others adapt classrooms or other community facility rooms to serve as courtrooms. Include a diagram of how these rooms are set up, with guidance as well about how the room has to be reassembled after use, and where any items are stored. Also include details about any agreements with organizations providing space, as well as any specific instructions from courthouses or other agencies about access to the space and restrictions on usage. Indicate where respondents go when they arrive, where any intake or screening takes place, and where the jury and the respondent go during jury deliberation.

EXAMPLE:

The RYC rents space from the Community Recreation Center through an annual contract. A copy of this contract is in C:\Facilities\Rec Center. The Youth Court is responsible for the two rooms it uses; if there are any problems, contact the building superintendent at XXX-XXX-XXXX. The building closes at 7:30 PM; all staff and youth must leave by that time.

The first room is the Hearing Room, which is used for all hearings and member activities. The second room is the Intake Room, which is used for meetings with respondents and their families, jury deliberations, and any private conversations between staff and members.

At the beginning of the session, set up four chairs in the hallway outside the Hearing Room for respondents and their parents who are awaiting their hearings. The Intake Room does not require any set up. See the Appendix for a diagram of the youth court set up. The members are responsible for setting up the courtroom at the beginning of each session and breaking it down when the hearings are over. Members are also assigned minor cleaning tasks on a rotating basis, such as sweeping, wiping down tables, and cleaning up papers. All cleaning supplies are kept in the storage closet.

Member activities:

Indicate what members do from the moment they arrive until the start of the hearing. This may include any group activities that usually take place as well as individual preparation by members.

EXAMPLE:

Session starts at 4:30. Members who arrive before then can do the following:

- Homework, quiet activities, conversation with other members
- Cell phone use, as long as conversation is not disturbing staff or other members

- Limited computer use (for schoolwork or job-related research ONLY)
- Limited youth court phone use (to contact parent, school, or other business ONLY)
- Snacks they bring (they must clean up before 4:30)

Starting at 4:30:

- Upon entering, check board for hearing assignments
- Put away coats, bags, turn off cell phones
- Put on youth court shirt
- Set up room for ice breaker as determined by staff
- Participate in ice breaker (10-15 minutes)
- Set up room for hearing. Advocates can sit this out and begin preparing opening statements.

After last hearing:

- Return all hearing materials (clipboards, paper, pens, etc.) to closet
- Arrange chairs in circle for debrief
- Participate in debrief
- After debrief, return chairs to stacks along wall
- Return shirts to closet
- Assist in general clean-up of space

◆ Hearing process

Member roles and responsibilities:

List the roles played by youth court members during the hearing, and any possible variations used depending upon the number of members who are present. This should include direction on how to provide active roles to members who do not have specific assigned roles during the hearing.

EXAMPLE:

The RYC uses the peer jury model when there are at least nine members present for a hearing. If there are fewer members, staff can use a tribunal model.

For each hearing, there are six roles: (1) judge, (2) bailiff, (3) community advocate, (4) youth advocate, (5) foreperson, and (6) jury members (including jury pool members). The roles are described in more detail in the Training materials, but some important points are noted below.

If there are more than 12 available jury members, keep the jury to 12 jurors and have the remaining members act as observers during the hearing. The observer watches the hearing, and takes notes on what the participants do well and what can be improved in future hearings. After the hearing, the observer participates in the debrief by presenting his/her observations.

Write the names of members/roles on the front board as assignments are made. Staff rotate role assignments to ensure that all members get to play all roles. However, staff can assign roles as needed to respond to member participation. For example, if a member has been absent a lot, staff may want to give her a minor role until she is ready for the more demanding responsibilities of other positions. Similarly, at the beginning of new cohorts, staff assign more senior members key roles to demonstrate them for the newer members.

Staff roles and responsibilities:

Staff play various roles during the hearing, depending on the program and the youth court model.

List the responsibilities of the staff in managing the members as they come in, setting up the room, greeting and working with respondents and their families before, during, and after the hearing, and interacting with members during the hearing and jury deliberations. If possible, identify which staff members (by role) should cover each role.

EXAMPLE:

Staff are responsible for the following tasks. Typically, when hearings are booked back-to-back, one staff member will be the point person for one hearing and the other staff person for the other hearing, allowing some staff functions (such as intake) to take place while another hearing is in progress.

- Ensure members have set up hearing room.
- Welcome respondents and families, and ask them to wait for their intakes.
- Assign hearing roles.
- Conduct intake with respondent and family: Explain hearing process and what to expect, get signed consent for participation, answer any questions, and introduce youth advocate.
- Indicate to the judge and bailiff when the hearing is ready to begin.
- Observe the hearing, and intervene only when necessary. (*Note: see below for more information about intervening.*)
- Observe jury deliberations. Participate as needed to correct information or to refocus deliberations if they go off track.
- After the hearing, meet with the respondent and families to review the sanctions, answer questions, and provide detailed information about sanction assignments.

- After all hearings, lead debrief with members about the hearings, focusing on what the members did well and what can be improved for next time. (As the group becomes more adept at debriefings, staff can have a member lead them.)

During the hearing, be sure to let the members lead unless adult authority is necessary for the order and safety of the process. For example, if a parent/guardian tries to answer jury questions on the respondent's behalf or interject opinions, allow the judge to respond first, calling for order in the courtroom and redirecting the hearing, but step in if the judge seems hesitant or if the parent/guardian continues to interject.

Intake/screening of respondent:

Describe the intake process for respondents and their parents or guardians when they arrive at the court, including any specific orientation completed by staff and any role played by youth court members.

EXAMPLE:

When a respondent and his/her guardian arrive for a hearing, a staff member greets them and escorts them to the Intake Room. During the intake:

- Ask for and answer any questions.
- Explain the youth court's connection to the referral source and the purpose of the youth court.
- Provide an overview of a youth court hearing and court roles, emphasizing the role of the youth advocate, who speaks on the respondent's behalf and portrays his/her positive qualities to the jury.
- Emphasize that the community advocate serves as the voice of the community and that his/her statements are directed at the offense in general, not at the respondent personally.
- Explain that the jury will ask about the incident for which the respondent was referred to youth court. Ask the respondent to discuss some of the details of the incident, both in preparation for testifying and to confirm that the case is appropriate for youth court.
- Explain that if the respondent successfully completes all sanctions, s/he will be eligible to apply to become a member of the youth court.
- If the case seems inappropriate for any reason, stop the intake process. Explain to the respondent and guardian why the case cannot be heard by the youth court and that you will be notifying the referral source.

- Have the respondent and guardian complete the following forms (C:\Respondents\Participation forms.doc):
 - Consent to participate
 - Waiver of Liability

When you have completed the intake, introduce the youth advocate to the respondent and guardian and then escort the guardian to a separate location. Familiarize the guardian with terms that will arise during the hearing (e.g., “respondent,” “youth advocate,” “sanction”), discuss potential sanctions and answer questions. When the youth advocate finishes the interview and the youth court is ready, the bailiff should bring everyone into the courtroom.

If more than one hearing is scheduled for a session, one staff member should step out of the hearing room and conduct an intake while a hearing is still in process so that the youth advocate can conduct the pre-hearing interview as soon as the current hearing is over.

Hearing protocols:

Provide a basic outline of a youth court hearing, including the sequence of events from the time the courtroom is called to order through the final gavel. (Every detail that is provided to youth court members about the process is not necessary, assuming that this guidance exists elsewhere, such as in the training curriculum or other program materials.) If detailed information about each stage of the hearing (e.g., the length and goals of opening statements by the advocates, or what questions should be asked by the jury) is not summarized anywhere else that can be referenced by the OM, then use the OM to record it for program documentation.

EXAMPLE:

Youth court hearing outline (for a sample script, see Training Curriculum):

- Introduction: Once all members and respondent and guardian are seated, the bailiff announces the judge, the judge administers the Oath of Confidentiality, and the bailiff announces the case. The judge then asks the advocates to introduce themselves. The advocates introduce themselves to the court, using only first names.
- Opening Statements: The community advocate delivers his/her opening statement and then the youth advocate delivers his/her opening statement. After the opening statements the judge asks the respondent if he/she wishes to say anything on his/her own behalf. The respondent speaks if he/she wants to.
- Questioning: The jury questions the respondent, following by any questions by the advocates.

- Closing Statements: The community advocate presents his/her closing statement and then the youth advocate presents his/her closing statement.
- Jury Deliberation: The judge directs the bailiff to lead the jurors out of the Hearing Room to the deliberation room. When the jury finishes deliberation, the bailiff escorts the jury back into the Hearing Room. During deliberation, staff asks the respondent and parent/guardian to complete hearing surveys (C:\Respondents\Surveys).
- Sanction Delivery: The judge asks the foreperson to deliver the sanction. The foreperson delivers the sanction and includes an explanation. The judge asks the respondent if he/she understands the sanctions. The respondent responds. (If the respondent says he/she does not understand, the judge reassures the respondent that staff will explain the sanction in more detail.) The judge then instructs the respondent to meet with staff after the hearing to get further information. The judge then thanks everyone in attendance and concludes the hearing.

Hearing scripts:

Include, either by reference or in the Appendix, copies of any hearing scripts that are used by the court, such as any confidentiality oaths that are administered or other set language used by the judge, bailiff, jury foreperson, or advocates.

EXAMPLE:

We use two scripts:

- All members use a complete hearing script during mock hearings and training, and until they get comfortable with the process. See C:\Hearings\Hearing Script.doc.
- The judge uses the Judge's Script at every hearing. This is a script of his/her prompts and includes the Oath of Confidentiality that the judge reads aloud at every hearing. See C:\Hearings\Judges Script.doc.

Jury deliberation process:

If your youth court uses a peer jury, indicate the steps of the jury deliberation process and the role of the jury foreperson, including direction on how the jury is to reach a decision (e.g., by consensus, by majority rule) and any protocols should the jury be unable to reach a decision. Also spell out any role that staff members play during deliberation. In the Appendix include samples of any documents used by the jury, such as those used to guide deliberations or record sanctions.

EXAMPLE:

Cool-down

- During the walk to the deliberation room, jurors take time to silently collect their thoughts in preparation for the deliberation process.

Case review

- The jury foreperson summarizes the facts of the case in chronological order, any consequences the respondent has already faced because of the offense (e.g., getting grounded at home, missing class time), and actual harm done to the community by this respondent's actions.
- The jury foreperson asks for any thoughts or comments from jurors regarding the case summary.

Consideration of sanctions and consensus

Jurors must select sanctions that fit the offense before the court (not previous offenses or other behavior shared during testimony) and offer fact-based reasons for their decision. Jurors may select any combination of sanctions and may decide to not assign any sanctions at all (although this is rare and must be clearly justified by the evidence). It is extremely important that jurors work as a team and come to an agreement and that those in minority opinions feel that they have been heard and are supportive of the group's decision. The foreperson's goal is to create a list of sanctions that all of the jurors can agree on, even if individual jurors have differences of opinion on specific sanctions.

- The foreperson reviews all sanctions available from the youth court. The foreperson names each sanction option out loud and asks for votes for and against every sanction option.
- If the votes for a specific sanction are **unanimous**: The foreperson records the group's decision and moves to the next sanction option.
- If the votes for a specific sanction are **not unanimous**: The foreperson asks jurors to state why they think the sanction is or is not appropriate, reminding them to base their reasons on the case review and the goals of the youth court. After all jurors have had an opportunity to share their reasoning, the foreperson can suggest a modification to the sanction so that the majority of jurors agree with it. (For example, the foreperson can modify the number of assigned community service hours or the topic of an assigned essay). The foreperson then asks the jury to re-vote on the sanction, with the majority ruling on the final decision for that sanction.

Confirmation

- After all sanctions have been voted on and discussed, the foreperson reads the proposed sanction(s) to jurors and calls for confirmation.
- Jurors verbally confirm the sanction(s).
- Once jurors confirm the sanction(s), it is documented on the Jury Sanction Slip and considered locked.
- The bailiff leads the jury back into the courtroom.

Staff do not intervene in the jury deliberation, with the following exceptions: to clarify/correct case facts, to instruct the foreperson to focus the group if they go off topic, to clarify information about available sanctions, or to answer questions that arise. If the jury is unable to reach a sanction, work with the foreperson and jurors to reach the best decision possible, and discuss the challenges during the hearing debrief later.

◆ After the hearing ends

Post-hearing meeting with respondent:

Specify the steps for finalizing the hearing process with the respondent, including any post-hearing meetings with staff and any paperwork that has to be completed by the respondent at the end of the hearing. Indicate how respondents are provided instructions for completing their sanctions, and by whom, as well as any process for making referrals to additional services.

EXAMPLE:

Immediately after the hearing, staff meets with the respondent and his/her guardian in a private space while the youth court members remain in the courtroom to debrief and/or prepare for the next case. The staff covers the following in the post-hearing interview:

- Ask and answer any questions.
- Assess their experience of the process. (Example: "Do you feel the questions were fair?", "Was the hearing what you expected?")
- Recap the jury's decision and review the sanctions in detail. Fill out an assignment sheet and give to the respondent (C:\Sanctions\Assignment Sheet). For community service or workshops, schedule a service date and enter into the sanction calendar. (C:\Sanctions\Calendar). For community service, give respondent the relevant handout with directions and instructions (C:\Sanctions\Community service instructions).
- Discuss with the parent/guardian how the respondent can successfully complete the sanction, and enlist his/her help addressing any possible barriers to successful completion. For example, discuss with the respondent and the parent/guardian whether the respondent will report for a sanction directly from school or go home first and how he/she will travel to the sanction

site. (Guardians are not required to accompany respondents to sanctions but are welcome to.)

- Remind the respondent that if s/he successfully completes all sanctions, s/he will be eligible to apply to become a member of the youth court.
- The Rowland Youth Court provides a list of available social services to all respondents and parents (C:\Respondents\Social services.doc). If staff determine a specific social service need, such as educational advocacy, specifically mention appropriate resources to the respondent and/or parent during the post-hearing debrief.

Update the Respondent Tracking Sheet (C:\Respondents\Tracking.xls) with sanction assignments.

Post-hearing debrief with members:

Most youth courts conduct some post-hearing review with members. Indicate when these are done (for example, after each case or at the end of the day), and what the basic protocol and goals of the debriefing process are.

EXAMPLE:

At the end of every session, after all hearings (mock or real) have been completed, debrief to help members improve their skills and work as a team. Have members sit in a circle. Ask the first question, and have each member respond. Then ask the second question, and have each member respond. You can also have the judge lead the debrief. You can also ask questions that address a specific challenge or accomplishment that occurred during the day's hearings.

- What is something another member, or the whole group, did well during the hearing?
- What is something you or the group can improve for future hearings? (Note: if the group dynamic supports it, you can have members provide constructive criticism to other individual members.)

SANCTIONS AND SERVICES

◆ Sanction options

Include a description of each sanction option that the jury or judge(s) may consider, including community service, workshops, written reflections like essays or letters of apology, and any other options. For each community service option, indicate whether the project is conducted and supervised by youth court staff or by a partner organization; if the project is undertaken with a partner in any manner, include contact names and information, and the usual process for maintaining contact and collaboration.

EXAMPLE:

Community service:

- The Rowland Reformed Church food pantry and soup kitchen, every Wednesday 4PM- 6PM. Up to 5 participants. Contact: Jane Smith, XXX-XXX-XXXX.
 - A RYC staff member must accompany and supervise respondents.
 - Respondents assist with packing grocery bags with nonperishable food items to distribute to homeless or low-income residents. Respondents might also assist with preparing food, serving meals, or organizing supplies.
 - It is the RYC staff member's responsibility to find appropriate tasks and keep respondents engaged.
- The East River State Park, every Saturday, 9 AM – 12 PM. Up to 2 participants (up to 4 participants during summer months). Contact: Joe Jones: XXX-XXX-XXXX.
 - Respondents help with general upkeep and projects around the park such as pulling weeds, pruning trees branches, and raking leaves. The park director makes an effort to keep the service interesting and to do projects, such as planting flowers or trees, from which respondents can learn new skills.
- Rowland Police Department, every Saturday, 1PM- 6PM. Up to 5 participants. Contact: Officer Maria Black, XXX-XXX-XXXX.
 - Officers take the respondents around the neighborhood to tear down illegally posted flyers, remove abandoned bicycles, and improve the area.
 - Performing community service at the Rowland Police Department gives respondents the opportunity to get to know the auxiliary officers as individuals. Officers also use the opportunity to give respondents some insight into their responsibilities.
- Community Mural Project, Thursday afternoons, 4PM – 6PM from October to May. Up to 4 participants. Contact: Jose Sanchez, XXX-XXX-XXXX.

- Respondents contribute to art projects in various capacities, such as cutting tiles for mosaic projects, cleaning brushes, or stuffing envelopes for mass mailings.
- Respondents who do well with their community service are encouraged to get involved in the organization's other programs, which include after-school activities and a paid summer internship through the Summer Youth Employment Program.
- Additionally, the youth court has partnered with the Ascension Church of Rowland, Town Square, Rowland Community Clean Up, and other organizations for performing community service. The youth court also partners with the Rowland Theatre Company for its Leadership Theatre Workshop.

Workshops run by the youth court staff:

- Conflict Resolution, every other Monday, 4PM – 6PM, 3-10 participants.
- Decision Making, every other Tuesday, 4PM – 6PM, 3-10 participants.
- Setting Goals, every other Wednesday, 4PM – 6PM, 3-10 participants.

Written reflection:

- Essay: Essays are intended to help respondents reflect on their decisions surrounding the incidents for which they were referred to youth court.
 - Jurors determine the topic and word count. Jurors typically assign topics such as “How assault negatively impacts the community” or “How associating with negative influences may be harmful to your future goals.” Jurors also determine the word count for respondents' essays.
 - If respondents struggle with writing their assigned essays, staff members may assist by collaboratively brainstorming ideas for essays or creating outlines, particularly for respondents with lower reading and writing abilities. Staff members may also provide materials for respondents for guidance. For example, if a respondent is sanctioned to write an essay on how marijuana negatively impacts his health, a staff member may give him an article to read on the topic.
- Letter of apology: (regardless of whether or not the letter will actually be delivered to the recipient)
 - Jurors assign to whom the letter is addressed, but do not assign length or word count. Staff members screen and accept letters that meet the criteria determined by the jury.
 - Example 1: A respondent is sanctioned to write a letter of apology to the residents of a building where he was arrested for trespassing and smoking marijuana.

Even if the respondent does not know the residents and will not deliver the letter to them, the exercise will help him reflect on his actions and consider how he would feel in their place.

- Example 2: A respondent is sanctioned to write a letter of apology to a family member or someone else to whom he should actually deliver the letter. In this case, a staff member should read the letter first and retain a copy for the youth court's records.

◆ Confirming and monitoring sanctions

Process for ensuring that respondent knows what the sanctions are and how they are to be completed:

If sanctions are decided by a youth jury or judge(s), youth courts may vary in how specific the jury's assignments are. For example, the jury may assign a certain number of community service hours, but leave it to the staff to identify the right assignment, while in other courts, the jury assigns a specific community service activity. Describe how the sanctions are assigned, and then the process, which usually takes place after the hearing, by which the staff or members provide the respondent and his or her family with details of what to do and where to go. Also detail any procedure staff must follow to link the respondent to an external community service partner. Include the schedule for making reminder calls to respondents in advance of community service or workshop dates, or due dates for written submissions.

EXAMPLE:

For workshops and community service:

- Two days before the assigned date, call respondent and parent to remind respondent of date, time, and location.
- If staff attend the sanction (such as food pantry or workshop), staff use attendance sheet to record participation (C:\Sanctions\Attendance). For others, call community service site first business day after service date and ask for attendance information.

For written reflection:

- Respondents may bring written assignments to workshops or community service sites. For probation referrals, respondents may drop assignments off with their probation officers.
- One week before due date, call respondent and parent to remind respondent of sanction and how to submit assignment.
- One day before due date, call respondent and parent to remind respondent of sanction and how to submit assignment.
- If delivered by email or through a probation officer, call respondent and parent to confirm receipt.

We try to close each case within 2 months of the initial hearing date with the following specific goals:

- For probation-referred cases, encourage respondents to complete sanctions before the adjustment date. However, respondents can still complete their sanctions after their probation officers have closed their cases.
- School-referred cases should be handled and closed in conjunction with the school's timeline. When scheduling school referrals, discuss the anticipated timeline with the referral source. Follow up with the school's liaison to the youth court after scheduling the hearing and after the hearing itself to inform the school of the anticipated completion dates.
- Referring courts typically have specific deadlines for the respondent to attend a youth court hearing and complete any assigned sanctions based on the court case's disposition. Staff should be able to get that information during intake, and use it to motivate the respondent to complete the process in time.

If the respondent fails to complete SOME assigned sanctions, the case may be considered successful or unsuccessful based on the determination of the referral source:

- Immediately after a missed sanction assignment, contact the respondent and parent by phone and attempt to reschedule the sanction.
- If you are unable to speak with the respondent or parent within one week of a missed sanction assignment, send a letter informing the respondent he/she is at risk of failing to complete youth court. Use the template applicable to the case's referral source (C:\Compliance tracking\Warning letters). After three days, attempt to contact respondent and parent again by phone.
- If you do not receive a response within two weeks of sending the warning letter send a letter informing the respondent that, due to non-compliance with some assigned sanctions, the case has been referred back to the referral source, who will determine whether the respondent met the conditions of the referral.

If the respondent fails to complete ALL assigned sanctions:

- Immediately after a missed sanction assignment, contact the respondent and parent by phone and attempt to reschedule the sanction.
- If you are unable to speak with the respondent or parent within one week of a missed sanction assignment, send a letter informing the respondent he/she is at risk of failing to complete youth court. Use the template applicable to the case's referral source (C:\Compliance tracking\Warning letters). After three days, attempt to contact respondent and parent again by phone.
- If you do not receive a response within two weeks of sending the warning letter, the case is closed as "unsuccessful." Send a letter informing the respondent that, due to non-compliance with

assigned sanctions, the case has been closed and this information is being provided to the referral source (C:\Compliance tracking\Closed unsuccessful letters).

- The youth court allows respondents to return to the youth court at any time to complete outstanding sanctions. However, staff must explain to respondents on a case-by-case basis whether completion of sanctions at that later date will affect their standing with the referral source. For example, Probation and the Police Department will look favorably on future cases should a respondent eventually complete all sanctions.

Notifying referral sources about sanction compliance:

Almost every referral source will want or require information about compliance with sanctions. Describe what information is provided to each referral source, when that information is provided, and the location of any templates or documents that are used for conveying the information.

EXAMPLE:

For all referral sources, we provide the following information when we close a case, using a compliance notification letter designed for each source (C:\Compliance Tracking\Referral Source Notification):

- Respondent name and date of referral
- Hearing date
- Sanctions assigned
- Status of compliance for each assigned sanction

Send the compliance notification letter when closing the case and notifying the respondent. Before sending, copy the letter and keep the copy with the respondent's file for future reference.

Since we are able to close most cases within two months of the hearing, this notification almost always goes out before adjustments dates (60 days from Probation intake) or ACOD (6 or 12 months from arraignment). If there is an exception, however, the referral source (Probation or the court) will contact us and request an update on the case. In those cases, provide the same information, indicating which sanctions are still pending completion and are considered open.

◆ Data tracking for sanctions and compliance

Youth court data tracking systems usually include components to track what sanctions have been assigned and whether or not they have been completed. Indicate what data is to be tracked, where, and by whom.

EXAMPLE:

Record sanction data in the “Hearing Info” tab of the Respondent Tracking Sheet (C:\Program data.xls).

- After the hearings, record all assigned sanctions. For community service and workshops, record assigned dates. For written reflections, record due dates.
- Update case info as warranted. For example, record when a letter of apology has been submitted or a warning letter is sent to a respondent.
- When the case has been closed, update the “Case Status” column in the “Hearing Info” tab.
- Mark cases as “rescinded” if the referral source revokes the respondent’s eligibility for participating in the youth court process. (Generally cases are rescinded when probation-referred respondents are rearrested before completing their sanctions.)

◆ Non-sanctioned service referrals

Many youth courts also assist respondents and their families with linkages to services in addition to sanction assignments. These may include links to tutoring programs, substance abuse treatment, counseling, or educational advocacy. Include a description of the available service linkages, or any resource guides or lists that are regularly used by staff. In addition, specify who makes the referrals and the extent of on-going assistance provided by the youth court in regards to these services. Some youth courts may be able to provide continuing case management services, while others can only provide names and numbers of services and/or letters of referral.

EXAMPLE:

The Rowland Youth Court provides a list of available social services to all respondents and parents (C:\Respondents\Social services.doc). If staff determine a specific social service need, such as educational advocacy, specifically mention appropriate resources to the respondent and/or parent during the post-hearing debrief. Review the handout periodically to add new options and keep the information up-to-date.

NON-HEARING SESSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

◆ Days when there are no cases

Because youth courts depend on referral sources to send cases, they are not always in control of case flow. Moreover, scheduled respondents may cancel at the last minute or not show up. Describe the range of options of activities for youth court members if there are no cases on a particular session day. These can include mock hearings or other practice activities.

EXAMPLE:

When cases cancel or are late, conduct an activity to keep members engaged and participating in youth court goals. Some examples are:

- *Mock hearings:* Conduct a standard hearing with a staff or youth court member as the respondent. (The person playing the respondent will shape the nature of the jury questioning. For this reason, staff members are generally preferable to youth court members as mock respondents.) Staff members may interrupt mock hearings to highlight things that were done well or could be improved upon. Rather than leaving for the deliberation room after the advocates' closing statements, the jury can deliberate in front of the other members.
- *Practice jury questioning:* Rather than conducting an entire hearing, focus solely on the jury questioning. As with mock hearings, pause the questioning to address questions that were done well or could be improved upon.
- *Practice jury deliberations:* Break the court in half and give each group the same fact pattern for a fictional case. Have the groups each read the fact pattern and determine an appropriate sanction for the respondent. The fact pattern should be complex enough that no single sanction stands out as a clear-cut, obvious answer and should contain enough evidence to help members support particular sanctions. After each group determines its own sanction, have the court reconvene and discuss the reasoning behind their respective sanctions.
- *Practice sanction delivery:* Determine a sanction for a fictional respondent and have members take turns acting as the foreperson, delivering the sanction to the court. The challenge is for members to recite the sanction accurately and to provide an explanation for the sanction.
- *Practice statement delivery:* If a respondent cancels at the last minute, have the advocates deliver their statements while waiting for the next case to practice public speaking skills. (This activity works better for community advocates, but youth advocates can fill in their statements with fictional details about the respondents.)

Once a month, the RYC organizes an event in addition to the standard schedule. This event can be a community service day, college visit, guest

speaker, RYC ceremony, or other activity. Such events can take place on Tuesdays or Thursdays in lieu of regular hearings or on other days, with sufficient notice for members. For example, every MLK Jr. Day the youth court hosts a community service activity for members and respondents. See C:\Members\Special Activities for information on past events.

◆ Professional development

Youth court programs often provide their members with exposure to colleges, law schools and law-related careers. List ideas and contacts for trips or potential future internships.

EXAMPLE:

- During training, bring in local professionals to speak to trainees about their careers and responsibilities. See C:\Training\Guestspeakers.doc for names and contact information. Speakers can also be requested from the NYS Unified Court System's Speakers Bureau. See <http://www.nycourts.gov/admin/publicaffairs/courtours.shtml> for more information.
- During training or early in the member cycle, staff can take participants on a tour of a courthouse. See <http://www.nycourts.gov/admin/publicaffairs/courtours.shtml> for more information.
- Once a semester, the youth court organizes and conducts visit to a local college or law school. Past visits have included Brooklyn Law School, Fordham University, and Stony Brook University.

◆ Community service

As a restorative justice model, youth courts offer community service as a sanction option not as a punishment but because service is a valuable contribution to the community. Programs often encourage youth court members to volunteer as well, either on specific service days or together with respondents as they complete their assigned sanctions. If your program does include this component, provide details on how this service is coordinated and tracked.

EXAMPLE:

Every other term the Rowland Youth Court hosts a "Volunteer Challenge," in which members compete to accumulate the most community service hours. Members are free to find their own volunteer opportunities (e.g., at their schools, or religious organizations) or to volunteer at the four sites where RYC respondents perform community service. Members are responsible for submitting their hours, and prizes are awarded to the top three finishers. For previous challenges the Rowland Police Department has donated funds to purchase gift cards for winners. We encourage friendly competition among members by posting the number of hours that each member accumulates.

APPENDICES

Include documents referenced in the manual: While programs will have most of their documents saved in electronic form, it is helpful to include any documents that a reader may want to refer to when using the operations manual.

EXAMPLE:

- Appendix A: Program Coordinator Job Description, Assistant Coordinator Job Description
- Appendix B: Evaluation tools: Member Survey, Respondent and Parent Survey
- Appendix C: Rowland Youth Court Application for Membership
- Appendix D: List of contacts for recruiting new members
- Appendix E: Member Contract
- Appendix F: Instructions for using data tracking system
- Appendix G: Respondent Intake Form
- Appendix H: Diagram of room set-up
- Appendix I: Hearing Script
- Appendix J: Jury Sanction Form