The Los Angeles Teen Court Program is an official juvenile diversion program of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. The program launched in 1992 and is an early intervention program that provides an opportunity for selected juvenile offenders to be questioned, judged and sentenced by a jury of their peers. There is no lawyer role playing and an official judicial officer presides over each session. Currently, the Los Angeles Teen Court program has 33 participating high schools and four new high schools will open during the upcoming 2016-2017 school year. Approximately 20,000 students per school year participate as jurors and audience members and an average of 800 juvenile offenders voluntarily participate in the program to avoid involvement in the traditional juvenile justice system. Teen Court links students, schools, teachers, parents, juvenile offenders, local police, civic organizations, volunteer attorneys, the Los Angeles Probation Department, and the Los Angeles Superior Court in a collaborative effort to reduce recidivism and encourage juvenile offenders to accept responsibility for their actions.

Teen Court is based on the philosophy that both the students who volunteer to participate as jurors, clerks, and bailiffs, and the juvenile offender benefit from participation. The premise is that a juvenile offender will not continue delinquent behavior after participating in a judicial process in which a jury of their peers determines that he or she violated the law and recommends an appropriate consequence. Each Teen Court case teaches the juvenile offender and the student volunteers: 1) The rules of the law that apply to the particular case; 2) The consequences of the offense; and 3) How due process is observed by court procedure. In addition, the participants – both offender and volunteer – learn about justice, power, equality, property rights, and liberty. Justice is demonstrated when the jury exercises its power of decision to either hold the alleged offender responsible for his/her actions or to exonerate him or her of responsibility by finding the minor not guilty. The property rights of members of society are addressed in cases involving vandalism and theft. Liberty is addressed when the desire of the individual offender is weighed against the rights of others. The court provides equal justice according to established rules and procedures.

Most Teen Courts are held at the participating high school in either an available classroom set up as a courtroom or a dedicated courtroom built on campus. As of 2016, seven of the 33 high schools have dedicated space and built courtrooms on their campus: Cabrillo High School, Dorsey High School, Gardena High School, Narbonne High School, Pasadena High School, Palos Verdes Peninsula High School and Wilson High School. Most use available classrooms, libraries or auditoriums, and a couple high schools use City Council Chambers and space at their local City Hall.

Any minor between the ages of 11 through 17 is eligible for participation in Teen Court. The minor should be a first time offender and eligible for early intervention by the Probation Department pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 236, or informal probation pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 654.

The Los Angeles Superior Court Teen Court Program has just been awarded the 2016 State Bar Education Pipeline Award. The Award will be presented during the 15th Anniversary Diversity Awards Reception on Saturday, October 1, 2016 in San Diego.