

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH COURTS

FIRST EDITION - October 2020

OUR MISSION

To constrain the school-to-prison pipelines by providing unique, peer-driven restorative justice models as alternatives to the traditional juvenile justice system

To empower young people to take an active role in addressing criminal offenses of their peers and expand access to justice

**ACT NOW
TO HELP TRANSFORM
“PIPELINES-TO-PRISON”
INTO
“STAIRWAYS-TO-SUCCESS.”**



“Justice for Youth by Youth”

President’s Message,

Welcome to the first newsletter published by the California Association of Youth Courts (www.calyouthcourts.com). As we stand in the gateway of the foreign COVID-19 world, everyone is compelled to think outside the box and find new ways to function in life situations with extraordinary limitations. Never before have our youth had to meet challenges like we face today and in the indefinite future.

The Association is leading the way to help protect justice for youth and implement processes which will empower youth to participate more effectively in solving the daily problems which we all encounter. In the past year, the Association has implemented changes to better accomplish its goals. The Association’s website has a crisp new look and feel that invites visitors to explore the many aspects of youth justice processes. A new informational brochure about youth courts and youth justice makes it easier to share pertinent information with interested youth and adults alike. The Association is also launching web-based educational offerings which will help maintain existing youth justice organizations and facilitate the proliferation and growth of new ones statewide.

Foremost among today’s challenges is the need to assure that youth of all ages are supported in their educational environments. When schools closed abruptly, most did not have a “Plan B.” The education system continues to struggle with the pressures to reopen schools and the hazards of imperiling the health of our entire population. Maintaining a student’s engagement in school processes during these transitional times is essential to the success of every youth in our society. Here is where youth justice processes and the Association can assist.

The Association’s abundant youth justice resources are valuable tools which can be tailored to each community’s unique needs to enhance student participation in classes and healthy activities. Empowering youth with knowledge while engaging youth in youth justice processes is the successful combination of resources which drives the success of each member of our future generations. The Association is a ready, willing and experienced partner with state and local educational institutions in accomplishing this goal.

Please subscribe (www.calyouthcourts.com) to this newsletter and join the California Association of Youth Courts in helping to lead the way forward. Together, we can make a positive difference in our children’s lives.

Charles H. Ervin
President – California Association of Youth Courts
Presiding Juvenile Judge – Sierra County Superior Court

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“JUSTICE FOR YOUTH BY YOUTH”

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO - The primary objective of the California Association of Youth Courts is to support the formation and continuity of Youth (Peer) Courts. Youth Courts have different styles of operation depending on the legal culture of a community. Universal training is accomplished via an annual Summit and roundtable events held throughout the state. Adults and students collaborate with persons interested in forming a Youth Court or who wish to expand or improve an existing program.

All Youth Courts accept first time, nonviolent offenders into the program. Referral processes vary in the communities. A typical referral process may look like:

- Youth are referred by school, juvenile probation or law enforcement.
- The respondent and a parent or guardian meet with a Youth Court representative to acquire program details and join the program.
- Youth Court volunteers interact with new participants.
- The respondent attends Youth Court on the scheduled day and time for hearing of the case.
- After the Youth Court jury reaches a decision, the youth respondent is given a determination of the consequences decided by the jury.
- The respondent is required to complete the consequences promptly, which includes sitting in judgment of another peer respondent.
- When the respondent completes all consequences as directed, the case is closed and will not become a criminal record. If the respondent does not perform satisfactorily, the case is subject to referral for formal juvenile justice proceedings.

Youth Court is a cost-effective community investment to reduce crime and build assets in our youth. It does so by diverting young offenders – referred by probation, law enforcement and schools – away from the formal juvenile justice system to a community-based system. Student volunteers, aged 12 – 18, are trained as advocates, bailiffs, jurors, jury forepersons, court clerks, attorneys and judges, to lead all aspects of the Youth Court program. A youth charged with an offense, such as vandalism or possession of drugs, may avoid traditional pitfalls of juvenile court by opting to accept a trial before a jury of teen peers. With a restorative justice focus, Youth Court volunteers help teen offenders to be accountable for their actions, reflect on their poor choices and commit to repairing damage done, while restoring relations with families, schools and communities. An offender in the program must participate on a future jury, perform community service and may attend counseling as a condition of the Restorative Plan. There is no criminal record upon successful completion of the program.

LATEST NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Programs Committee

- FREE WEBINARS - In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of our annual Summit, the CAYC is currently in the process of working on several free webinars to educate and train new peer court members for the year 2020-2021. These webinars are free of charge, and we invite anyone and everyone with special interest in this arena to please join in. As these webinars are developed, we will post them on our website, social media as well as in this newsletter...STAY TUNED FOR MORE!
- ALUMNI - CAYC is also in the process of reaching out to peer court alumni. If you have ever participated in any peer, youth or student court, not only in California but other states as well, we would love to hear from you. We are establishing a data base of alumni, so please feel free to go to our website (www.calyouthcourts.com) and add your contact information. We will add you to the list and keep you informed on how we're doing.
- STATE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD (SARB) – We are currently working with officials of SARB to introduce to them our CAYC program and the benefits of having a peer court within each and every jurisdiction of the State. A ZOOM presentation was presented to SARB on **September 24, 2020, from 1000 to 1200 a.m.** Presentation topics and speakers include, “A Student’s Perspective” (TBD); “Youth Court

Referral Process” by Karen Green and Judge Couzens; “Peer Court Models” by Mikki Chickocki (San Bernardino City USD), Nigel Holly (Antelope Valley), and Don Carney (Marin County); and “Parents, Educators & Students in Action (PESA)” by Attorney Seymour Amster. Stay tuned for an update on the success of this presentation. Early reports reflect this was a huge success. CAYC anticipates an invitation to the next SARB meeting in November.

- PEER COURT COORDINATOR DISCUSSION FORUM – Again, in light of COVID-19, the peer court coordinators forum will be held via ZOOM on **Tuesday, October 20, 2020 from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.** CAYC will be sponsoring a webinar on “**Taking Your Youth Court Virtual**”. This will be your opportunity to learn how to move forward with virtual hearings; it is free and is part of an ongoing series of topics to help youth courts. A link to this webinar will be posted shortly on our website www.calyouthcourts.com. If you have any questions, comments or inquiries, please feel free to contact organizer/coordinator, Sacha Marini @ hcteencourt@bgcredwoods.org. *This is a FREE forum and no pre-registration is necessary.*
- On September 30th, a ZOOM meeting took place regarding CAYC’s Virtual Summit. We are working with several vendors which to facilitate this event. Stay tuned for more news on our progress. Coordinating is Jennifer (Richards) Coulter, Program Director, Youth Options Shasta, Jennifer@YOShasta.org.
- CRITICAL OUTREACH – CAYC is currently reaching out to all State Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police to garner their support of CAYC and the peer court process. If you know any Chiefs or Sheriffs, please enlighten them about your involvement and encourage them to visit the CAYC website for more information.
- **In future issues of this newsletter, we will be “spotlighting” Teen Courts as well as students, and their voices. Please feel free to submit information about your court and/or student via e-mail to Board Member, Derek Beverly at (derek.beverly@gmail.com).**

Administration Committee

- ANNUAL MEETING – In light of COVID-19, our annual meeting this year was held via ZOOM on **Tuesday, September 22, 2020 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.** If you would like to attend, please feel free to contact us either by phone at (916) 663-1272 or via email at inquiry@calyouthcourts.com.
- BOARD MEMBER APPLICATIONS, DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – CAYC is in the process of developing and/or implementing the following subject matters:
 - Duties and Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and Its Members;
 - Role, Engagement and Supervision of the Youth Advisory Board.

Fundraising/Marketing Committee

- GRANTS – CAYC is in the process of making application for several grants and other funding resources. One such grant under consideration is “Substance Use Disorder Prevention.”
- *Since we are a private/non-profit organization we rely heavily on grants and other funding (private/corporate) sources.* Please check out our website (www.calyouthcourts.com) and hit the link to subscribe and donate. *Your tax-deductible donation will serve to help our program and the youths of today.*

DONATE TODAY, KEEP CAYC STRONG

**JOIN OUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NOW
SUBSCRIBE TODAY, FREE MEMBERSHIP**

BE SURE TO CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK, PINTEREST, AND TWITTER!

ARTICLE OF INTEREST

YOUTH COURTS: PROMOTING THE CIVIC LIFE OF OUR YOUNG GENERATION **By Hon. J. Richard Couzens, Judge of the Placer County Superior Court (Ret.)**

In celebration of Law Day on May 1, particularly considering the multiple stressors our society is currently facing, I want to share with you the vital importance of promoting strong civic engagement in our younger generations.

Respect for the law, rooted in the freedoms, rights and responsibilities written into the U.S. Constitution, needs revitalization – sort of a legal checkup and citizenship tune-up for our youth.

One great opportunity to give young people a positive view of our legal system is through youth court programs, currently operating in over 80 communities in California and in over 1,400 communities nationally.

The California Association of Youth Courts (CAYC) serves as a central point of contact for youth court programs across the state, delivering training and technical assistance, and developing resource materials to foster the creation of new courts and expand the operations of existing youth courts in California.

These innovative programs nurture in youth a respect for the rule of law, help develop positive citizenship attitudes, encourage civic engagement, and promote educational success through a diversity of service-learning opportunities, strategies, and activities. Youth courts are structured to provide swift interventions for low-level offenses, allowing young people to take responsibility for their own actions, to be held appropriately accountable, and to make amends to the community, in a positive and empowering environment.

In addition to imposing constructive sanctions for juvenile offenders, youth courts offer valuable civic opportunities for youth in the community. The peer-driven sentencing mechanism fosters positive peer pressure, where teens influence the behavior of other adolescents.

Youth volunteers actively learn the roles and responsibilities of the various parts of the judicial system. They act as law enforcement professionals, prosecuting and defense attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, jurors and even judges, to gain experiential knowledge of the criminal justice system.

Youth respondents and volunteers acquire valuable understanding about police and probation officers, youth services workers, and court administration, offering a path for academic and career-building opportunities.

Youth courts' alternative sentencing results in reduced costs per case compared to the traditional justice system and in lower recidivism rates. Expanding youth courts is a cost-effective strategy for reducing juvenile delinquency while cultivating community engagement.

CAYC is affiliated with youth courts throughout California and with the National Association of Youth Courts (NAYC) at the national level. These government and community-based programs offer diversion from the traditional juvenile court system for problematic youth behaviors such as chronic truancy, delinquent actions, and other minor offenses. Youth courts are predicated on their sensitivity to the unique needs and diversity of the people they serve – the youth, their families and community partners. Relationships with existing civic, educational, law enforcement, courts and faith sector organizations currently provide the prime outreach strategies for recruitment of youth court participants and community volunteers.

CAYC seeks to develop strategic partnerships to expand existing youth courts and improve their sustainability. As a result of these partnerships, the state's youth courts will bolster the educational and economic futures of young people, promote respect for our justice system, and foster life-long civic involvement.

Youth courts are truly “Justice for Youth by Youth.”

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Sierra County Superior Court

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