

## What Are the Benefits of Volunteering With Teen Court?

Volunteers learn valuable skills such as conflict resolution, public speaking, and problem solving. Teens meet and work with other teens from throughout Jefferson County. Teens are also placed in integral roles that can empower them to address problems within their community thereby developing and/or strengthening their sense of citizenship while interacting regularly with influential members of the community including judges, attorneys, and educators. All teen volunteers must complete a 16 hour law-related education training program enhancing their knowledge of the justice system and the consequences of crime. In addition, teen volunteers earn community service hours for their service in Teen Court.

## What Types of Cases Are Heard in Teen Court?

Teen offenders who have committed a misdemeanor or minor offenses may be referred to Teen Court. The most common types of cases heard in Teen Court are shoplifting, disorderly conduct, minor in possession of alcohol or drugs, and affray.

## Where Are the Hearings Conducted?

Teen Court is held at the Birmingham Division on certain Tuesday evenings and Bessemer Division the first Thursday evening of each month during the academic school year.

## Whom Do I Contact for More Information?

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[www.acfce.org](http://www.acfce.org)

**Teen Court Is Funded By:**  
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Jefferson County Family Court  
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# Teen Court of Jefferson County, Birmingham & Bessemer Division



Teen Court is directed and managed  
by:

## Alabama Center for Law & Civic Education

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## What Is Teen Court?

Teen Court is a peer sentencing court for juvenile offenders charged with misdemeanors or minor crimes. It is an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system that empowers youth and communities to take an active role in addressing the early stages of youth delinquency. Teen Court provides communities with an opportunity to ensure immediate consequences to youthful offenders through a peer operated sentencing hearing that constructively allows the offender to take responsibility, be held accountable, and make restitution for violating the law. Teen Court also allows young people to participate in the decision-making process for dealing with juvenile delinquency, while gaining hands-on knowledge of the juvenile and criminal justice systems as they serve as attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, and jurors.

## What Are the Goals of Teen Court?

The primary goal of Teen Court is to intervene in early criminal behaviors to reduce incidents and prevent the escalation of such behaviors. Teen Court teaches both teen volunteers and the offenders about the laws that were broken, the consequences of the offense, and how due process is observed through court procedure.

## How Does Teen Court Work?

Teen Court is a REAL sentencing court for youthful offenders. The offender is represented and prosecuted by teen attorneys and goes before a jury of peers who decide how the defendant will be held accountable for his or her actions. The jury is presented with evidence relevant to sentencing, deliberates and renders a binding sentence for the offender. Sentencing may include community service, papers, jury duty, finding employment and curfews. The jury cannot sentence any youth to a detention facility or jail.

## What Are the Roles For Teen Volunteers?

Teens participate by serving as defense attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, and jurors. Everyone is rotated through each position; however additional training is required for teen attorneys.

## How Does One Become a Teen Volunteer?

Teens interested in volunteering must be in 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade and in good academic standing in school. A completed application and teacher recommendation must be received **no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>**. Applicants must interview with Teen Court staff. Teens are selected based on their application, teacher recommendation and interview. Teens who are selected must attend a two-day training before serving as a Teen Court volunteer.

## Can Adults Volunteer for Teen Court?

Adult volunteers are a critical element of this program. Adult volunteers interact with teen volunteers and defendants directly impacting their lives.

## What Are the Roles for Adult Volunteers?

Judges (attorney) preside over Teen Court hearing sessions. Session Coordinators contact all volunteers scheduled to participate to confirm their participation and register teens the night of the hearings. Case Managers meet with the defendant and family immediately after sentencing and contact the client weekly to check on their progress. Attorney Coaches (attorney) help teen attorneys prepare cases.

## How Does One Become an Adult Volunteer?

Adults interested in volunteering with Teen Court need to contact the Teen Court Coordinator, attend a two-hour training, and complete a background check. Family Court reserves the right to refuse placement of any volunteer without an explanation.