



Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Teen Court

**Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2002-2003
Submitted April 2004**

***Executive Summary
Legislative Report
Teen Court
2002-2003 Fiscal Year***

Teen Court programs operate in accordance with the General Statutes of the State of North Carolina. The General Statutes pertain to providing these services to youth. Teen Court programs provide a community resource for the diversion of cases in which a juvenile has allegedly committed certain offenses for hearing by a jury of the juvenile's peers. As a participant in the Teen Court program the juvenile may be required to participate in counseling, pay restitution, cooperate with curfews, perform community service and/or participate in other rehabilitative measures.

During FY2002-2003, Teen Court programs were operated in 36 counties and provided services to 1841 juveniles. On average the Teen Court Program costs the state \$772 per student, which is 63% of the total cost of \$1226 per student. Evidence of the local support for these programs is the more than \$835,000 in cash and in-kind contributions from local funding sources to support Teen Court programs. Participants in Teen Court programs paid over \$6,600 dollars in restitution, worked over 33,000 hours of community services, were required to attend almost 1,200 seminars and write over 700 letters of apology.

The program's long-term goals include the reduction of juvenile crime, teaching youth to be accountable for their actions, developing responsible decision making skills, reducing the caseload for intake counselors, juvenile court and district court, educating youth on the justice system, promoting community collaboration, strengthening the family and promoting long-term behavioral change that leads to increased public safety. The number of programs increased from 26 programs to 36 programs (38% increase) between 2000 and 2003.

The Teen Court Program currently provides delinquency prevention programming to over 1800 youth across the state of North Carolina each year. There are currently 36 active programs that are responsible for providing over 33,000 hours of community service and collecting over \$6,600 in restitution. This report will update the growth of the Teen Court Programs in North Carolina and present statistical documentation of services during the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

Historical Overview

Legislative support for Teen Court programs began during the 1993 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly (Session Laws, Chapter 561, Section 89). Pursuant to this legislation, the Cumberland County Dispute Resolution Center received funding through the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to implement a Teen Court program for the 12th Judicial District. Funding was expanded during the special legislative session the following Spring (1993 Session Laws, Extra Session 1994, Chapter 24, Section 40). The \$75,000 appropriation that the AOC received at that time allowed for the continued funding of the program in Cumberland County, as well as the establishment of new programs in Buncombe and Durham Counties.

In fiscal year 1996-97, funding for a program in Rockingham County was added to the AOC's budget. In the 1997 Session, the General Assembly provided funding to establish new Teen Court programs in Orange, Columbus, Brunswick, Forsyth, Cabarrus and Wake counties (Chapter 443, Section 18.24). The 1998 Session provided additional funds to expand Teen Courts into Duplin, Onslow and Guilford counties (Chapter 212, Section 16.4).

The 2002 Session of the NC General Assembly transferred funds formerly designated for Teen Court Programs to the county Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) fund. These funds were to be used during 2002-03 for the Teen Court Programs in those counties. The Department gave DJJDP Area Offices the responsibility of Teen Court Program management when the Teen Court coordinator position was eliminated due to budget constraints. Since July 2002, Teen Court Programs have been incorporated into the ongoing county JCPC process with local support and oversight. During the FY 2002-03 Teen Court programs had a total operating budget of \$2,256,681, which included money received from DJJDP and local entities and in-kind contributions. Of this total amount, the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, by way of the local JCPCs, provided \$1,421,421. This represents an 11% increase in total funding and an 18% increase in Department funding for Teen court programs during the year the programs were transitioned to JCPC support. During 2001-02, the Teen Court operating budget was \$2,026,598 with a total of \$1,209,512 in Department funding.

The Teen Court Model

Teen Court is a juvenile justice program that provides a community resource for the diversion of cases in which a juvenile has allegedly committed certain offenses for hearing by a jury of the juvenile's peers. Teen Court programs serve many functions. In addition to providing a mechanism for holding youthful offenders accountable and educating youth on the legal system, teen courts also provide avenues for developing, enhancing, and practicing life skills. This effort enables youth to contribute to the betterment of their respective communities.

Teen Court is appropriate for first time youthful offenders charged with misdemeanors and other offenses that have not led to serious injury. Teen Court Programs also provide services to youth that violate school policies, such as truancy and

disorderly conduct. The target population for Teen Court consists of youth aged 10-17. Youth older than 17, can participate in the program if they are currently enrolled in an educational program. The program receives referrals from juvenile courts, law enforcement, school resource officers and other school personnel, district courts and parents.

In the typical Teen Court model the juveniles referred are first offenders charged with misdemeanor offenses to which they have already admitted guilt. Their cases are heard and a jury of juvenile peers imposes sanctions on the offenders. Although most juveniles referred to Teen Court are under the age of 16 when they commit their offense, some cases are heard on referral from adult district court. At the Teen Court session, student volunteers play the roles of defense attorney, prosecuting attorney, bailiff, clerk, and jurors. During the actual sessions, only the judge is an adult, usually a sitting or retired judge or an attorney who has been trained as a Teen Court Judge.

Once a jury has listened to the defendant's story and heard arguments by both attorneys, jury members retire to consider the appropriate constructive disposition. Sentences imposed by teen juries must fall within the guidelines that have been established with the concurrence of the court and the District Attorney's Office. Sentences may include community service work, the requirement to serve on a number of future Teen Court juries, attendance at educational seminars, attendance at behavioral counseling sessions or payment of monetary restitution within established limits. Defendants may also be subject to curfews, required to write letters of apology or other rehabilitative measures as deemed appropriate by the jury or imposed by the judge.

Each Teen Court program must have the endorsement of the Chief District Court Judge, Chief Court Counselor, and District Attorney's Office within the judicial district to be served by the program. Teen Court programs are required to report regularly throughout the year to the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention on the expenditure of funds, on the operations of the programs, and on relevant statistical data.

Program Support and Technical Assistance

The North Carolina Teen Court Association was formed to provide ongoing support for programs around the State, to sustain professional growth of the program directors and strengthen and expand the Teen Court model.

A major event sponsored by the association is the statewide Teen Court Summit. More than 300 adults leaders and teen volunteers participate in training seminars and mock trial competitions. This event offers the opportunity for programs to showcase what they are doing in their respective communities. The summit was held in April 2003 in Southern Pines and attracted participants from across North Carolina.

The association also sponsors an annual conference. This is an opportunity for Teen Court providers to network and explore ideas for "best practices" in Teen Court programming. The conference also allows the programs to receive updates on standards, operating procedures and Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

Prevention policies. The most recent conference was held in July 2003. The keynote speaker was Tracy Godwin Mullins, Director of the National Center for Youth Courts.

Statistical Comparison

Table I examines the growth of the Teen Court program by comparing fiscal year 2002-2003 to the previous fiscal years.

Table I

Measure	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
# Of programs	26	32	32	36
Referrals	2001	2111	2173	2076
Admissions	1502	1709	1862	1841
% Of Referrals Served	75%	81%	86%	87%
<u>Most Common Offenses</u>				
Affrays (fighting)	16%	16%	16%	19%
Larc/Poss Stolen Property	15%	21%	19%	19%
Shoplifting	13%	8%	12%	6%
Assault	13%	13%	13%	16%
Drugs/Paraphernalia	9%	9%	8%	9%
Property Damage	6%	6%	4%	3%
Weapon (not firearm)	5%	6%	4%	7%
Misd. B&E	3%	2%	3%	2%
All Others	20%	19%	21%	19%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<u>Results Arising From Teen Court Dispositions</u>				
Community Service Hours	28,324	27,617	31,704	33,454
Restitution Paid	\$5,218	\$11,029	\$4,483	\$6,687
Jury Duties Performed	3,303	4,068	4,634	4,238
Educational Seminars	1,032	1,266	1,717	1,197
Apology Letters	540	662	955	715
Essays Written	265	287	480	370

The statistical comparison in Table I above show that the Teen Court programs have had 38% growth since 2000. Services to youth with reported involvement in affrays, assaults and drugs/paraphernalia have increased, while services to youth charged with shoplifting and misdemeanor breaking and entering, have declined. In terms of court dispositions, there has been an increase in community service hours performed and over \$6,600 has been collected in restitution.

Table II
Teen Court Annual Summary
Fiscal Year 2002-2003

1. Referral received	2,076	a) Not accepted	137
		b) Not screened	83
2. Accepted for participation	1,856		
3. Total volunteers	3,891	a) Students	3368
		b) Adults	523
4. Withdrew before hearing	15		
5. Hearings conducted	1,841		
6. Number of completions	1,625		
a) Successful dispositions	1,369		
b) Terminations for noncompliance	256		
7. Dispositions ordered			
a) Community service hours ordered	38,040		
b) Restitution ordered	\$8,915		
c) Jury duties ordered	4,853		
d) Educational seminars ordered	1,684		
e) Apology letters	857		
f) Essays	453		
8. Dispositions Completed			
a) Community service hours performed	33,454		
b) Restitution paid	\$6,687		
c) Jury duties performed	4,238		
d) Educational seminars attended	1,197		
e) Apology Letters	715		
f) Essays completed	370		
9. Type of offenses heard			
Larceny/Poss. Stolen property	356	19%	
Affray	350	19%	
Assault	297	16%	
Poss. Drugs/paraphernalia	157	9%	
Possession of weapon (not firearm)	136	7%	
Disorderly conduct	130	7%	
Shoplifting	114	6%	
All others	301	17%	
Totals	1841	100%	

10. Referral Source	Number Referred	Number Admitted	Admission Rate	Number Complete	Completion Rate
School	26	24	92%	24	100%
SRO	824	712	56%	553	78%
Police	141	133	94%	61	46%
Sheriff	22	19	86%	12	63%
Juvenile Intake	575	532	88%	448	79%
District Attorney	33	26	80%	18	69%
Juvenile Court	156	144	92%	123	85%
District Court	286	246	86%	136	55%
Other	13	12	92%	10	83%
Total	2,076	1841	89%	1369	74%

11. Demographics of admitted defendants		
Race		
Black	930	51%
White	786	43%
Hispanic	61	3%
Other	64	3%
Total	1841	100%
Gender		
Male	1132	61%
Female	709	39%
Total	1841	100%
Age		
11& under	101	5%
12 & 13	517	28%
14 &15	794	43%
16 &18	429	22%
Total	1841	100%

12.Sources of financial support FY 2002-2003					
County	\$JCPC	LOCAL	\$IN-KIND	OTHER	TOTAL
Alamance	\$65,381	\$10,373	\$13,310	\$0	\$89,064
Bladen	\$82,749	\$0	\$10,120	\$0	\$92,869
Brunswick	\$46,023	\$0	\$24,000	\$0	\$70,023
Buncombe	\$25,000	\$0	\$9,397	\$0	\$34,397
Cabarrus	\$41,310	\$38,434	\$26,750	\$0	\$106,494
Camden	\$6,748	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,748
Carteret	\$41,030	\$0	\$15,094	\$0	\$56,124
Chatham	\$25,000	\$8,000	\$0	\$0	\$33,000
Columbus	\$38,829	\$0	\$8,900	\$0	\$47,729
Craven	\$15,956	\$0	\$6,985	\$32,787	\$55,728
Cumberland	\$53,220	\$3,885	\$2,880	\$4,000	\$63,985
Currituck	\$12,511	\$3,753	\$0	\$0	\$16,264
Davidson	\$30,000	\$0	\$11,250	\$0	\$41,250
Duplin	\$21,200	\$0	\$8,120	\$30,000	\$59,320
Durham	\$171,500	\$30,000	\$39,760	\$12,541	\$253,801
Forsyth	\$37,863	\$30,832	\$10,000	\$2,313	\$81,008
Gaston	\$40,925	\$7,898	\$57,705	\$0	\$106,528
Guilford	\$44,084	\$11,500	\$600	\$17,000	\$73,184
Hoke	\$64,984	\$4,500	\$3,000	\$17,510	\$89,994
Jones	\$30,000	\$0	\$8,000	\$20,000	\$58,000
Lenoir	\$21,328	\$4,174	\$4,600	\$0	\$30,102
Moore	\$80,685	\$11,861	\$22,800	\$1,200	\$116,546
Nash	\$6,307	\$2,586	\$0	\$35,073	\$43,966
New Hanover	\$30,000	\$0	\$6,000	\$2,457	\$38,457
Onslow	\$20,000	\$0	\$8,987	\$0	\$28,987
Orange	\$40,000	\$13,296	\$0	\$3,000	\$56,296
Pender	\$39,086	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$39,086
Pitt	\$26,902	\$27,637	\$0	\$0	\$54,539
Randolph	\$51,545	\$0	\$23,540	\$0	\$75,085
Robeson	\$6,360	\$0	\$636	\$82,750	\$89,746
Rockingham	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
Rowan	\$28,734	\$0	\$9,021	\$0	\$37,755
Sampson	\$27,906	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$27,906
Scotland	\$27,672	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$27,672
Wake	\$64,623	\$12,473	\$6,914	\$0	\$84,010
Wayne	\$30,960	\$7,688	\$3,220	\$4,150	\$46,018
Total	\$1,421,421	\$228,890	\$341,589	\$264,781	\$2,256,681

Impact on Juvenile Court

In addition to the 1841 juvenile defendants admitted for participation in Teen Court last year, there were an additional 3368 youth volunteers, as well as 523 adult volunteers who spent time assisting in the implementation of these services. Young people learned about the operating procedures of the court system and were exposed to adult professionals in the judicial system and law enforcement. The relationships developed had lasting effects among the youth served by the teen court programs as well as the youth volunteers. The exposure to the court system empowered youth with the understanding and familiarity with the processes of juvenile courts and the roles and responsibility of all involved.

This service intervention served 1841 youth in 36 counties to reduce further penetration into the juvenile justice system. Schools, school resource officers, and other law enforcement officers referred 888 youth served by Teen Court rather than charging the youth with juvenile complaints. At juvenile intake, another 532 were diverted from court into this program. District attorneys and judges identified 246 youth that were admitted to Teen Court as a disposition option instead of a more invasive disposition.

Teen Court allows the system to respond proactively and compassionately to juveniles at the first instance of problem behavior. The program undercuts the permissive message that is often inadvertently sent when minor offenses lead to essentially "no response" from a system over-burdened with more serious offenders. The combined effect of this "first response" that requires accountability, community services and interaction with victims. This effort is laying important groundwork that will reduce the escalation of delinquent behaviors for many teens being impacted by this program.