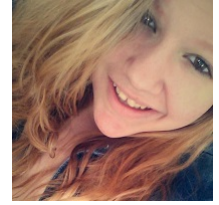


New Bedford Youth Court – An Alternative Court for Minors



by Danielle
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Youth Court is a program where troubled teens and pre-teens are sent for bad behavior. We receive cases about habitual school offenses, larceny, assault and battery and even small drug cases.

Every Tuesday a group of specially trained attorneys, like myself, meet at the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School around 4:30 p.m. to start preparing for our cases. Each night we have 3-5 cases to work. Usually we have two members on the defense team, they represent the respondent, and two on the prosecution team who represent Youth Court.

Youth Court is as real as it gets. It has everything an actual court would have, from the judges, to the jury (made up of our peers), attorneys, witnesses, SRO Officers, sanctions, and even bailiffs! One thing that is different about our program is that you have to admit to being guilty before your case. As a defense attorney for Youth Court your job would be to help lower the sanctions that your respondent will get and to help them realize what they have done is wrong. As a prosecution attorney your job would be to get the respondent a reasonable amount of sanctions and also help them to realize what they have done is wrong.

What are sanctions?



New Bedford Youth Court

Sanctions are the punishments the respondent or “client” receives for his or her actions. Sanctions range anywhere from community service – which every respondent receives at least 8 hours of – serving on the youth court jury (which every respondent over the age of 12 receives), essays, apology letters, boot camp, counselling, mandatory programs, curfews, house checks and even some extreme ones like drug tests and no-contact orders.

Youth Court has touched the lives of many adolescents making them realize that if they keep doing wrong there’s a good chance they won’t amount to anything in life. We’re very lucky to have this program in New Bedford because it helps kids realize there still is a chance for them to have a bright future. Usually when kids are sent to family court, they are sent off with a warning and they are more likely to re-offend sometime soon. In Youth Court you stay in our program for at least the next 6 months.

I’ve been a part of this program for what feels like a lifetime and being able to help kids my age is truly an incredible experience for me. Youth Court has helped me in more ways than one by bettering my public speaking skills, time management and most of all my confidence. The best thing about this program is being able to watch some of the kids you’ve helped mature and grow over time.

Website: **<http://nb-fryouthcourts.org/>**
