

## Dress & Behavior Code

### Introduction

Teen Court is a voluntary one-time juvenile justice diversionary program which allows first time juvenile misdemeanor offenders to resolve their offenses through an informal judicial process. The cases are heard by a jury of the respondent's peers who assess a disposition (sentence) appropriate for the individual and the offense. Teen Court is a "hands on" educational opportunity, which allows teen offenders and teen volunteers to better understand our system of justice. Upon successful completion of Teen Court, the respondent's case is closed and not forwarded to the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), thereby avoiding the offense creating a juvenile criminal record. The cases are real, with the hearings held in the St. Mary's County District Courthouse. In keeping with the significance of the proceeding, the following are the appropriate dress and behavior codes that are enforced for all respondents, jurors, and volunteers:

### Teen Court Dress Code

- You will be in a real court of law and should dress appropriately, meaning neat and clean attire only. Clothes must be worn in such a way that the chest, midriff, pelvic/groin area, buttocks, and upper thighs are covered with opaque material.
- No caps, hats, or other head coverings, except religious wear, are to be worn in the courtroom.
- Short shorts, short skirts, or tank tops are not allowed.
- No inappropriate logos on shirts. Clothing displaying or suggesting profanity; sexual activity through graphic images, words, or innuendos; weapons; drugs/alcohol or drug paraphernalia; violence; or tobacco products may not be worn, visible, or displayed on shirts.
- Clothing with identifiable gang/crew representation or paraphernalia may not be worn, visible, or displayed.
- Symbols or messages generally accepted to promote intolerance, hate, racial slurs may not be worn, be visible, or displayed. Vulgar tattoos must be covered.
- Sagging pants, exposed underwear, pajamas, or parts of pajamas are not allowed at any time.
- Shoes must be worn. Tennis shoes/sneakers are permitted if they are clean and neat. Flip-flops are not permitted at any time.

### Teen Court Behavior Code

Demeanor and posture:

- When standing before the judge, stand up straight with arms either at your side or with hands clasped in front or behind you. Hands should not be placed on hips or inside pockets and no crossed arms. No chewing gum.
- During the hearings, sit up straight and do not look out into the audience. Respondents may consult with their lawyer, if applicable, but no one else.
- While in the audience, keep silent, unless spoken to by an officer of the court. Keep your hands to yourself and do not move around the courtroom.

Speaking to the court:

- Speak loud enough to be heard by the judge.
- Shaking your head and other gestures are not acceptable.
- The proper ways to answer questions are "Yes, sir/ma'am," or "Yes, your honor," and "No, sir/ma'am," or "No, your honor." A simple "yes" or "no" is not acceptable.
- Words like "yeah," "yep," "uh-huh," "nope," and "uh-uh" are never acceptable.
- Law enforcement officers are referred to as "Officer", "Deputy", or "Police Officer". Referring to law enforcement officers as "Cop" is not acceptable or appropriate in court.

General:

- All individuals entering the Carter Building are required to go through the established security checkpoint.
- There will be NO EATING, DRINKING or GUM-CHEWING in the courtroom.
- Cell phones and other communication devices must be *turned off* at all times unless otherwise directed.
- No one will be admitted into the courtroom without proper I.D. or approval by the Teen Court Coordinator.
- Sign-in may be required for all Teen Court volunteers upon arrival at the Teen Court session. Volunteers are not permitted to leave the designated Teen Court area until Court is dismissed.
- Due to juvenile proceeding rules, unless otherwise approved by the Teen Court Coordinator, parents and/or legal guardians are the only non-Teen Court staff individuals permitted to observe the Teen Court proceeding. Permission to observe must be obtained from the Teen Court Coordinator in advance.
- At the conclusion of the court session, all participants are to exit the building only through the front doors.
- Always walk in groups.
- There is to be no running in the Carter Building halls.
- Smoking or possession of tobacco or tobacco products by anyone under the age of 18 is prohibited in accordance with Maryland State Law and will be STRICTLY ENFORCED.

**Teen Court reserves the right to refuse participation of anyone who does not abide by the dress or behavior codes.**