

LA PORTE CIRCUIT COURT

THOMAS J. ALEVIZOS
JUDGE

W. JONATHAN FORKER,
JUVENILE MAGISTRATE

813 LINCOLNWAY
SUITE 303
COURTHOUSE
LA PORTE, INDIANA 46350-3482
(219) 326-6808 ext. 2495

TELECOPIER (219) 324-0147

PAMELA MUNSEY
MAGISTRATE

CHIP COTMAN
DIRECTOR OF
JUVENILE COURT SERVICES

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child _____ has admitted to _____ at
_____ location.

This incident could have resulted in his/her arrest. Instead as part of a partnership between the LaPorte County Circuit Court, the Michigan City Area Schools, LaPorte Community Schools, and LaPorte County Teen Court, he/she is eligible for participation in Teen Court program instead of arrest and formal court proceedings.

Teen Court is a program intended to divert juveniles from the juvenile justice system. Offenders are referred to Teen Court as a way of providing juveniles with an alternative to prosecution. Participation is strictly voluntary. However, if you choose not to participate or complete your Teen Court sentence, you will be subject to the legal consequences for the offenses committed.

At the Teen Court hearing, the offenders are sentenced by a jury of their peers who are students at the high school and middle school level. The Prosecutor and Defense Attorney are also secondary students who have been trained for their roles. The hearing is confidential, and participants take an oath to not talk about the offender or the case outside of the courtroom. The Teen Court hearing does not determine guilt or innocence as the offender has already admitted to the offense. The purpose is to sentence the offender to constructive sanctions meant to hold them responsible for their actions and ensure that they do not reoffend.

The sentences include a combination of the following: paying victim restitution up to \$200 (if applicable), providing community service for local non-profit agencies, writing essays, apologizing, attending counseling sessions or classes, serving on a Teen Court jury and other conditions that may be appropriate for the offense. Generally, the offender will have 45 days after the hearing to complete their sentence.

In order to take advantage of this opportunity you must contact the Teen Court Coordinator Toni Osowski at 219-362-9587 ext. 106 within five days of the date at the top of this letter. Failure to do so will result in your child being referred to the LaPorte County Juvenile Probation Office for further legal actions.

It is my sincere hope that you take advantage of this opportunity to avoid prosecution and learn a valuable lesson in citizenship.

Sincerely,

Judge Thomas Alevizos

La Porte County Youth Service Bureau

Teen Court Program Process



Teen Court is a delinquency prevention and diversion program for a juvenile who commits an offense that could result in an arrest, but instead, are referred to the Teen Court program. It shall be the officer's discretion if Teen Court applies to the offense. Officers will make their determination to utilize the Teen Court program based off the facts from each case.

The purpose of Teen Court is to provide an opportunity for teens to avoid the court system, while being held accountable for their actions by sentencing the offender (defendant) to constructive sanctions meant to safeguard against recidivism. Teen Court does not determine guilt or innocence as the offender has already admitted to the offense upon entering this program.

Teen Court defendants are sentenced by a volunteer jury of their peers. The hearings are confidential, and volunteers take an oath not to talk about the defendant or the case outside the courtroom. They will have 45 days after the hearing to complete their sentence, or be subject to the legal consequence for the offense(s) committed.

Failure to complete the Teen Court sentence could result in further legal actions being taken by the LaPorte County Juvenile Probation Office. Those who successfully complete their sentence will have their case closed or dismissed.

Who is eligible for Teen Court?

First time offenders (**Ages 11-17**) who commit low level misdemeanor offenses such as theft (A-Misd.), battery (with no visible injury), disorderly conduct, criminal mischief, harassment, alcohol related offenses, possession of marijuana (small amount or no intent of dealing), trespass, status offenses (truancy, runaway, curfew violations, or habitual disobedience), or other offenses an officer deems appropriate. Please note: No victim restitution can be given through Teen Court unless prior authorization is given by the Teen Court Coordinator.

Referral Process:

- Juvenile Meeting & Offer
 - Officer meets with juvenile, parent/guardian and offers the opportunity to participate in Teen Court instead of being arrested.
 - Participation is strictly voluntary. However, non-participants will be subject to the legal consequences for offenses committed.
- Juvenile/ Guardian Accepts and Referred to Teen Court Coordinator "TCC"
 - Complete Teen Court Referral Form and email to Youth Service Bureau, Toni Osowski. Email address: ysbteencourt@gmail.com
 - Deliver La Porte County Circuit Letter to Parent/Guardian

- Intake Interview Scheduled
 - TCC contacts Defendant and parent(s) to schedule an intake interview at the Youth Service Bureau office, which offers more privacy for juvenile
- Intake Interview Held
 - TCC reviews the offense with the Defendant and explains the Teen Court process.
 - Defendant and Parent(s) sign Teen Court contract agreeing to participate

Hearing Process:

- **Location** The courthouse setting provides for confidentiality and gravitas.
 - La Porte Circuit Courthouse or in Michigan City Superior Courthouse.
 - Defendants can choose either Courthouse setting.
- **Court Events**
 - Held in the evening twice a month in each Courthouse, an average of one night a week.
 - Additional hearing nights may be added if necessary.
- **Court Members**
 - Defendant, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), TCC, and Volunteer Jurors
 - Volunteer Attorneys and the Teen Court Judge - adult, licensed attorneys.
 - Other interested parties from the school, law enforcement, or court are welcome to attend.
- **Pre-screen Selection**
 - Defendants will pre-screen the list of Teen Court volunteers, and will have the option to remove any volunteer prior to, or during the hearing.

Judgment/Sentence:

- TCC will monitor Defendant's progress and case status and notify the courts when the Defendant has completed the sentence.
- Defendant has up to 45 days from the date of the hearing to complete the sentence.
- Defendant may ask for an extension from the TCC due to extenuating circumstances

What type of Sentencing to expect:

The sentences will include a combination of the following:

- **Apologizing** written and/or verbal for their offense
- **Community service** for a local service agency, optional at the Defendant's School
- **Counseling** hours paid by Defendant's parent(s) on insurance and dependent on affordability
- Educational **classes** or other classes to build assets according to Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets
- **Essays** or research projects related to their offense
- **Jury duty** on future Teen Court cases
- Required **\$50 user fee** may be reduced or waived based of financial circumstances
- **Other** conditions deemed appropriate for the offense

Questions:

Toni Osowski, Teen Court Coordinator

Email: ysbteencourt@gmail.com

Ph- 219-362-9587 Ext. 106

La Porte County Youth Service Bureau Teen Court Program

Teen Court Referral

DATE OF REFERRAL: _____

DATE OF OFFENSE: _____

OFFENSE(S): _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

DOB: _____ **AGE:** _____ **RACE:** _____ **SEX:** _____ **GRADE:** _____

PARENT / GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP CODE:** _____

HOME PHONE: _____ **CELL PHONE:** _____

INCIDENT REPORT #: _____

REPORT ATTACHED? YES NO

DATE OF INCIDENT: _____ **TIME OF INCIDENT:** _____

LOCATION OF INCIDENT: _____

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INCIDENT:

SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN OR ANTICIPATED:

REFERRED BY OFFICER: _____

TITLE: _____ **PHONE #:** _____

E-MAIL: _____

JUVENILE RELEASED TO:

NAME: _____

DATE AND TIME JUVENILE WAS RELEASED: _____

LOCATION JUVENILE WAS RELEASED: _____

PARENT OR GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE ACCEPTING CUSTODY OF JUVENILE:

Youth Service Bureau of La Porte County, Inc.

Michigan City Office:

228 West Fourth Street
Michigan City, IN 46360
Phone (219) 879-5151
Fax (219) 879-5169

La Porte Office:

906 Michigan Avenue
La Porte, IN 46350
Phone (219) 362-9587 Ext. 106
Fax (219) 324-5024