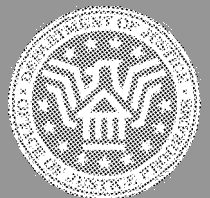
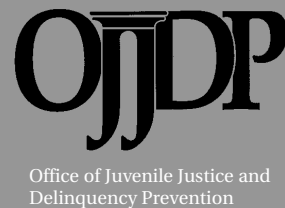
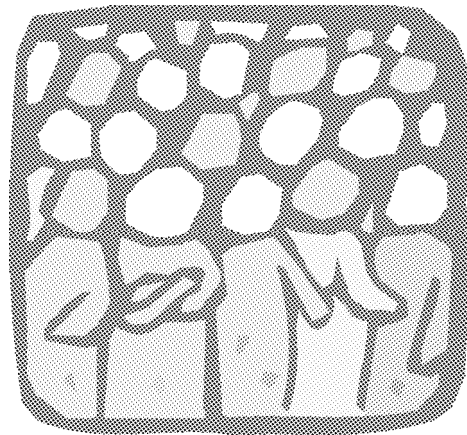
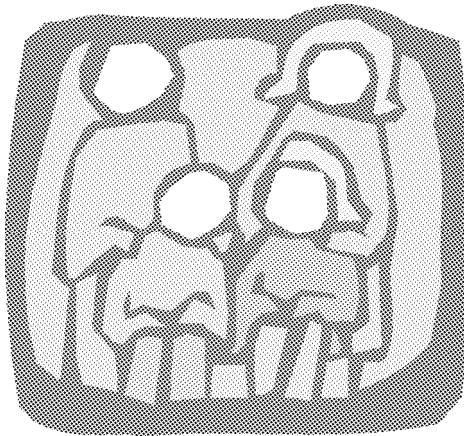
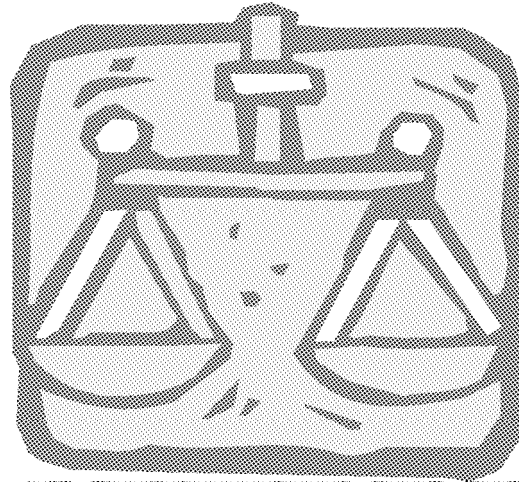


# GIVING BACK

## A COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING MANUAL FOR YOUTH COURTS



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## **A COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING MANUAL FOR YOUTH COURTS**

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# PREFACE

On December 20, 2001, the Speaker of the House, the Honorable J. Dennis Hastert from Illinois, read the following statement before the U. S. House of Representatives:

I rise to praise the efforts of the Constitutional Rights Foundation and the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago. Their work encourages schools, youth programs, attorneys, judges, and police departments to work together to form and expand diversionary programs.

These programs, known as Youth Courts, are where juveniles, under the supervision of representatives from the educational and legal communities, determine sentencing for first-time juvenile offenders who are charged with misdemeanors or minor infractions of school rules.

The program displays that as a sentencing option, community service can serve both the offender and the community.

Speaker Hastert's statement underscores the significance of the rapidly growing popularity of youth courts in the United States. It also provides a rationale for this publication, *Giving Back: A Community Service-Learning Manual for Youth Courts*.

Youth courts, also known as teen courts or peer juries, engage young volunteers to help their peers who have committed delinquent acts or other problem behaviors. Youth courts most frequently serve as sentencing hearings for first-time offenders who have acknowledged their guilt and agreed—with the consent of their parents or guardians—to accept a sentence determined by their peers.

The popularity of youth courts in the United States comes as no surprise. Youth courts divert minor offenders from overloaded juvenile courts while still holding them responsible for their actions. They teach young offenders that there are consequences for their misbehavior but that these consequences can be fairly administered by their peers. Youth court volunteers learn about due process, balanced and restorative justice, and the benefits of volunteering to improve their community and themselves.

Educators have long known the value of community service. Beyond its value to the community, service can help provide young people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to assume the most important role in our society—that of citizen.

Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF), Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC), and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) recognize the importance of youth courts to teach about good citizenship while they administer justice. Accordingly, CRF, CRFC, and the OJJDP have joined together to provide this publication, *Giving Back*, to support and enhance the quality of youth courts. We hope that you find the information in this publication will help youth court coordinators, volunteers, and young respondents to find meaning and value in our justice system and in community service.



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For ordering information, contact the National Youth Court Center at (859) 244-8193; e-mail: [nycc@csg.org](mailto:nycc@csg.org) or visit the web site at [www.youthcourt.net](http://www.youthcourt.net).

# INTRODUCTION

## WHY COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING?

Youth courts are among the fastest growing crime intervention programs in the nation. There are good reasons for their popularity. Youth courts divert minor offenders from overloaded juvenile courts and hold them responsible for their actions. They educate young people about the impact their actions have on others, teach about the legal system, and provide opportunities and a forum to develop and practice life and leadership skills.

Community service is the most popular disposition prescribed by youth courts. When properly administered, community service can contribute to principles of restorative justice. Community service has the potential to help youthful offenders improve their self-image, develop needed life skills, and make meaningful contributions to their communities while still holding them accountable for their actions.

How do busy youth court administrators plan and implement community service options that can realize the principles of restorative justice? One answer may lie with lessons already learned in America's schools.

Educators have long known the value of community service. Many schools link community service to classroom work to teach math, science, language arts and social studies. Making a connection between classroom-based study and service to the community is often called *service learning*.

## WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

According to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, service learning is an educational method that:

- Encourages students to learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs.
- Is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the service activity.
- Provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities.
- Enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

## SERVICE LEARNING AND BALANCED AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Balanced and restorative justice and school-based service learning share many of the same goals and objectives. The chart below offers a quick comparison between educational and restorative justice principles.

Because of these shared goals and objectives, youth courts can take advantage of the expertise that educators have developed about service learning. As with youth court dispositions, school-based service learning revolves around the concept of community service.

This manual will give you the tools you need to apply school-based service-learning methods to community-service dispositions for youth courts. With *community service learning*, respondents can explore their potential as citizens by helping communities meet their education, public safety, human, and environmental needs. With *community service learning*, respondents become resources who provide service, rather than recipients who are always in the role of being served. Hopefully, by following these procedures, you can help young offenders become better citizens while they give back to the community.

<b>SERVICE-LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>BALANCED AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES</b>
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about their community and its people, processes, and institutions.</li> <li>• Identify and analyze community problems.</li> <li>• Develop social, political, and analytical skills necessary to participate in community life.</li> <li>• Learn that individual rights and freedoms are balanced by responsibilities.</li> <li>• Understand the value of service for the good of the themselves and the community.</li> <li>• Recognize characteristics and actions of a participating citizen.</li> <li>• Work cooperatively with others.</li> </ul>	<p>Youth court respondents will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the legal and judicial system.</li> <li>• Repair harm they have done to victims and the community.</li> <li>• Analyze their own needs and the needs of others, i.e., victims and the community.</li> <li>• Develop competencies that will enable them to become responsible and productive citizens.</li> <li>• Understand the impact their actions have on others, i.e., victims and the community.</li> <li>• Identify and act upon opportunities to make meaningful contributions to their families, schools, peer groups, and communities.</li> <li>• Develop a personal stake in the future of their communities.</li> <li>• Increase life and coping skills.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Service-learning goals and objectives excerpted from Active Citizenship Today, a school-based, service-learning program designed and implemented by Constitutional Rights Foundation and Close Up Foundation.

## HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

**Manual review.** Make sure you are familiar with the procedures and have gathered the materials respondents will need to make their project a success.

**Project Supervisors.** All projects described in this manual require supervision. The role of supervisor may be carried out by a variety of individuals. A project supervisor can be a youth court coordinator, a qualified adult volunteer, a teacher or school administrator, a social-services professional, a member of a partnering community organization, an outside resource person who may have expertise in the project area, or a law-enforcement or probation officer.

**Supervisor Guides** provide step-by-step instructions for supervisors to guide each session. Instructions include an Overview, Materials and Preparation, Procedures, and Check Points.

**Handouts** provide directions for respondents to complete each step of a community service-learning project. Handouts include directions, readings, activities, a Stop and Think reflection component, and a supervisor sign-off called a Check Point.

**Important!** Handouts refer to “supervisors” or “project supervisors” in all readings, activities, and action steps. *Make sure respondents know who is acting as the project supervisor at each stage of a community service-learning project.*

**Community service-learning options.** This manual provides three basic plans, or options for planning and implementing a community service-learning project. To determine which option is best for you, see Choosing a Community Service-Learning Option on page 15.

**Materials and preparation.** This manual is spiral-bound to make it copy-friendly. Be prepared to photocopy handouts for respondents. Done in a Day handouts (see page 25) have a list of tools and

materials required for each project.

**Project Guidelines.** Make sure the project you plan:

- Is do-able, given your resources and time frame. A small, successful project is preferable to a large, failed project.
- Promotes good citizenship by developing positive knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Gives back to the community.
- Involves community members in project planning and implementation.

## EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

In this manual, evaluation and reflection are implemented by two simple handout components:

- **Stop and Think.** Reflection allows respondents to stop and think about what they are learning and how community service impacts their own skills, attitudes, and behaviors. In the Stop and Think component, respondents are required to write answers to questions describing what they have learned from each activity.
- **Check Points.** Respondents are required to submit their completed project handouts to supervisors for signatures. At this point, supervisors can evaluate respondent progress by reviewing their responses to handout questions.

In addition, supervisors are encouraged to set up their own evaluation procedures to determine:

- How does each community service-learning project operate?
- What are the overall effects of each project on the respondents?
- What effects does each project have on other youth court participants and the community?
- How can each project be improved?

Information collected from evaluation and reflection can provide useful data for:

- Demonstrating your youth court's capacity to provide services to respondents.
- Reporting respondent progress to parents, probation officers, and the courts.
- Demonstrating the success of projects for staff development.
- Writing grants and seeking community support for youth courts.

## **SUPERVISOR GUIDES AND HANDOUTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section consists of activities that introduce respondents to basic concepts about community, community problems, and ways to address them (community service-learning projects). Step One and Step Two consist of skill- and awareness-building activities and serve as an introduction to the community service-learning options presented in Step Three. All activities are organized into Guides for supervisors and Handouts for respondents.

#### **Step One—What's a Community?**

Introduces the idea and purpose of community service. Respondents follow procedures and complete handouts to accomplish three goals:

- Define community.
- Discuss the purpose of community service.
- Identify the benefits of service to their own community.

**Step Two—What's the Problem?** Guides an exploration of community problems. Respondents follow procedures and complete handouts to accomplish three goals:

- Identify crime as a community problem.
- Reflect on crime as a community problem with causes and consequences.
- Brainstorm a list of additional community problems.

**Step Three—Community Service-Learning Options** Provides information for (a) supervisors to choose and (b) respondents to complete one of three community service-learning options:

- Volunteering—At an existing community service agency.
- Build Your Own—Planning and implementing an action project.
- Done in a Day—Completing one or more short, pre-planned community service-learning projects.