

MIDTOWN COMMUNITY COURT: DOCUMENTED RESULTS

The Midtown Community Court, established in 1993, hears cases where defendants are charged with misdemeanor offenses, such as prostitution, illegal vending, graffiti, and possession of marijuana. Midtown sentences offenders to community service to pay back the neighborhood in which they committed their crime and provides them with social services to address their underlying needs. Midtown is located in one of the busiest commercial districts in the United States. The catchment area, which includes four police precincts and encompasses the area between 86th and 14th Streets and Lexington Avenue to the Hudson River, is home to approximately 750,000 people, in addition to which more than three million commuters work in Midtown. In the 1990s, Midtown was besieged by low-level crime, including drug dealing, illegal vending, and street prostitution. Results include:

- **Caseload.** In 2012, Midtown heard 28,403 cases (which consisted of 9,446 misdemeanor cases and 18,957 summonses). The most frequent misdemeanor charges were stolen property, trespassing, panhandling, and marijuana drug possession.
- **Sentencing.** Research indicates that, as compared with the downtown criminal court, for cases disposed at arraignment, Midtown decreases the extremes of jail on one hand (14 percent vs. 19 percent) and time served sentences on the other hand (3 percent vs. 21 percent).
- **Compliance and Accountability.** In 2012, 83% of defendants at Midtown completed their community service mandates, compared to approximately 50% of the defendants who were processed at the downtown criminal court. Furthermore, research indicates that although Midtown is less likely to use jail as an initial sentence, Midtown is more likely than the downtown criminal court to impose jail as a secondary sanction on those offenders who fail to comply with initial court orders.
- **Community Restitution.** In 2012, defendants at Midtown completed over 37,216 hours of community service or the equivalent of over \$269,800 of labor, including cleaning the courthouse, painting over graffiti, stuffing envelopes for local non-profit organizations, and cleaning the streets of Times Square.

- **Cost Savings.** Research estimates that Midtown saves an average of 1.2 million dollars annually. These savings result primarily from reduced costs of pre-arraignment detention (i.e. due to reduced arrest-to-arraignment time) and reduced use of jail as a primary sentence.
- **Workforce Development.** Midtown’s on-site job training program, Times Square Ink, enrolled 114 participants in 2012. Of these, 81 participants successfully completed the full six-week program, and 35 were placed in jobs during the year. The average hourly wage for Time Square Ink graduates who were placed in jobs was \$13.77 an hour.
- **Adolescent Diversion Program.** In 2012, Midtown became the sole site in Manhattan for handling cases involving 16 and 17 year old defendants in the Adolescent Diversion Program (ADP). A pilot program initiated by Chief Judge Lippman, ADP seeks to address the unique needs of adolescent defendants in criminal court by offering social services and alternative dispositions that eliminate the consequences of adult criminal convictions. During this time, Midtown has handled and provided services to 324 adolescent defendants.
- **Public Support.** A survey reported that the majority of respondents (64 percent) would be willing to pay additional taxes to support a community court like Midtown.
- **Recognition.** Midtown has been the recipient of several awards including the Serving Youth Opportunity Award (2010) by the New York City Employment & Training Coalition and the Golden Scroll Award (2007) by The Broadway Association. Both awards recognize Midtown’s commitment to public safety through community involvement.

Further Reading (available at www.courtinnovation.org)

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C E N T E R
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Karafin, D.L. 2008. *Community Courts Across the Globe: A Survey of Goals, Performance Measures and Operations*. Open Society Foundation for South Africa.

Sviridoff, M., Rottman, D., Ostrom, B., and Curtis, R. 2000. *Dispensing Justice Locally: The Implementation and Effects of the Midtown Community Court*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

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