

## Overview

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Project Reset is a diversion program offering a response to low-level offending that is proportionate, effective, and restorative. Through Project Reset, participants avoid the possibility of a criminal record by completing community-based programming. The program's approach to minor crime holds people accountable for their actions while promoting healing and strengthening public trust in the justice system.

### Concept

Every year, tens thousands of people in New York City are arrested for low-level offenses. In the past, police and prosecutors have had only two responses to choose from: prosecution—and, in some cases, jail—or releasing people without a meaningful response from the justice system. Project Reset offers a third option: a community-based program that is restorative for participants and communities and avoids the potential harms of standard case processing.

### Eligibility

Project Reset serves people who are issued Desk Appearance Tickets (DATs) for specific low-level, non-violent crimes, including shoplifting, trespassing, and criminal mischief. Project Reset is active borough-wide in Manhattan and the Bronx and in the northern half of Brooklyn.

### How It Works

Following an arrest by the New York City Police Department, the local prosecutor's office reviews the case to determine if it is eligible for Project Reset. Eligible cases are then referred to an independent non-profit organization which offers people the opportunity to engage in programming rather than go to court. Those eligible may consult with a defense attorney before deciding to participate, or at any point during the process.

Participants complete an intake interview with program staff and engage in two-to-four hours of programming. In Manhattan and Brooklyn, participants complete educational group workshops, arts-oriented programming, and/or individual counseling sessions. In the Bronx, programming consists of a restorative circle with community volunteers where participants discuss their arrest and any underlying issues that led to their contact with the justice system. They are also encouraged to reflect on their own accountability and discuss ways to avoid future arrests. All participants are offered voluntary referrals to community-based social services such as counseling, job training, and treatment for substance use disorders.

Everyone who successfully completes Project Reset never sets foot in a courtroom. Instead, the local district attorney declines to prosecute their cases. Participants do not get a criminal record for the case and their arrest record is sealed.

### Impact

An evaluation of 16- and 17-year-old Project Reset participants in Manhattan found that participants were significantly less likely than defendants in a comparison group to be convicted of a new crime within one year. The study also documented improved case processing times, case outcomes, and positive perceptions of the program. More than 95 percent of

participants said they had made the right decision by entering the program and that they would recommend Project Reset to someone in a similar situation.

**Partnership**

Project Reset is a collaboration among the Center for Court Innovation, the New York City Police Department, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the Bronx District Attorney's Office, the Kings County District Attorney's Office, the Osborne Association, and Young New Yorkers.

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**For More Information**

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