

Overview

The Youth Impact Program at the Staten Island Justice Center serves as a meaningful and proportionate alternative to traditional forms of discipline for adolescents 12- to 18-year-olds. Youth Impact is an innovative, peer-led diversion program in which young people hear actual cases involving their peers and work toward solutions.

Youth Impact members use peer influence to ensure that young people who have committed minor offenses in the community, and receive the support they need to avoid further involvement in the justice system. Local teens are trained to provide a range of interventions, including peer-to-peer mentoring, restorative circles, peer-led educational workshops, and community benefit projects. The Youth Impact members go through a rigorous 40-hour training program to develop the skills needed to provide appropriate, restorative responses to misbehavior. Grounded in restorative justice principles, our youth courts seek to prevent future misbehavior by finding responses to problematic behavior that are proportionate and meaningful and promote accountability.

Eligibility

The Youth Impact Program serves young people across the entire island. Staff work

with schools, precincts, and courts to divert misbehavior that would otherwise end in fines or arrest, prosecution in Family Court, or school suspension or expulsion. Some low-mid level offenses appropriate for Youth Impact include possession, fare evasion, assault, and truancy committed by Staten Island residents 12- to 18-year-olds. Youth Impact does not determine guilt or innocence; participation in Youth Impact is voluntary and requires young people to take accountability for their actions.

Process

The Staten Island Youth Impact receives referrals from community and justice system partners including local schools, the New York City Police Department, the New York City Department of Probation, Family and Criminal Courts, and the District Attorney's Office. After receiving a referral, a staff member speaks with each young person and

their parent/guardian to explain the program and assign an engagement plan. Through a structured deliberation process, members decide on fair and appropriate steps that hold youth accountable and restore harm. Participants can receive a combination of healing steps, including, but not limited to: community benefit projects, letters of apology, essays, workshops, referrals, and serving as a youth impact circle keeper. All Youth Impact decisions regarding healing steps are reviewed and approved by staff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: sjc@innovatingjustice.org

Membership

To ensure that Youth Impact is truly peer-based, the program recruits members—ranging from 14- to 18 years old—through outreach to local high schools and community-based organizations.

The Youth Impact holds two recruitment cycles throughout the year. The program does not require a minimum grade point average or any previous experience, but members must be residents of Staten Island. Young people who have previously appeared in Youth Impact as participants are strongly encouraged to apply.

Staten Island Justice Center

A Program of the
Center for Justice Innovation

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