

Youth PACT

Positively Advancing in Community Together

Youth PACT, a diversion program at the Midtown Community Justice Center, offers young people the opportunity to avoid prosecution or receive a more favorable sentence on gun possession charges by participating in restorative programming.

Youth PACT is one of few holistic alternatives to traditional prosecution and sentencing in Family Court for young people ages 14–17 arrested for gun possession in NYC. Cases referred pre-filing by the New York City Law Department, Family Court Division that result in successful completion are dropped for prosecution, eliminating the impact of a full criminal process. Filed cases referred by any legal party - a judge, defense counsel, or The Law Department - as sentence mitigation or as part of a final disposition receive a more favorable outcome, thereby reducing or eliminating the collateral consequences of system involvement.

Youth PACT aims to address the root causes of gun carrying and identify supportive and protective factors for its young participants. The program provides a forum for young people and their loved ones to improve mutual understanding and communication,

while facilitating connections to critical community-based resources.

Program Details

After an arrest for gun possession occurs, cases are referred to Youth PACT.

Using a framework rooted in restorative justice, the program includes two components over 12 weeks: One-on-one case management and restorative circles.

In weekly one-on-one sessions with a youth engagement specialist, participants work through a structured curriculum that explores relationship building, life experiences, socioemotional wellness, support networks, and a goals roadmap. The goals roadmap guides the young person's additional activities over the course of their programming and beyond.

Youth PACT connects participants to community-based pro-social resources in safe locations that support their self-identified goals and interests. These community-based providers offer continuity to the young people during and after their time with Youth PACT.

In addition to one-on-one work with the youth participants, Youth PACT engages key supporters in participants' lives who participate in one or more restorative circles during the twelve weeks. Supports include at least one parent or guardian, and other family members like grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, godparents, close family friends, guidance counselors, and coaches. The restorative circles provide a forum for the young participants, their families, and other support people to address and process the impact of the arrest, take accountability for the decisions that lead to carrying a gun, and communicate with each other in a safe, mediated environment to facilitate relationship strengthening and repair. Before holding circles, the Youth PACT restorative justice facilitator and youth engagement specialist conduct prep conversations with the young people, their guardian(s), and other supporters to lay the groundwork for productive communication and mitigate potential harm.

During the circles, participants share their goals with their supporters, who have an opportunity to express their own hopes for the young person. Circles culminate with a set of agreements that communicate each person's commitments to supporting the participant moving forward. The restorative process activates the participants' community to foster a support network that will continue to function long after the young person's court case has ended.

Location

Midtown Community Justice Center (314 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019) is open Monday through Friday:

- 9:00 am–1:00 pm
- 2:15 pm–4:15 pm
- with some extended evening hours to accommodate school and work schedules

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: midtown@innovatingjustice.org

Refer a Case: <https://bit.ly/YouthPACT>

Midtown Community Justice Center

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