



What is a Teen Justice Panel?

Teen Justice Panels are based upon the principles of balanced and restorative justice. These principles include helping juveniles realize their potential while being accountable for their actions, providing protection to the community, and promoting competency development. Panels help local communities deal effectively with first time youth offenders in a positive and effective way.

How It Works:

- 1. Referral.** Lincoln County Juvenile Department offers the offenders, age 12-17 years old, the opportunity to go before the panel instead of heading to court. The Department refers appropriate youth who have committed minor offenses such as, possession of alcohol, possession of less than 1 ounce of marijuana, possession of tobacco, theft, criminal mischief, curfew violations, or traffic offenses. In order to participate, the youth must admit involvement in the offense and agree to meet with the panel.
- 2. Panelists.** All volunteer youth panelists live in the local community that they serve. They are trained in conflict resolution, decision making, consensus building, victim awareness, and the juvenile justice system. The panel is made up of the offender, parent/guardian, 3 volunteer youth, an adult advisor, and 1 prior offender. If there is an identified victim, they are invited to be a panelist. If there is not an identified victim, a community representative is included as a panelist.
- 3. The Panel Session.** An adult facilitator, trained in mediation and consensus building, convenes the panel in a neutral location. Participants are seated around a table. Panelists question the offender about the offense and how they have been affected by their own actions. All participants are invited to describe how the incident has affected them. Discussion takes place about how the offender can repair the harm done. The session is a voluntary and confidential process that can be stopped at any time. Panelists are assisted in the process by the facilitator.
- 4. The Resolution Contract.** The panel does not decide guilt or innocence. The panel develops a program that is customized to the offense and its impact on the victim and/or community, as well as the individual's abilities. Resolutions can include community service, restitution, skill building and educational activities, apologies, connections with resources in the community,

and other forms of repairing harm done and paying back to the community. The youth contracts with the panel to complete the resolution within a specified time.

5. Completion. The youth's advisor monitors his or her progress on the Resolution Contract. When the resolution is completed, the advisor informs all participants. The Juvenile Department shows successful program completion on the youth's record with no legal action taken. If for any reason the youth fails to complete the resolution or commits another offense, the case is returned to the Juvenile Department for further action.

Benefits:

1. The youth and their parents/guardians do not enter the justice system, with all of the stigmas, costs and detriments of a juvenile record attached.
2. The youth is accountable for their actions and have a chance to directly repay the victim and/or the community through positive action.
3. The youth gains life skills and competencies that will prevent them from re-entering the criminal system.
4. The youth and their parent/guardian witness the care and concern of their community.
5. The family has an opportunity to access additional resources within their community.
6. Volunteer panelists are educated by the cases they hear; problems of other local youth and the community become clearer; they learn conflict resolution, decision-making skills and leadership skills; gain knowledge of the judicial system; and they experience the value of becoming more involved in their communities.
7. Panelists will provide information and input into the decisions of their community which involve the issues of all young people, not just those in trouble.
8. Teen Justice Panels are customized to meet the needs of the local community.
9. The Juvenile Department has an effective tool to deal with minor first-time offenses.
10. The program will save Lincoln County money and other valuable resources.

Successes:

Nation-wide, panels collectively average a 90% completion rate for the contracts they enter with youth. The effectiveness of the Teen Justice Panel can also be measured by intangible results. Youth are accountable for their actions, are less likely to enter the criminal system, and are less likely to use alcohol and other drugs. They receive career guidance, positive adult mentoring, and life skills. Volunteer youth benefit as well.

Training:

Each panelist receives formal training which includes:

1. An overview of the Juvenile Justice System,
2. Information about group process, conflict resolution, decision-making, and leadership,
3. Information about abuse of alcohol and other drugs.
4. Victim awareness.

A Collaborative Effort:

The Teen Justice Panel Program is a collaborative effort:

- Volunteer teen panelists, adult advisors and resolution facilitators
- Partnership Against Alcohol & Drug Abuse (PAADA)
- Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution
- Lincoln County Juvenile Department
- Lincoln Commission on Children and Families
- Local law enforcement
- Lincoln County District Attorney
- Victim Assistance
- Juvenile and Circuit Court Judges
- Lincoln County School District
- Lincoln County Health and Human Services

Local governments, businesses, and service organizations also give the program invaluable support. All parts of the community benefit when the panels work well.

Administration:

PAADA, in conjunction with Lincoln County Commission on Children and Families and Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution, administers the program. They are responsible for recruiting, training, raising resources, public education, working with public agencies, and coordinating the program.



Who We Are



PAADA is a grass roots community coalition working to empower youth and adults to make healthy decisions and to reduce the use or abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

PO Box 2401, Newport OR 97365, 541-574-2995

Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution

LCDR believes that assisting people to constructively manage conflict and resolve disputes fosters healthy family and community relationships, which contributes to stronger families and communities. Constructive management of conflict reduces demand on services of government agencies and the legal system.

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