

A Guide for Using the “Little Book of Restorative Justice” In Your Youth Court

About this Guide

The Office of the Attorney General Lisa Madigan’s Illinois Youth Court Association (IYCA) has developed this guide to accompany the book, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*¹. The guide is designed to assist your youth court program in incorporating restorative justice principles outlined in the book into your initial or on-going training of youth volunteers. In particular, activities are provided that correspond to sections of the book. Please feel free to alter the activities in order to make them more user-friendly and age appropriate. We hope you enjoy reading the book and we encourage you to share it with colleagues and adult volunteers, as well as your youth volunteers.

About the *Little Book of Restorative Justice*

The author of *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* is Howard Zehr, co-director of the graduate Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University². The author describes the book as “a brief description or overview- the *Cliff Notes*, if you will, of restorative justice” and “an effort to articulate the restorative justice concept in straightforward terms.” He further states, “*The Little Book of Restorative Justice* is for those who have heard the term and are curious about what it implies. It is also for those who are involved in the field but are becoming unclear or losing track of what they are trying to do.” For youth court programs, the *Little Book* and this guide can help you gain an understanding of restorative justice and ways to use it in your program.

Purpose of Restorative Justice in Youth Courts

Using restorative justice can improve the administration of youth court programs. The following are some potential benefits of using restorative justice in your program³:

¹ The views of the author do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan or the Illinois Youth Court Association. The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority has a limited supply of copies of the *Little Book of Restorative Justice* by Howard Zehr available for free to interested youth court programs and other juvenile justice professionals in Illinois. To request a copy, please contact Jessica Ashley by e-mail at jashley@icjia.state.il.us.

² The views of the author do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan or the Illinois Youth Court Association.

³ Godwin, T. (2001) *The Role of Restorative Justice in Teen Courts: A Preliminary Look*, National Youth Court Center.

- Community is involved in solving local problems, which reduces fear and reliance on the overburdened criminal justice system.
- Offenders are held directly accountable to those they have harmed.
- Offenders have increased capacity for making thoughtful decisions and can improve relationships with their families, peers, victims, and community.
- All participants, victim, offender, community, have increased satisfaction with the justice system.
- Offender recidivism rates are reduced and completion rates are increased.

Suggested Activities

The following activities were designed to be lead by an adult youth court coordinator with youth volunteers. These are just suggested activities to assist in incorporating the contents of the book. Please feel free to alter these activities or develop your own.

Restorative Justice is Not...

Featured on page 8 -13

Activity: Each One, Teach One

Instructions: Hand out the following statements on strips of paper giving one statement to one youth volunteer. The strips of paper each have a statement about what “restorative justice is not” on it. Each youth is then instructed to explain what is printed on their strip to at least three other youth in the room. After each youth had explained their statement to the other youth, the other youth are asked to share what they just learned. Keep track so that all statements are read.

Discussion: Lead a discussion about each statement. Detailed descriptions of each statement are provided in the book on page 8 -13.

(Adapted from: Fisher, M., (2001) *Youth Court: A Guide for Trainers of Student Volunteers*, American Bar Association.)

Restorative justice is not primarily about forgiveness or reconciliation.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not mediation between two people.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not primarily designed to reduce repeat offenses.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not a particular program (such as peer jury) or a blueprint.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not primarily intended for minor offenses or first time offenders.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not a new or American development.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not necessarily a replacement for the legal system.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not necessarily an alternative to traditional court sentences.

✂-----

Restorative justice is not necessarily the opposite of punishment.

Victims: The Missing Voice

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Activity 1: Apologies are Powerful

Instructions: Have youth write an apology letter to anyone they have harmed, such as a friend, a parent, or a sibling. Allow them to reflect their thoughts and difficulties in the exercise.

Discussion:

- How do offenders learn from this activity?

- Are apologies difficult, easy, or does it depend?

Activity 2: Both Sides of a Disagreement

Instructions: Provide youth with a hypothetical disagreement between two people. One youth is designated to play role of victim, another youth is designated to play the role of offender. The “offender” offers an apology and the “victim” must respond to it. Ask how both parties felt when providing and receiving an apology.

Discussion questions:

- Is an apology always appropriate? Why or why not?
- Do apologies differ according to the wrongdoing? The parties involved? How?
- What would be a good apology? What would be a bad apology?

Community: It’s All Around You

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Activity 1: Community Mapping

Instructions: Have youth brainstorm places, organizations, and people in your community. (You may want to refer to the Constitutional Rights Foundation’s publication, *Giving Back: A Community Service-Learning Manual for Youth Courts*, see the “Additional Resources” section in this guide.) The list can be used for possible community service sites.

Discussion:

- Who are all the people in the community affected by crime?
- How are they affected? Are they affected directly or indirectly?

Activity 2: Draw Your Community

Instructions: Ask youth to depict their community in a drawing. This can visually illustrate their community. Each youth can describe their vision of community.

Discussion questions:

- What is community to you?
- How can we define “community”?
- How do our definitions vary?

Activity 3: Develop a Community Directory

Instructions: Ask youth to develop a list places where community service is needed and welcomed. You may also ask youth (with supervision if appropriate) to visit community agencies in their neighborhood and create a “profile” of the program. The profile may include services offered, population served, assistance needed, if they are willing to participate as a service site, and contact information. The profiles can be used to create a list of potential community service sites for your program.

Creating a Diversion

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Activity: Youth Court or Juvenile Court?

Instructions: Have youth play out a mock case through both a youth court (diversion program) and the formal juvenile court process. Youth then act out youth court roles of jurors and offender and, depending on your program, parents, victim, attorneys, judge, etc. Youth then act out juvenile court roles of judge, defense and prosecuting attorneys, bailiff, and defendant.

Discussion questions for each process (on page 55):

- Does the process address harms, needs, and causes? If yes, how?
- Is it adequately victim oriented? If yes, how?
- Are offenders encouraged to take responsibility? If yes, how?
- Are all relevant stakeholders involved? If yes, how?

- Is there an opportunity for dialogue and participatory decision-making? If yes, how?
 - Is the process respectful to all parties? If yes, how?
- Ask: How are the processes different?

True Justice

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Activity: The Right Questions

Instructions: Lead youth in a discussion to assess how your program answers these questions during the deliberation process of a youth court session. You can practice using them in your next session.

- Who has been hurt?
- What do they need?
- Whose obligations and responsibilities are these?
- Who has a vested interest in this situation?
- What is the process that can involve stakeholders in finding a solution?

Additional Resources

The following are suggested materials for youth courts to further learn or train on restorative justice. All are available on the National Youth Court Center Website at <http://www.youthcourt.net> or contact the National Youth Court Center c/o National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, P.O. Box 8970, Reno, NV 89507, Phone: 775-784-6715, Fax: 775-784-6628, email youthcourt@ncjfcj.org.

- Fisher, M., (2001) *Youth Court: A Guide for Trainers of Student Volunteers*, American Bar Association.
- Godwin, T. M., *The Role of Restorative Justice in Teen Courts: A Preliminary Look*, National Youth Court Center, American Probation and Parole Association. Available at <http://www.youthcourt.net/publications/article1.pdf>.
- Godwin, T. M., (2001) *Restorative Justice and Teen Courts: Where should Programs Start?*, National Youth Court Center, American Probation and Parole

Association. Article in spring issue of *In Session*. Available at <http://www.youthcourt.net/Newsletter/Spring2001.pdf>.

- Mayer, M. & Morreale Scott, L., (Published 2001; Revised 2002) *Street Law for Youth Courts: Educational Workshops*, Street Law, Inc. Available at <http://www.streetlaw.org/youthcourtleasons.html>.
- Degelman, C., (2006) *Giving Back: Introducing Community Service Learning, Improving Mandated Community Service for Juvenile Offenders*, Constitutional Rights Foundation. Available at http://www.crf-usa.org/YouthCourt/GivingBack_home.html.

About the Illinois Youth Court Association

Due to the growing interest in and development of youth courts in the state of Illinois, the Attorney General developed the Illinois Youth Court Association (IYCA) in February of 2002 to assist and support the youth court programs in the state. There are over 130 of these programs operating in Illinois. The IYCA's goals are to (1) promote inter-agency cooperation and information sharing among youth courts, (2) provide assistance to local youth courts, and (3) encourage the development of youth courts. Accomplishments include periodic newsletters, brochures, statewide surveys, a directory of state programs, a Website, and Illinois Youth Court Summits. The IYCA supports initiatives related to youth courts and Balanced and Restorative Justice.

For more information, contact the IYCA, visit the Attorney General's Website at www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov and click on "Keeping Communities Safe" and then select "Illinois Youth Court Association or contact Theresa Geary at tgeary@atg.state.il.us, or by phone at 312-814-0991.