

CHAPTER 2

ORGANIZING THE COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing awareness that to address the problem of crime in our country there must be an integrated response from the government and the community (Calhoun, 1988). Teen court programs offer an avenue for engaging the community in a partnership with the juvenile justice system to respond to the problem of juvenile crime by (1) increasing awareness of the delinquency issues within the local community, and (2) mobilizing community members (including youth) to take an active role in addressing the problem of juvenile crime within the community.

Teen court programs are administered and operated by various agencies and organizations in the community and rely heavily on local resources. Community involvement and support is essential throughout the conception, development, and life of a teen court program to ensure the delivery of effective services and the financial security of the program.

At the conclusion of this chapter, readers will have the knowledge needed to

- ◆ cultivate community support of the program through the identification of key stakeholders;
- ◆ form an advisory committee and/or task force to assist in program development tasks;
- ◆ determine the types of services teen courts can access within the community; and
- ◆ sustain community support of the program.

DEVELOPING STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

The success and survival of a teen court program is partially dependent on the extent of the developer's ability to identify and secure support (programmatic and financial) from individuals and organizations that have an interest or stake

in the program. To accomplish this, program developers must conduct a stakeholder analysis and solicit advice and input from key persons (Knepper, 1994). Those identified can provide valuable assistance and information to teen court programs in a variety of areas, including

- ◆ assessing needs and resources;
- ◆ developing policies and procedures for the program (e.g. identifying the target population, referral process);
- ◆ identifying and securing financial and in-kind support for the program;
- ◆ providing needed services for the program and its clients (e.g., community service sites, counseling services, training for facilitators); and
- ◆ marketing and promoting awareness of the program.

Identifying Key Stakeholders

Program developers should consider the following types of questions when conducting a stakeholder analysis (Crowe and Schaefer, 1992):

- ◆ Whom will this program affect most and how?
- ◆ Who is most likely to oppose the implementation of this program?
- ◆ Who is most likely to support this program?
- ◆ Who has knowledge, skills, or access to resources needed in the development and implementation of this program?

Teen courts should take a politically bipartisan approach when mobilizing community members. This can help ensure continual support for the program through different administration changes. Figure 2-1 identifies possible stakeholders in teen court programs. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive. Each community must examine its own makeup to determine the key players.

Figure 2-1: Possible Key Stakeholders in Teen Courts

Possible Key Stakeholders
◆ Judges
◆ Law enforcement agencies
◆ Probation departments
◆ Lawyers (e.g., prosecuting attorneys, public defenders)
◆ Schools
◆ City and state officials
◆ Victims
◆ Youth
◆ Parents
◆ Youth-serving agencies and organizations
◆ Churches and synagogues

Programs should be able to answer the following two questions for each stakeholder that is identified:

- ◆ What can this program offer the stakeholder (i.e., selling point)?
- ◆ What can the stakeholder offer this program?

The following section examines a few of the individuals and organizations that should be considered when conducting a stakeholder analysis for a teen court program.

Support from the local chief juvenile judge(s) is absolutely critical to the development and operation of any teen court program.

Judges

Support from the local chief juvenile judge(s) is absolutely critical to the development and operation of any teen court program. Judges have influence over the types of programs that will operate and receive support in their jurisdictions. In many jurisdictions,

authorization for the teen court program to operate has come from a local chief judge in the form of an administrative order (American Probation and Parole Association, 1994).

Before giving their endorsement, judges may want to know what benefit they may receive as a result of the teen court program. For most jurisdictions, court time is limited, and judges often are looking for new strategies to deal with first-time and less serious offenders. Teen courts can address this need, thus freeing a judge's time to handle cases involving serious, chronic offenders.

Juvenile Justice System Representatives

Whether teen courts operate within a juvenile justice agency or in a community-based agency or organization, they must depend on and interact with various components of the juvenile justice system. Time and budgetary constraints, combined with high caseloads, prompt many juvenile justice professionals to search for alternative ways to handle juvenile offenders. In an overburdened system, teen court programs offer jurisdictions an option for holding juvenile offenders accountable who previously may have received very little or no intervention.

Juvenile justice system agencies are potential referral sources for teen court programs, and professionals who work in the juvenile justice system have valuable knowledge about youth and the delinquency issues of primary concern in the community. In addition to judges, stakeholders within the juvenile justice system include

- ◆ prosecuting and defense attorneys;
- ◆ law enforcement officials; and
- ◆ juvenile probation professionals.

Gaining the support and involvement of persons who are familiar with the internal operations of the local juvenile justice system can help program developers understand the local

juvenile justice process and practices and assist developers with tasks such as defining the offender target population and referral process.

City and State Officials

Juvenile crime is a major issue in most communities, and city and state officials (e.g., mayor, members of the city council, state legislators, governor) are under extreme pressure to develop strategies to address and control this problem within their jurisdiction. Teen court can offer communities a prevention and intervention program aimed at addressing and reducing juvenile crime locally. In addition to the potential advantage available to public officials linked with the teen court program, support from persons in leadership positions can generate widespread support throughout the community and help in obtaining funds for the program.

Educators and School Officials

Crimes and behavioral problems occurring in schools are also of major concern for most communities. Some teen court programs have been developed within schools specifically to address crimes and behavioral problems, while other teen courts have become a community resource for school officials searching for alternative approaches for responding to these problems.

Educators work with a wide range of youth on a day-to-day basis and have valuable insight into the problems facing youth in the community. Schools also are a major source of volunteers, both adult and juvenile. Therefore, acquiring the cooperation of school officials and teachers can simplify and expedite the recruitment process.

In addition, educators can be excellent resources when developing a volunteer training program. For example, they can help produce or review training materials to ensure they are written at an appropriate level of understanding for volunteers. Educators also can help identify

various training and teaching methods for different age groups of volunteers and can serve as facilitators of training events.

Civic and Social Service Organization Representatives

Civic and social clubs often seek community projects to support and sponsor. Securing the proper endorsement or sponsorship from these types of organizations can help funding, marketing, and volunteer recruitment efforts of the teen court program.

Victims

More needs to be done to ensure participation of victims of crime in all aspects of the juvenile justice system. Actively involving victims in the development and operation of the teen court program can help restore their faith in the juvenile justice system and help them regain a sense of control over a traumatic situation. Victims can provide teen court programs with information about the needs and expectations of victims of juvenile crime, which can help programs develop goals and objectives that are victim-sensitive. They also can be called upon to volunteer and assist the program in designing services that teach youthful offenders about the impact of crime on victims.

Youth

Teen court programs impact a wide range of youth. They are designed to benefit not only the youthful offenders referred to the program, but also the young people who choose to volunteer for the program. According to a report prepared by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992), youth are seldom given an opportunity to help define and formulate the types of programs that serve them. This lack of youth input often translates into the development of programs that do not meet their interests or needs. Teen court programs can reverse this trend by actively seeking input and participation from young people in all aspects of the program, including program development.

Youth can help program developers identify the issues with which youth are struggling and can offer insight into the types of approaches that are likely to work when attempting to address the identified issues. In addition to the contribution that young people can make to the decision-making process, this type of meaningful participation fills other goals of teen court programs by empowering youth to assist in addressing real problems within their community.

Making Contact With Stakeholders

Teen court programs will need different types of expertise at various points throughout the life of the program, and they should not limit themselves to involving community members only during the development process. Once key stakeholders have been identified, program developers should determine the role that each stakeholder could potentially serve in the teen court program and initiate contact. Initially, the primary purpose for making contact with stakeholders is to give and receive information, with the ultimate goals of generating support for the program and obtaining information that will assist in the development and implementation process.

Teen court programs will need different types of expertise at various points throughout the life of the program, and they should not limit themselves to involving community members only during the development process.

The method used to initiate contact will depend on the type of support or assistance needed from the various stakeholders. Methods that can be used to approach stakeholders and disseminate information about the program include (1) the use of letters, surveys, and questionnaires; and (2) the initiation of personal contact via telephone, face-to-face meetings, or presentations. Programs using a combination of these approaches will yield the most positive results.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Disseminating and gathering information through letters, surveys, and questionnaires is a simple and efficient way to reach a wide audience. Surveys and questionnaires should be tailored to the type of data needed and to the position of the person who is responsible for providing the information.

Potential drawbacks to relying solely on sending surveys and questionnaires are that the documents may get lost on someone's desk, may not receive a high priority for response, or may be perceived by some as an imposition on their time or as too impersonal (Knepper, 1994). Some suggested strategies for improving response rates when collecting information through the mail include the following (Barrick et al., nd):

- ◆ Design the survey or questionnaire so that it minimizes the amount of time needed to respond and is easy to complete.
- ◆ Include a personalized cover letter with the survey or questionnaire.
- ◆ If possible, include official sponsorship by a party or agency respected by the potential respondent (e.g., use official letterhead of the sponsoring agency for the cover letter).
- ◆ Specify a deadline for returning the completed survey or questionnaire.
- ◆ Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for returning the survey or questionnaire.
- ◆ Develop a strategy for following up with nonrespondents, such as sending followup postcards, making telephone calls and personal visits, and mailing a second questionnaire.

An additional tactic to employ includes mailing questionnaires on less busy days of the week and times of the year (avoid holidays). Also, persons may be more apt to respond if confidentiality is assured and if they are offered a summary of the results (Barrick et al., nd).

Personal Contact

Personally contacting stakeholders by telephone and face-to-face meetings and interviews allows for a more accurate exchange of information; questions and points of contention can be addressed and clarified immediately. It also provides an opportunity for teen court representatives to form relationships with key individuals.

When representatives of the teen court initiate personal contact with stakeholders, the latter will want to know exactly what is needed and expected from them; therefore, program representatives should be prepared to explain the purpose of the desired meeting and specify what action, if any, is requested of the stakeholder. Some guidelines to follow when meeting personally with stakeholders include the following:

- ◆ Be prepared.
- ◆ Invite input.
- ◆ Listen with an open mind.

Written information should be provided to stakeholders prior to the scheduled meeting in order to allow them time to prepare. Additional materials, including information on how to contact the teen court program representative(s), should be given to the stakeholders following the meeting (Knepper, 1994). As in the case of letters and questionnaires, care should be taken to ensure that the information provided to the stakeholders is pertinent to their role in the development and implementation of the teen court program.

Making presentations to agencies and organizations such as social clubs, churches, corporations, professional groups, and schools is another effective way of disseminating information on and generating support for the program's efforts. Encourage feedback from participants. Provide materials to participants that give information on the program and how the speaker can be contacted.

Personally contacting stakeholders can be a very time-consuming process; therefore, it is not a feasible avenue for contacting *all* stakeholders unless the community is very small. This method should be targeted to key individuals identified as having the most at stake or the greatest interest in the program, or whose help and assistance is imperative to the success of the program (e.g., judges, community leaders).

Mobilizing and actively involving the community in teen court programs must begin as early as possible.

FORMING A TASK FORCE OR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mobilizing and actively involving the community in teen court programs must begin as early as possible. Many developers of teen court programs have found it helpful to form a task force or an advisory committee to assist during the development and implementation process. There are numerous advantages to this approach. Involving representatives from various areas of expertise helps bring fresh and diverse perspectives to the process, thus yielding more reliable and credible information on which to build a foundation. In addition, tasks can be divided and distributed among committee members, allowing an opportunity for more contacts to be made and more resources in the community to be discovered (Crowe and Schaefer, 1992).

The primary difference between an advisory group and a task force is that the latter is a hands-on working group, whereas an advisory group typically does not assume an operational role. Members of an advisory group make suggestions and offer guidance on the design and operation of the program; members of a task force not only provide suggestions, they play a direct role in the design and execution of plans (National Crime Prevention Council, 1986). Program organizers may choose to use either one or both types of committee. Whichever

approach is chosen, organizers should ensure that committee members clearly understand what the program expects of them.

It is important to keep the committee as small as possible, especially in the beginning stages. As additional expertise is needed, other persons can be invited to join, or subcommittees can be established to deal with specific issues (e.g., fundraising). The most manageable size group for decision making is five to seven members. Too few members on a committee will make it difficult to conduct meetings when two or more members are unable to attend; however, if too many members sit on a committee, it may impede the ability of the group to conduct the necessary tasks (Knepper, 1994).

In addition to cultivating community and system support, some of the issues facing the advisory committee or task force during the developmental process include

- ◆ the legal authorization for the program to operate;
- ◆ the type of offender population the program will target;
- ◆ the type of services the program will provide;
- ◆ the duties and responsibilities of the staff and volunteers; and
- ◆ how the program will be evaluated.

These issues will be covered in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Committee members should be selected according to the skills and knowledge they can bring to the process. In the early phases of program development, consider choosing

members with background and experience in

- ◆ program development and evaluation;
- ◆ fundraising and marketing;
- ◆ the operation and functioning of the local legal and juvenile justice system; and
- ◆ the needs and interests of youth.

In addition to recruiting committee members with the right balance of knowledge and skills, attempts should be made to ensure that the committee reflects the geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the community (Knepper, 1994).

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Some communities may have language barriers and cultural differences that require different techniques for developing the program and obtaining the support and acceptance of the community. When working with individuals from different cultures, it should be recognized that there can be significant variations concerning personal and family relations and values. If these differences are not recognized, it can lead to conflict, a lack of responsiveness, and distrust (National Crime Prevention Council, 1986). Figure 2-2 provides a summary of initial steps the National Crime Prevention Council suggests for working with different cultural groups.

Figure 2-2: Initial Steps to Consider When Working With Different Cultural Groups

When working with different cultural groups,

- ◆ get stakeholders involved in the program who are trusted within the different cultures;
- ◆ learn about the culture (e.g., reading, talking with others);
- ◆ seek insight into the proper interpretation of attitudes and actions of the culture;
- ◆ learn nonverbal actions and signals basic to the culture;
- ◆ work with leaders acknowledged by the community;
- ◆ get to know existing community groups;
- ◆ stay out of the community's politics - do not align yourself with one particular group;
- ◆ build networks with other service agencies;
- ◆ deliver on promises made;
- ◆ give credit to all who contribute; and
- ◆ once trust is gained, build upon it.

Source: National Crime Prevention Council, 1986

USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY

Conducting a Needs and Resources Assessment

Teen court programs must meet local needs to be accepted and supported. Therefore, conducting a needs and resources assessment is an important first step in the development of an effective program. If done properly, the assessment will provide information helpful to decision making throughout the development and implementation of the teen court program. Also, data obtained can be used to market the program and provide good baseline information for program evaluation.

Type of Information to Be Gathered

Common issues of concern surrounding the juvenile delinquency problem within the community should dictate the type of information gathered. Some issues are

- ◆ the magnitude of and the social and financial costs of juvenile crime within the community;
- ◆ community and professional attitudes toward the problem of juvenile crime within the community;
- ◆ the types of offenders and offenses being handled under the current system;
- ◆ the types of offenders and offenses not being handled adequately under the current system;
- ◆ the existence of other diversion/alternative programs for delinquent youth within the community;
- ◆ the types and locations of services for youth in the community; and
- ◆ the existence of financial and human resources within the community.

Possible Data Sources

With the assistance of the advisory committee or task force, the developer should gather data from agency and community records and explore the opinions and viewpoints of citizens and professionals. Information can be obtained through techniques such as

- ◆ assembling preexisting data;
- ◆ reviewing available agency records;
- ◆ administering surveys and questionnaires;
- ◆ conducting interviews; and
- ◆ engaging in other informal methods of communication.

Possible data sources include mental health agencies, schools, juvenile court records, and

youth services organizations. A process must be in place for collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting the data (Crowe and Schaefer, 1992).

Using the Information Received

Information received through a needs and resources assessment can yield information that will help determine

- ◆ whether there is a need for a teen court program within a jurisdiction;
- ◆ the appropriate target population for the program;
- ◆ the types of services that the teen court program will need to develop and provide; and
- ◆ the level of resources available to support the teen court program.

After analyzing the information, a plan of action should be established with target dates for the completion of certain goals and tasks. (See Figure 2-3 for a sample action plan format.) The action plan should identify who is designated to take the lead role on each of the tasks. This will help provide a framework to guide the future work of the committee.

Interagency collaboration and coordination are key to the delivery of effective and comprehensive services.

Interagency Coordination and Collaboration

Interagency collaboration and coordination are key to the delivery of effective and comprehensive services. Often, teen court programs must rely on and access services in the community to accomplish their goals and objectives. Careful collaboration and

coordination can help diminish role confusion, overlapping of services, and potential rivalry between community and government agencies.

For example, most teen court programs require offenders to perform a certain number of community service hours as a condition of their sentence. In order to meet this obligation, offenders must have a place to do community service. Community agencies and organizations willing to allow youthful offenders to do volunteer work must be identified; then formal agreements should be made establishing them as community service sites. See Figure 2-4 for a listing

Figure 2-3: Sample Action Plan

Sample Action Plan			
Goal	Activities	Responsible Parties	Target Dates
Promote Community Awareness of Program	Develop brochure and public information material.	Joe Smith	1-15-96
	Identify civic and community organizations and schedule appointments to make presentations.	Jane Miller Teen court staff person	1-15-96
	Determine individuals (youth and adults) interested in serving on a speakers' bureau.	Teen court staff person	1-20-96
	Make presentations.	Teen court staff and volunteers	1-30-96
	Develop press release and contact media.	Teen court staff Fred Parker	1-30-96

Figure 2-4: Potential Community Service Sites

Potential Community Service Sites
◆ Adopt-A-Highway programs
◆ Nursing homes
◆ Food banks
◆ High schools
◆ Retirement homes
◆ Senior citizen centers
◆ Churches
◆ Parks and recreation departments
◆ Police departments
◆ Youth bureaus
◆ Libraries
◆ Goodwill Industries
◆ Salvation Army

of possible agencies/organizations to consider as community service sites.

Also, teen court programs recognize that youth participating in their program could benefit from groups and workshops on a variety of subjects, such as substance-abuse awareness, defensive driving, victim awareness, and conflict resolution. Because of time and budgetary constraints, it is often impossible for teen court program staff to conduct these types of groups and workshops in-house. However, groups and workshops often are available through other agencies and organizations within the community (e.g., youth service organizations, counseling agencies, police departments). By identifying and using existing services, teen court coordinators can ease their workload and avoid duplicating services within their community. Also, brokering to these outside agencies expands the network of support for juveniles, their families, and the teen court. More detailed information on selecting and contracting with outside agencies for services can be found in Chapter 6.

In addition to the types of services mentioned above, teen court programs can solicit adult volunteers for carrying out the day-to-day functions of the program (i.e., courtroom monitors, training facilitators). Chapter 8 discusses in more detail the various roles volunteers can assume in teen court programs.

Coordination and collaboration are also essential between the teen court program and referral sources. Jurisdictions vastly differ in how their juvenile justice systems are structured and how cases are processed through the systems. Thus, it is imperative that the lines of communication between the teen court program and other juvenile justice system components be open. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

SUSTAINING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

This chapter has emphasized the need to mobilize and involve the community throughout the development of teen court programs; however, programs cannot afford to lose visibility and support within the community once they have moved beyond the development stage. The tenuous nature of funding and the reliance on community resources for the functioning of many of these programs necessitate that they maintain a high profile.

Teen court programs should keep the community and stakeholders at the center of all their efforts and strive to maintain positive relationships through constant communication.

As teen court programs evolve, new needs will emerge requiring assistance and support from persons with different areas of expertise. Teen court programs should keep the community and stakeholders at the center of all their efforts and strive to maintain positive relationships through constant communication. Key players change within the community and the juvenile justice

system; therefore, programs should review and update their stakeholder analysis periodically to ensure its accuracy.

Staffs tend to turn over often in criminal justice and social service fields. To ensure smooth program operation and service delivery, it is crucial that the staffs of teen court programs, service providers, and referral agencies be educated and kept informed periodically of each other's program purpose and services. This communication also offers an opportunity to discuss and address obstacles and barriers encountered in the programs, as well as to ensure that new staff members in supporting agencies are made aware of the program.

Techniques that teen court programs can employ to maintain ties to service providers and stakeholders include

- ◆ periodic telephone conversations;
- ◆ luncheon meetings; and
- ◆ meeting and networking during shared social events.

Additional methods for maintaining communication and disseminating information about the teen court program and its services include

- ◆ providing mutual training activities and workshops with service providers and referral agencies;

- ◆ developing a speakers' bureau made up of staff and volunteers (youth and adult) to make presentations to local agencies and organizations, such as civic and social clubs, schools, and churches;
- ◆ developing a catchy logo or slogan that the public can associate with the program;
- ◆ developing and distributing public relations materials, such as brochures, fact sheets, posters, and audio or video tapes (sample teen court program brochures may be found in Appendix C); and
- ◆ using the media.

CONCLUSION

Community involvement is vital to the success and survival of teen court programs. This chapter discussed ways to identify stakeholders and to mobilize the community primarily in the program development stage. Throughout this *Guide*, there will be references to different ways community members can be involved in the development, implementation, and operation of the program. When confronted with obstacles and barriers (e.g., funding, lack of referrals, program evaluation), teen court staff always should look to persons and resources in the community for assistance.

CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZING THE COMMUNITY

Have teen court program organizers or staff —

- Identified key stakeholders?
 - Determined who is most likely to oppose the implementation of the teen court program?
 - Determined who is most likely to support this program?
 - Determined who has knowledge, skills, or access to resources needed in the development and implementation of this program?
 - Identified what the program can offer (or how it can benefit) each stakeholder?
 - Identified what each stakeholder can offer (or how each can benefit) the program?

- Made contact with stakeholders?
 - Decided what method will be used to contact each identified stakeholder (e.g., surveys, questionnaires, letters, telephone contact, personal meetings, presentations)?
 - Identified strategies for improving the response rate for stakeholders being contacted through informal means such as letters, surveys and questionnaires?
 - Developed a packet of information that can be adapted easily and provided to stakeholders with whom personal contact will be made? (Note: This packet of information also could be used for other public relations efforts.)
 - Identified other teen court participants (i.e., youth and adult volunteers) who will make in presentations on behalf of the teen court program?

- Formed a task force or an advisory committee to perform or assist in accomplishing certain tasks in the development, implementation, or operation of the program?
 - Established the purpose of the committee(s) (e.g., to serve in an advisory capacity only, to perform or assist in accomplishing certain tasks in the development or implementation of the program)?
 - Determined the number of persons who will be asked to serve on the committee(s)?
 - Examined the need to establish subcommittees to address certain issues in more detail?
 - For each committee, determined the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish the committees' purposes?
 - Identified stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed (based on a list of stakeholders)?
 - Made efforts to recruit committee members who represent the geographic, racial and ethnic diversity of the community?

- Conducted a needs and resources assessment?
 - Determined the type of information to be gathered?
 - Identified possible sources of information in the community?
 - Established a mechanism by which data can be collected, organized, and stored?
 - Determined how results of the assessment will be reported and used?

- Developed an action plan?
 - Identified the major goals to be accomplished in the development or enhancement of the program?
 - Determined activities necessary to accomplishing each goal?
 - Designated who will be responsible for performing each activity?
 - Established target dates for the completion of each activity?

- Identified additional ways in which the community can aid in the provision of services for the teen court program?
 - Identified agencies in the community that can serve as appropriate and meaningful community service sites?
 - Identified other agencies and organizations in the community that provide services that supplement or complement teen court program goals and objectives?

- Determined ways in which community support can be sustained?
 - Developed techniques and strategies to maintain ties and communication with stakeholders and service providers?