

St. Clair County



A Project of the St. Clair County Juvenile Justice Council

Annual Report

July 2020 - June 2021

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Program Overview

The St. Clair County Teen Court serves as an alternative approach to juvenile justice that holds first-time non-violent youth accountable for their actions through remedies imposed by their peers and restorative justice conferencing participants. The program emphasizes accountability and responsibility instead of applying traditional punitive measures, thereby focusing on balanced and restorative justice which is the policy statement of the Illinois Juvenile Court Act.

Through this restorative approach, special emphasis is placed on restoring individuals who have been harmed, the respondent who caused the harm, and taking steps toward broader community healing. As respondents assume responsibility for their actions, and through successful completion of their remedies, those cases will not be charged in juvenile court.

Our youth respondents have more opportunities to access housing, higher education, armed forces, and other desirable career options as they transition into adulthood. Each respondent is given 90 days to complete their restorative justice remedies to prevent the case from being returned to the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office for prosecution. Teen Court is a collaborative effort administered by the St. Clair County Juvenile Justice Council in cooperation with the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office and the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department.

As a result of COVID-19, all Teen Court sessions were convened virtually. Despite the pandemic, Teen Court maintained momentum by continuing to engage peer jurors, volunteers, respondents and their families. Teen Court also celebrated some major milestones during this program year.

In this report, you will learn how Teen Court continued to meet the needs of young people during the pandemic by connecting them to supportive services to promote their well-being, stronger relationships, and healing.

We Appreciate the Generous Support of These Champions of Youth

Ameren Illinois

Belleville Boot Company

Illinois American Water

Sandberg Phoenix & Von Gontard

St. Clair County Teen Court Program Highlights

- I. During this program year, Teen Court developed a virtual platform to convene our monthly hearings. As our virtual platform was being developed, we took extra steps to ensure our cases were compliant with privacy and confidentiality protocols. In some cases, we made special accommodations to maintain our respondents' privacy while continuing to move forward with our hearings.
- II. Our Teen Court Director, Judge Annette Eckert (Retired), was featured on the "[Mike Clairborne Show](#)" discussing innovative ways of operating Teen Court.
- III. On May 1, 2021 (Law Day) Teen Court debuted "[Five Year Anniversary, 200 Graduates and 20,000 Volunteer Hours](#)" via YouTube.
- IV. Teen Court was implemented in December 2014. Since then, Teen Court has successfully graduated 206 respondents. Many of our graduates have reported they are in college, serving in the armed forces, and pursuing their career goals.
- V. Peer Jurors supported youth respondents who have experienced trauma by making referrals to community-based programs to address housing and food insecurity, mental health counseling, grief therapy, and caring services.
- VI. This past year, the Teen Court added restorative justice conferencing. Restorative justice conferencing is a conferencing that brings together the referred teen and family, the victim(s), members of the community and teens. The conference is used rather than the peer jury, where the victim wants to participate. The conference group meets in a circle at Teen Court and must unanimously decide what remedies the teen should perform, based on the rules of restorative justice that are used in peer jury hearings.

Cases and statistics from the virtual cases will be kept with and separately from in person cases. Also, conferencing cases statistics will be kept with peer jury cases and separately.

The Benefits of Implementing a Restorative Justice-Based Diversion Program

Teen Court benefits Youth Respondents by:

- Providing each young person with an opportunity to recognize the consequences of his/her behavior/actions and to make conscience decisions for correction and improvement.
- Allowing each young person to be held responsible and provided with a second chance to pursue future goals and aspirations.
- Granting each young person with an opportunity to repair harm to restore self, victim(s), and community.
- Diverting youth through early interventions and restorative supports, the program assists with rebuilding the whole person.
- Connecting youth to community service opportunities in partnership with area businesses and nonprofits. Youth are paired with a mentor, most often an off-duty sheriff's deputy to reinforce restorative justice principles highlighted in Teen Court sessions.

Teen Court benefits the Peer Jurors by:

- Giving them an opportunity to develop a sense of empathy and compassion as they interact with other young people from different racial/ethnic groups, socio-economic status and communities.
- Increases their knowledge, skills, and abilities: civic/community engagement, youth leadership, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and social skills.
- Allows jurors to be “change agents” within their schools and community by setting a positive example for other young people to consider.
- Prepares jurors for real life experiences.

Teen Court benefits the Community by:

- Serving as an early intervention and prevention program.
- Promoting the principles of Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed Care.
- Connecting respondents to community-based resources and services to impact positive youth development outcomes.
- Educating youth about the legal system.
- Encouraging civic engagement and responsibility.
- Supporting a reduction in recidivism while improving youth development outcomes.

Teen Court Program History from December 2014 - June 2021

Program Year 1: December 2014 – June 2015

TOTAL Participants	24 Respondents
Successful Completions	12 Graduates

Program Year 2: July 2015 – June 2016

TOTAL Participants	38 Respondents
Successful Completions	35 Graduates

Program Year 3: July 2016 – June 2017

TOTAL Participants	56 Respondents
Successful Completions	41 Graduates

Program Year: 4: July 2017 - June 2018

TOTAL Participants	39 Respondents
TOTAL Declined	21 Failed to Respond
Successful Completions	38 Graduates

Program Year 5: July 2018 - June 2019

TOTAL Participants	34 Respondents
TOTAL Declined	15 Failed to Respond
Successful Completions	36 Graduates

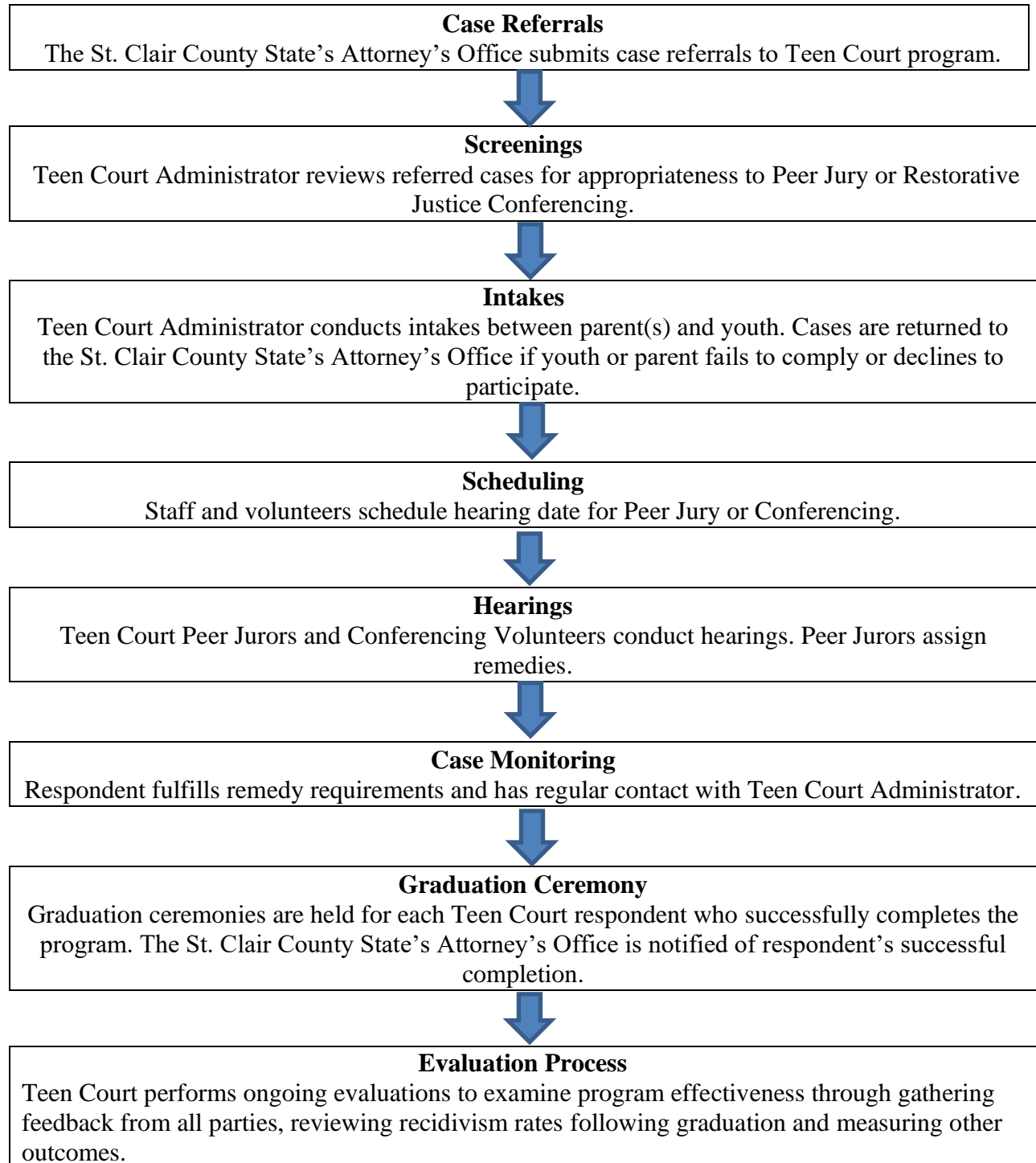
Program Year 6: July 2019 - June 2020

TOTAL Participants	27 Respondents
TOTAL Declined	10 Failed to Respond
Successful Completions	32 Graduates

Program Year 7: July 2020 – June 2021

TOTAL Participants	13 Respondents
Successful Completions	12 Graduates

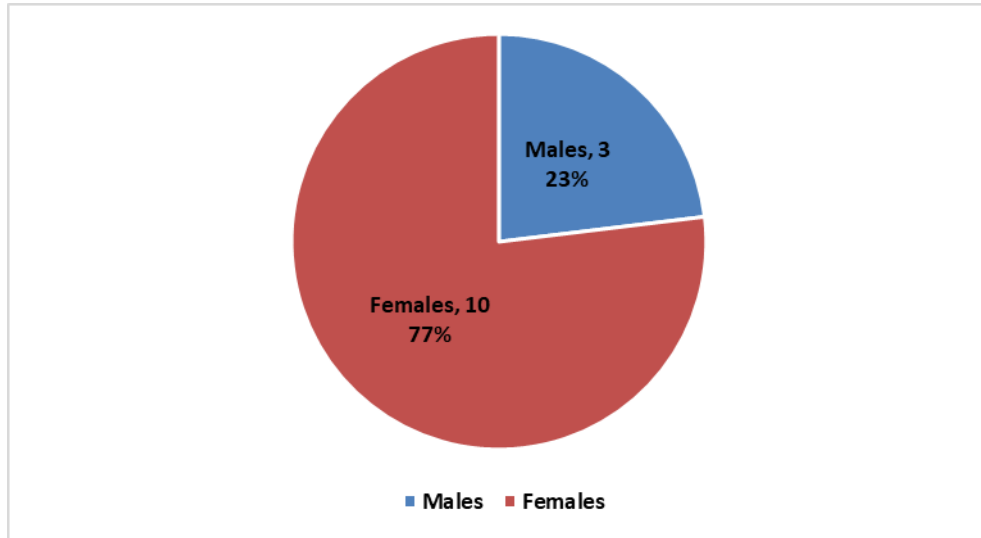
St. Clair County Teen Court Process



July 2020 – June 2021 Annual Summary

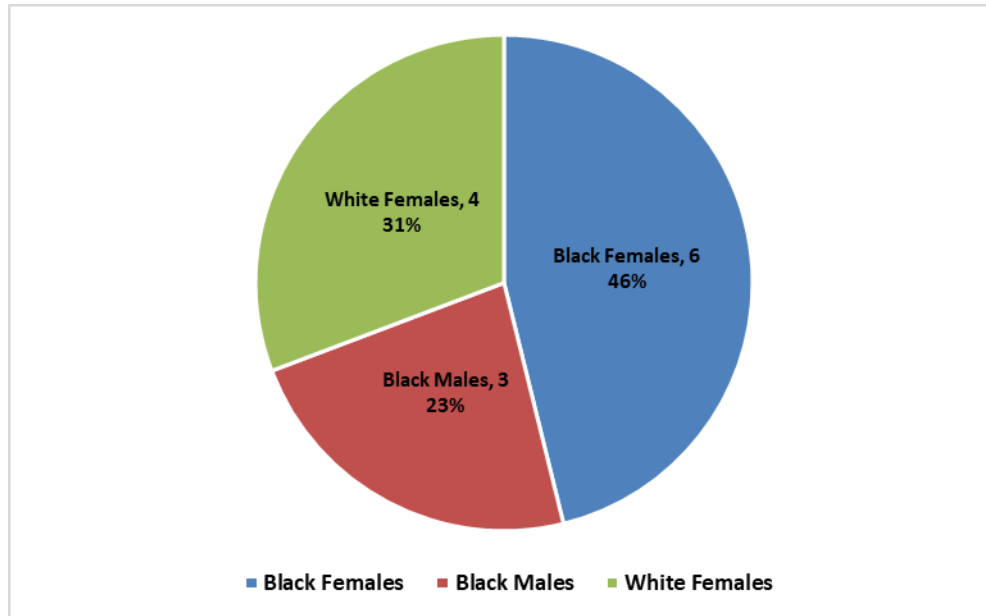
The chart below provides a breakdown of each respondent's gender who made a virtual appearance in Teen Court during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

Figure 1. *Respondents by Gender*



The chart below provides a breakdown of each respondent's race and gender who made a virtual appearance in Teen Court during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

Figure 2. *Respondents by Race and Gender*



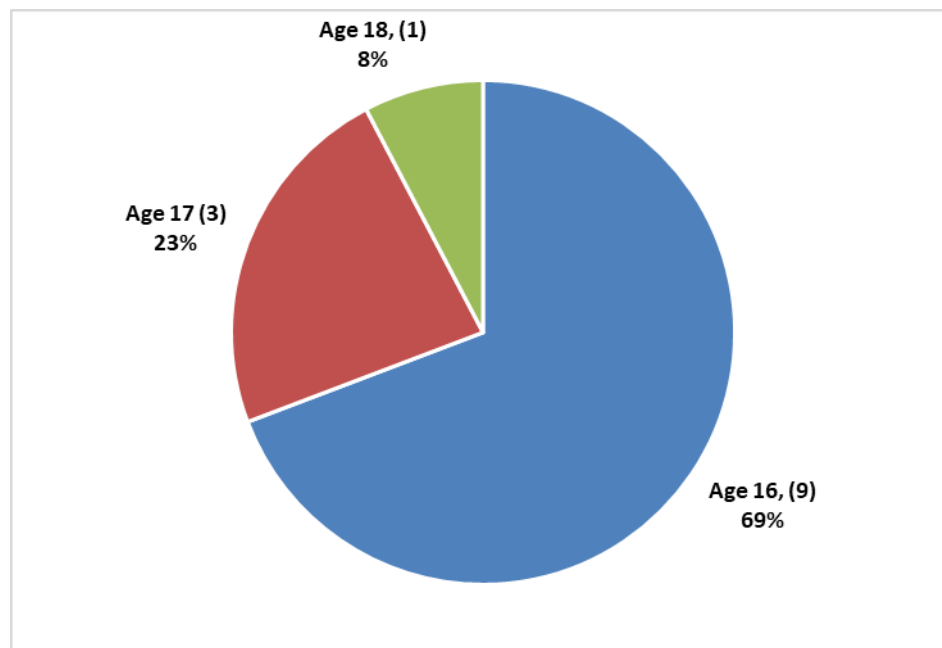
The chart below provides a breakdown of each respondent's race and gender who was seen in Teen Court during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

Figure 3. Respondents by Race and Gender

Race	Male	Female	Total
Black	3	6	9
White	0	4	4
Total	3	10	13

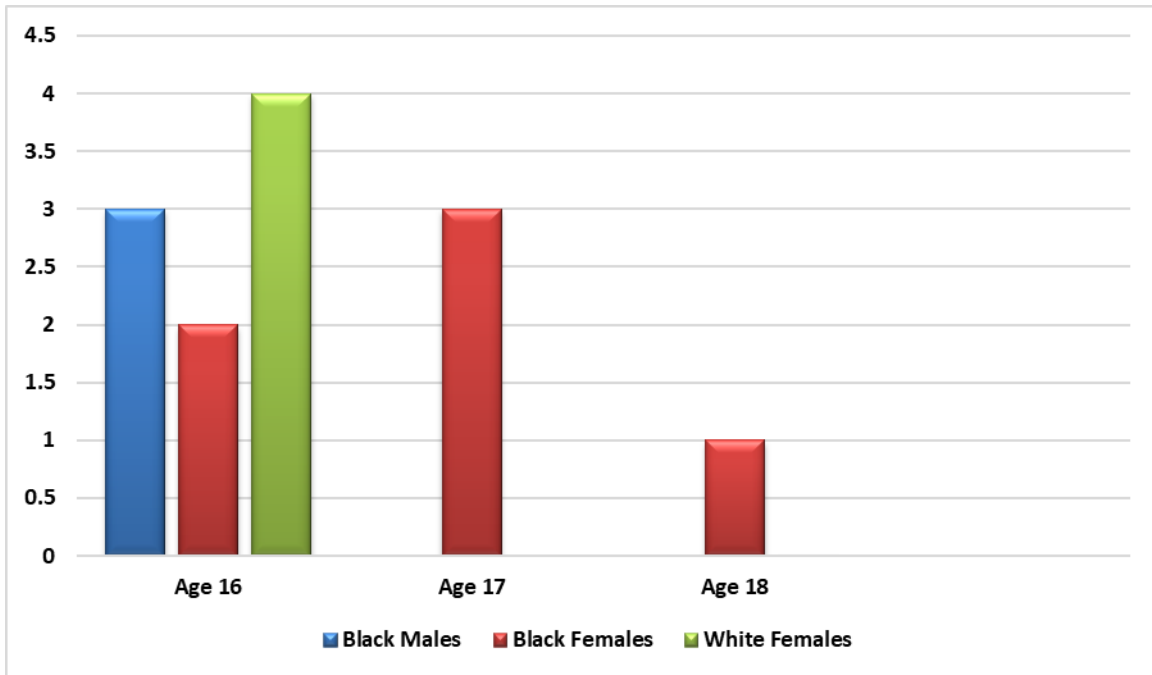
The chart below shows the age of respondents when they appeared before the Teen Court Peer Jurors during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

Figure 4. Respondents by Age (Total) and Percentage



The chart below illustrates the gender, race, and age of the respondents who appeared in Teen Court during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

Figure 5. Respondents by Gender, Race and Age



The information below displays the various schools attended by Teen Court respondents during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

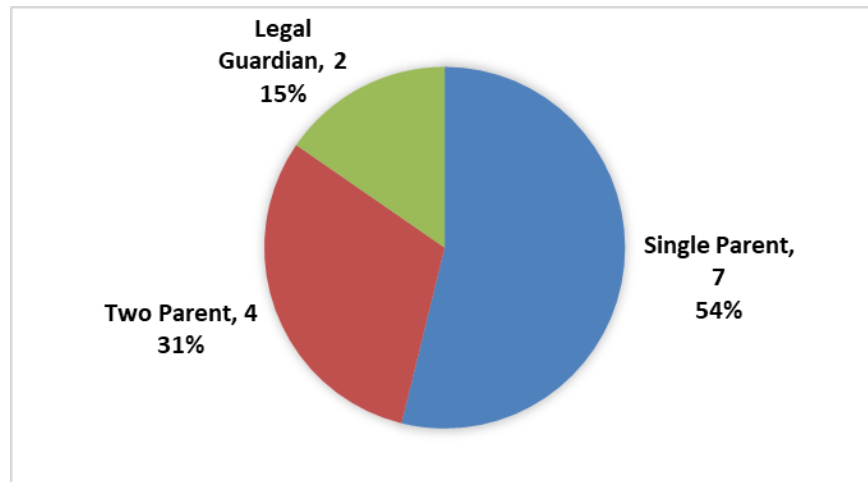
Figure 6. Respondents by Schools

School	# of Students Attending
Belleville West High School	2
Collinsville High School	1
East St. Louis High School	1
Granite City High School	1
Homeschooling	1
O'Fallon High School	2
Triad High School	4
Unknown	1
Total	13 Students

Household Status

Teen Court collects the household status of each respondent appearing before the Peer Jury. The information below provides the family status of each respondent seen during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

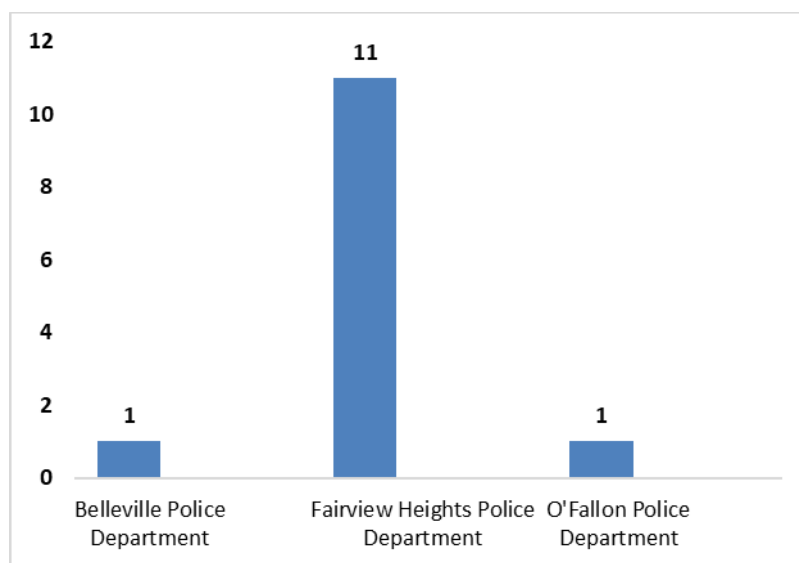
Figure 7. Respondents by Household



The chart below provides a breakdown of each police department that was involved with referring cases to Teen Court during the July 2020 – June 2020 program year.

Referring by Police Department

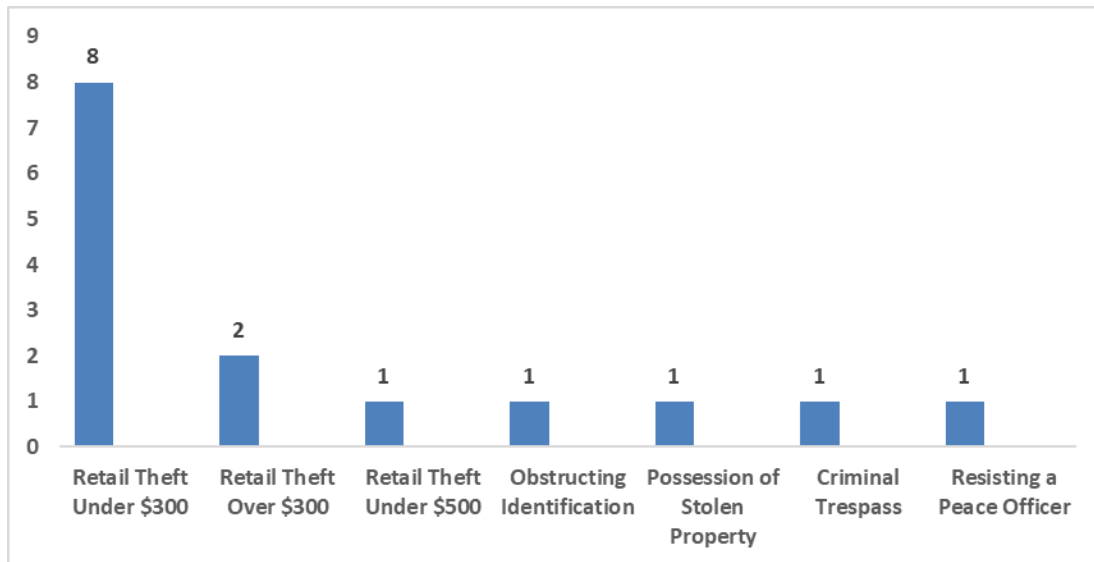
Figure 8. Referring Police Departments



Please note: A large shopping center with many retail stores is located in Fairview Heights, IL which includes many retail stores which explains the high number of referrals related to theft and retail theft in comparison to other police departments.

The chart below provides a breakdown of all offenses committed by Teen Court respondents at the time of their July 2020 – June 2021 appearance.

Figure 9. *Offenses Committed*



Offenses by Race and Gender

The chart below provides a breakdown about each offense committed by Teen Court respondents during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year. Some Teen Court respondents committed more than one offense.

Figure 10. Offense Chart

Offense Type	Black Females	Black Males	White Females	Total
Retail Theft Under \$300	4		4	8
Retail Theft Over \$300	2			2
Retail Theft Under \$500		1		1
Obstructing Identification	1			1
Possession of Stolen Property		1		1
Criminal Trespass		1		1
Resisting a Peace Officer		1		1
Total Number of Offenses	7	4	4	15

Teen Court Cases, Offense Type, Race, Gender and Referring Police Department

The chart below provides a breakdown of Offenses, Race, Gender, Referring Police Departments during the July 2020 – June 2021 program year.

Figure 11: *Cases, Offenses, Race, Gender and Referring Police Departments*

Retail Theft Under \$300...8 Offenses

- 1 Black Female** – (1) O’Fallon Police Department
- 3 Black Females** – (3) Fairview Height Police Department
- 4 White Females** – (4) Fairview Heights Police Department

Retail Theft Over \$300...2 Offenses

- 2 Black Females** – (2) Fairview Heights Police Department

Retail Theft Under \$500...1 Offense

- 1 Black Male** – 1 Fairview Heights Police Department

Obstructing Identification...1 Offense

- 1 Black Female** – 1 Fairview Heights Police Departments

Possession of Stolen Property...1 Offense

- 1 Black Male** – 1 Belleville Police Department

Criminal Trespass...1 Offense

- 1 Black Male** – 1 Fairview Heights Police Department

Resisting a Peace Officer...1 Offense

- 1 Black Male** – 1 Fairview Heights Police Department

Teen Court Restorative Justice Remedies

Teen Court Cases: Type of Hearing: Peer Jury # Restorative Justice Conferencing #

Community Service Hours

During this program year, Teen Court was unable to assign respondents to Community Service sites due to COVID-19 safety protocols. As the state reopened in June 2021, (1) respondent was referred to St. Vincent DePaul in East St. Louis to complete six hours of community service hours. Prior to the pandemic, respondents were referred to the following community partner sites:

- Shelter Shop, Belleville
- St. Vincent DePaul, East St. Louis
- Tapestry of Community Offerings -TOCO Shop, Belleville

In previous years, each Teen Court respondent was accompanied by an adult mentor, most often an off-duty member of the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department of a similar gender.

Individual & Family Counseling Referrals (In-Person & Tele-Health)

Teen Court connects youth with community-based counseling services to support positive youth development outcomes. During the pandemic, counseling has been a vital resource to assist respondents with accessing care to address behavioral/mental health, trauma, grief, homelessness, rebuilding trust and other counseling needs. During this program year referrals were made to the following agencies:

- AA/NA- Alcoholic Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southwestern Illinois
- Collinsville High School Counselor
- Heartlinks Grief Center
- Hoyleton Youth & Family Services
- Independent Licensed Counselor

Counseling to Approved Alcohol Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) Meetings

Teen Court respondents who disclose or may be at risk of substance use may be ordered to attend a teen-friendly AA or NA meeting in St. Clair County. The Teen Court Administrator coordinates the meeting dates and times with the respondent and his/her parents to ensure that an adult connected to the young person will be present to sit with the respondent for moral and emotional support.

Essays

Teen Court respondents were assigned to write an essay are given a minimum amount of words required for the essay as well as a topic for the essay. The Peer Jury customizes the topic for the respondent based upon information acquired during the court proceedings. Topics during this program year included taking accountable, making positive choices, dealing with peer pressure, managing stress and stressful situations and dealing with substance use.

Extra-Curricular Activities

During this program year, (4) respondents received remedies focusing on prosocial activities and personal reflections.

- (2) Start Writing a Daily Journal
- (1) Assigned to read book focusing on Youth Leadership
- (1) Connect with parent to discuss school success/challenges
- (1) Participate in School Tutoring Sessions

Interview a Nurse

Teen Court respondents who have an interest in joining the healthcare industry receive a remedy to interview a medical professional. During this program year, a respondent interviewed a nurse to learn more about the educational requirements and other career information.

Letter of Apology

The letter of apology provides our respondents with an opportunity to work toward correcting his/her actions to reduce harm as result of the offense(s) committed. Letters of apology are usually written to the respondent's parents, siblings, teachers, business owners and lost prevention officers. The letter of apology is a remedy that helps respondents work toward repairing and healing strained relationships.

Teen Strong

During this program year, Teen Court respondents were not assigned Teen Strong due to COVID-19 safety protocols. In previous years, Teen Strong assisted youth respondents with developing pro-social skills. Through our partnership with the Gateway YMCA in Belleville and the 375th Security Forces from Scott Air Force Base, respondents have access to mentoring, recreational activities and other supports to help them become successful members of society. During the program year, (8) respondents engaged in Teen Strong to build stronger relationships with peers and service personnel.

Teen Court Peer Jury

Youth respondents may be recommended and requested to serve as a peer juror at a future Teen Court hearing. The respondents serving on the peer jury has an opportunity to actively participate as a peer juror to help a fellow teen in a situation. The respondent serving on the peer jury has a role in determining the appropriate remedies for other teen respondents appearing before the Teen Court on the date required for juror service.

Verbal Apology

The peer jury may request Teen Court respondents to openly apologize to another person during a court proceeding. The verbal apology, like the letter of apology allows the respondent to take responsibility for his/her actions. This is another way to mitigate harm and moving parties involved toward healing.

Vision Board

A vision board is a visual art project completed by Teen Court respondents. Through this remedy, respondents use visual images of pictures, quotes and words of encouragement to express their goals and aspirations. The creation of vision boards gives respondents an opportunity to create poetry, art, music, business plans and other creative ideas.

Teen Court Remedies Assigned during the July 2020 - June 2021 Program Year

Remedies Category	Number of Referrals	Remedies Assigned by Peer Jurors
Community Service	1	Teen Court respondents assigned (6) hours of community service at an area food pantry in East St. Louis.
Counseling Referrals	6	Teen Court respondents and members of their families were referred to community-based health care providers to increase access to counseling services. As a result of the pandemic, many of these sessions were tele-health conferences.
Essays	11	Teen Court respondents were given essay writing assignments for setting goals, self-reflection, and personal development.
Extra-Curricular Activities	5	Teen Court respondents were assigned extra-curricular activities to connect youth to pro-social activities, academic enrichment and sports. These activities included journal writing, joining school leadership groups, and school sporting events.
Career Development Interviews	2	Teen Court respondents had to conduct interviews to learn about joining the United States Armed Forces and becoming a registered nurse.
Letter of Apology	15	Teen Court respondents are given an opportunity to repair harm caused to members of the community by writing letters of apology. A total of (15) letters have been written to family members, teachers, and businesses to restore trust

		and repair relationships.
Teen Court Peer Jury	2	Teen Court respondents are oftentimes selected to serve on Peer Jury. This process allows the respondent to experience the Teen Court process and engage in assigning remedies.
Verbal Apology	2	Teen Court respondents verbally apologized to their family members to regain trust and heal broken relationships.
Vision Board	7	Teen Court respondents developed vision boards to focus on their aspirations and goals. During graduation ceremonies, respondents typically present their vision boards and share what inspired them by citing quotes, artwork and other forms of creative expression.

Please note: Due to COVID-19, many of our program referral categories for this reporting period are significantly lower than previous years due to public safety, closures and shelter in place orders. During this program year, we were unable to refer respondents to our Teen Strong Program. We hope to reinstate that program when it is safe enough to do so.

**Teen Court Recidivism Log
Program Year July 2020 – June 2021**

Three Months Post-Graduation

2/206 graduates committed a new offense at any point within 3 months of exiting the program, for an approximate 0.9% recidivism rate at the 3-month point, based on locally available data.

Youth 1: Committed offense of Unlawful Possession with Intent to Deliver Cannabis
Outcome: Youth received juvenile court supervision

Youth 2: Committed offense of Retail Theft Under \$300
Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to juvenile probation.

Six Months Post – Graduation

9/198 graduates committed a new offense at any point within 6 months of exiting the program, for an approximate 4.5% recidivism rate at the 6-month point, based on the locally and available data.

This data includes youth who committed the offenses described above as well as the following:

Youth 3: Committed offense of Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and Possession of Cannabis
Outcome: Youth successfully completed community service and drug prevention classes in exchange for a dismissal of charges

Youth 4: Committed numerous offenses including: Burglary, Possession of Alcohol by Minor, Burglary, Criminal Damage to Government Supported Property, Theft Under \$500, Criminal Damage to Property, Criminal Damage to Property, Retail Theft, Theft from a Person and Aggravated Battery
Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to juvenile probation

Youth 5: Committed offense of Leaving the Scene and Theft from a Person
Outcome: Youth received juvenile court supervision

Youth 6: Committed offense of Unlawful Possession of Cannabis and Unlawful Possession of Drug Paraphernalia
Outcome: Youth successfully completed supervised supervision and received credit for employment

Youth 7: Committed offense of Retail Theft Over \$300
Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to juvenile probation

Youth 8: Committed offense of Aggravated Battery and Criminal Trespass
Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to juvenile probation

Youth 9: Committed offense of Aggravated Battery
Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to juvenile probation

One Year Post – Graduation

20/194 graduates committed a new offense at any point within the first 12 months of exiting the program, for an approximate 10.3% recidivism rate at the 12-month point, based on locally available data.

This data includes youth who committed the offenses described above as well as the following:

Youth 10: Committed two unrelated series of offenses including Aggravated Vehicular Hijacking, Aggravated Battery, Aggravated Fleeing, Eluding a Police Officer and Attempted Residential Burglary

Outcome: Youth was committed to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice

Youth 11: Committed offense of Aggravated Fleeing, Attempting to Elude Police, Aggravated Unlawful Use of a Weapon

Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to probation

Youth 12: Committed offense of Possession of Cannabis

Outcome: Youth received alternative disposition of Risk Education classes

Youth 13: Committed offense of Unlawful Possession of Cannabis

Outcome: Youth successfully completed Community Service

Youth 14: Committed offense of Retail Theft Under \$300

Outcome: Youth successfully completed Supervised Supervision and Community Service

Youth 15: Committed offense of Aggravated Battery and Unlawful Possession of a Weapon

Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to juvenile probation

Youth 16: Committed offense of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm

Outcome: Youth received juvenile court supervision

Youth 17: Committed offense of Criminal Trespass to Residence

Outcome: Youth was adjudicated delinquent and sentenced to probation

Youth 18: Committed offense of Deer Hunting Violation

Outcome: Youth received active supervision

Youth 19: Committed offense of Deer Hunting Violation

Outcome: Youth received active supervision

Youth 20: Committed offense of Disorderly Conduct

Outcome: Youth received community service

Three Year Post-Graduation

Since Teen Court's inception, 135 youth graduated 3 or more years ago; of those 135, 10 youth reoffended at some point in that 3-year period.

To ensure our Teen Court program is effective and improving life outcomes for youth, we commit to doing the following:

- Reviewing our annual reports to examine racial and ethnic disparities in collaboration with our Juvenile Justice Council, program staff, community partners, and law enforcement agencies.
- Maintaining partnership with our local police chiefs to increase the number of Teen Court referrals to reduce the number of ordinance violations, citations, and unnecessary arrests.
- Training community partners and stakeholders about the benefits of implementing Restorative Justice principles into policies, programs and practices to mitigate harm and re-traumatization.
- Incorporating Restorative Justice remedies that are responsive to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which include grief counseling, homelessness, racism, suicidal ideation, substance use, etc.
- Building youth resiliency to support young peoples' strengths, talents, pro-social skills, and positive relationships.
- Increasing Teen Court's capacity through ongoing learning and training opportunities.

Total Number of Graduates Re-offending

Overall, out of 206 total graduates to date, (20) have committed new offenses at any point after graduation for an overall recidivism rate of 9.7%. This meets our goal of less than 10% recidivism among graduates.

There are limitations on the ability to check for recidivism rates, as there is limited access to juvenile arrest records overall. This is a barrier to completing a full, comprehensive criminal records check on graduates; however, all locally available records are limited in this data. Examining "reoffending" includes reporting on matters filed in St. Clair County, Illinois. This rate includes cases where the graduate was charged with an offense (whether in criminal court, an ordinance violation, or a new juvenile delinquency allegation), and there was a finding or admission of guilt, resulting in conviction, adjudication of guilty, or an alternative disposition such as diversion or court supervision. The offenses would include misdemeanor offenses, a serious ordinance violation (such as theft or drug offenses), or serious traffic offenses such as DUIs or reckless homicide; minor traffic offenses, such as speeding tickets are not included in this evaluation. Pending allegations are not included in the final recidivism rate in order to avoid cases where youth may be found not guilty or there is not enough evidence to proceed with a charge.

The (20) graduates captured in the overall recidivism rate are from the following communities:
(4) Belleville

- (5) Cahokia
- (3) East St. Louis
- (1) Fairview Heights
- (2) Freeburg
- (2) O'Fallon
- (1) Shiloh
- (2) Swansea

Teen Court Feedback/Responses
June 2020 – July 2021

“Teen Court made me realize the importance of being a leader and instead of a follower.” *Teen Court Graduate*

“The Vision Board gave me an opportunity to plan my future.” *Teen Court Graduate*

“I am grateful for the Teen Court program because they gave my child a second chance.” *Teen Court Parent*

“Teen Court has allowed me be able to help others in a time of uncertainty. Being able to assist teens during a time when I felt there was no way I could help was extremely uplifting for me. This time also allowed me to have real interactions with others and grow as a leader. Not only was I able to help others in this aspect, but I was also provided with excellent learning moments as I become an adult.” – *Teen Court Peer Juror*