

Panel Selections

Interested citizens who wish to volunteer their time as a Youth Aid Panelist are required to complete a three-stage process: Application, Interview, and Training.

Step One: The Application

Prospective panelists are required to complete an application questionnaire as a first step in the selection process. This form elicits personal information, background data, and inquires as to any special skills or affiliations you may have. When your application is received by the District Attorney's Office, it will be reviewed for completeness and content. As part of the application review, a criminal record check will be conducted. Please note, however, that an arrest or criminal conviction does not automatically exclude you from further consideration.

Step Two: The Interview

After your application is reviewed and approved, you will be contacted by the District Attorney's Office and scheduled for an interview. This interview usually take place at a conveniently located police district. It is conducted by an Assistant District Attorney from the Juvenile Unit and an Officer of the Philadelphia Police Department. The purpose of the interview is to review your application, obtain clarifications where needed, and to discuss your interest in the program. It is also an opportunity for you to voice your concerns and to have any questions you may have answered.

Step Three: The Training Process

Applicants are required to complete five (5) training sessions, which will include a commencement ceremony prior to participation in the program. These classes occur weekly for five weeks and are usually scheduled for 7:00 - 9:00PM.



We Need Your Support...

This program is entirely dependant on the commitment and continued support of community volunteers that have made the program a success.

If you are able to serve as a Youth Aid Panelist, or have any questions, please call or visit the Crime Prevention Officer of your local police district or contact the **Youth Aid panel staff by calling (215) 686-7600, (215) 686-6305, or (215) 686-7620 from 9:00AM-4:00PM.**

You may also visit our website at ww.phila.gov/districtattorney to download the application. Please consider becoming a part of the solution, so that together we can make a difference.

District Attorney's Office of Philadelphia Youth Aid Panel Program



R. Seth Williams, District Attorney

City of Philadelphia

**YOUTH AID PANEL
3 S. Penn Square, 3rd Floor
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215-686-7600

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A Message From The District Attorney

During my time as an Assistant District Attorney, I have always thought that the Youth Aid Panel Program was an excellent program. It has proven to be a great way to identify and recruit citizens of Philadelphia who are willing to volunteer their time in the community to help our youth. It has been my goal to be smart on crime, rather than tough on crime, with hopes to prevent crime in the future.

It has also been my goal to expose the youth in Philadelphia to positive examples of careers in law through various programs here in the Office. The two programs that are currently here in the District Attorney's Office are the *Youth Explorers Post Program* and the *Bridge to a Future Program*. To find out more information on either of these programs, please contact the District Attorney's Office at **215.686.8000**.

What is the Youth Aid Panel?

The Youth Aid Panel is a Juvenile Diversion Program which gives first time juvenile criminal offenders the option of appearing before a panel of community volunteers rather than entering the juvenile court system. A juvenile who completes the contractual obligations imposed by the panel will avoid the stigma and possible adverse effects of a criminal record. Juveniles who fail to complete their obligations are referred to court for criminal prosecution.

Unlike traditional methods of intervention in which the courts assume the decision-making process, the Youth Aid Panel involves the juveniles family and community in the process. This approach is critical to the prevention and rehabilitation goals which underlie the program. The key element of this diversion program is to make the juvenile understand the seriousness of their actions and the effect that the crime has on them, their family and their community. The panelist encourage the youth to hold themselves accountable for his or her behavior, thereby encouraging the juvenile to behave responsibly.

How Does a Juvenile Get into The Diversion Program?

When juvenile offenders are arrested in Philadelphia, one of the first things the investigator does is conduct a record check. If a record check indicates no prior arrests, the juvenile may be referred to the Youth Aid Panel for diversion. If the Police Officer and Assistant District Attorney determine that the juvenile is appropriate for the Youth Aid Panel, the juvenile will be given a one-time opportunity to participate in the program. If the juvenile accepts, the case will be referred to the Youth Aid Panel Director for admission into the program.

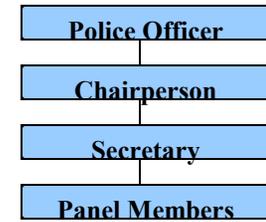
How Successful is The Diversion Program?

The Youth Aid Panel currently enjoys a tremendous success rate by deterring youth offenders from committing further criminal acts. Of the thousands of juveniles that have completed the program, most are not arrested again. This contrasts sharply with the recidivism rate for juveniles who have been through the traditional court system.

How is The Youth Aid Panel Structured?

Each Youth Aid Panel is composed of a chairperson, Secretary, Police Representative and Panel members.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S YOUTH AID PANEL



The Chairperson is responsible for the overall operation of the panel. Chairpersons act as a liaison between the panels.

The Police Department, and the District Attorney's Office. The Police representative is the Crime Prevention Officer of the police district where the hearings are conducted. This officer functions as a liaison between the Police Department, the Chairperson and the District Attorney's Office. Crime Prevention Officers provide advisory services to the panel, make materials and case file available and generally provide assistance whenever possible.

The secretary is responsible for the accurate and complete preparation of all required documents pertaining to the cases heard.

The panel members are the backbone of the program. They hear each referred case along with the crime prevention officer, and jointly arrive at a contract of obligations to be performed by the juvenile. A panel member that volunteers to monitor a case ensures that the juvenile completes his/her contract obligations.

The monitor calls the juvenile periodically, checks on their progress, and assists them with any problems they may be encountering during the duration of their Youth Aid Panel contract.