

PANELIST?

Interested citizens who wish to volunteer their time as a Youth Aid Panelist are required to complete a three-stage process.

STEP ONE: 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: 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 takes place at a conveniently located police district. It is conducted by an Assistant District Attorney from the Juvenile Unit and a representative 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: Training

Applicants are required to complete four training sessions and to attend a commencement ceremony prior to participation in the program. These classes occur once a week for five weeks and are usually scheduled for 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. They are held at a conveniently located police district with the appropriate facilities.

Topics covered include, but are not limited to an overview of the program, mechanics of the program, role playing, case critiques, and group discussion.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT...

This program is entirely dependant on the commitment and continued support of the community volunteers that have made the program a success. If you can serve as a Youth Aid Panelist, have any questions, or wish to serve as a Community Service Resource where we can refer juveniles to perform free community service work, please call or visit the Crime Prevention Officer of your local police district, or contact the Youth Aid Panel staff by calling 686-7600 during normal business hours. Become part of the solution. Together we are making a difference!



PHILADELPHIA

YOUTH AID PANELS

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Youth Aid Panel Program
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DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

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 juvenile's family and community in the process. This approach is critical to the prevention and rehabilitation goals which underlie the program. Such intervention provides a swift and meaningful community response to delinquent behavior. This reaction has proven to be uniquely effective in ending minor's delinquent activity.

The key element of this diversion program is to make the juvenile understand the seriousness of the juvenile's actions and the effect that the crime has on them, their family and their community. The panel assists the juvenile in holding himself or herself accountable for his or her behavior, thereby encouraging the juvenile to behave responsibly.

HOW DOES A JUVENILE GET INTO THE 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 adjudication. 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 PROGRAM?

The Philadelphia Youth Aid Panel currently enjoys a tremendous success rate by deterring youthful 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 PANEL STRUCTURED?

Each Youth Aid Panel is composed of a Chairperson, Secretary, Police Representative and Panel Members. 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 Secretary is responsible for the accurate and complete preparation of all required documents pertaining to the cases heard. 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 files available, and generally provide assistance wherever possible. The Panel Members are the backbone of the program. They hear the case along with the panel officers and jointly arrive at a contract of obligations to be performed by the juvenile. A panel member that volunteers to act as a liaison between the panel and the juvenile is referred to as the monitor. The monitor acts as a mentor to the juvenile and ensures that the juvenile is progressing through the contract provisions without difficulty. Monitors call the juvenile periodically, check on their progress, and assist them with any problems they may be encountering. Since the monitor works closely with the juvenile in the weeks following the initial hearing, their comments are given added importance when a final determination is made to either "sign-off" on the juvenile's contract as successfully completed, or to find that the juvenile breached the contract.