

SANTA CLARA COUNTY PEER COURT

Information for Volunteer Attorneys

What is Peer Court?

Peer Court is an early intervention, prevention and diversion program run **by teens for** teens. Juvenile offenders charged with first-time misdemeanor offenses are referred to Peer Court through Santa Clara County Probation, *i.e.*, the traditional juvenile justice system.

Peer Court keeps teens out of jail. It provides a fast and inexpensive way of helping teens understand and make amends for first offenses and minor crimes, while avoiding the longer and more expensive juvenile court process—a process that can also result in the teen having an official delinquency record. Additionally, Peer Court reduces juvenile crime and substance abuse and promotes restorative justice and alternative dispute resolution, which results in stronger, more secure youth and safer communities.

Teens who are ages 14 to 18 from all over Santa Clara County play the roles of prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, jury, bailiff, and clerk. A real judge presides over the case. Peer Court Hearings are conducted every other Tuesday at Central County Occupational Center (next few hearings are April 2, 16, 30, May 14, 28, etc.).

Our team conducts trainings once a month at Lincoln Law School of San Jose. Our mentor team is made up of current 3L and 4L Lincoln Law School students, private attorneys, district attorneys and defense attorneys.

How can a volunteer attorney help?

We need adult attorney mentors to help mentor our teen attorneys! Each teen attorney is given two weeks to prepare for their hearing. Our adult mentors work with the teens for those two weeks to give them ideas for preparation, make sure the teens are on track, and to guide the teens using Peer Court's Restorative Justice Model.

Where would attorneys provide that help?

During the two weeks prior to the hearing, the attorney provides assistance to their teen mentees through phone, text message, email, or in-person meetings, completely at the discretion of the attorney. The mentoring attorney will attend the (roughly) 1.5 hour hearing to support his/her mentees.

Upcoming Training for Attorneys and Teens

Saturday June 15, 2013
Saturday July 20, 2013
Saturday August 24, 2013

The trainings take place from 9AM to 11:30AM, at Lincoln Law School in San Jose. While the trainings take place during the summer, we will not be matched with a teen to mentor until the fall, when the students return to school and the hearings start up again.

Who should attorneys contact to offer their help?

Please contact Deanna Burneikis, Lead Training Attorney of the Peer Court program, at (408) 292-6122 x11 or DBurneikis@yahoo.com. You can also contact Lai Yip, ABTL Leadership Development Committee member, at (415) 774-3147 or LYip@sheppardmullin.com.