



## **What is Youth Court?**

Youth Court is a restorative program that supports students who may be struggling with choices or behavior—whether or not they've committed a crime. Instead of entering the traditional court system, referred youth take responsibility for their actions in a positive, peer-led process that focuses on growth and accountability.

## **Why Peer Support?**

Youth Court uses a peer model because students often respond best to those their own age. This approach builds trust, encourages honesty, and helps referred youth take accountability in a supportive setting that focuses on growth, not punishment."

## **What Behaviors Can Be Referred?**

It is an effective early-intervention option for repeated minor issues before they escalate into more serious problems. Youth Court accepts referrals for a range of behaviors such as bullying or harassment, substance use or possession (including vaping), property damage, school code of conduct violations as well as theft, trespassing, vandalism and criminal mischief. If you are wondering if the behavior is appropriate for youth court, our staff are happy to speak with you further.

## **Who can refer to Youth Court?**

Referrals can come many different sources. A majority of the referrals that youth court receives come from school resource officers and prevention specialists, law enforcement, PINS and Probation. However, referrals can also be made by parents/legal guardians, family members, the Department of Social Services (DSS), support professionals such as case managers social workers and community agencies that work with youth.

## Why Schools Should Refer: Benefits for Youth Participants

1. Reduces Stigma – A relaxed, peer-led setting helps students feel supported rather than judged.
2. Encourages Positive Peer Influence – Feedback from peers helps students take responsibility and reflect on their actions.
3. Supports Restorative Justice – Students understand the impact of their behavior and take part in reparative steps that promote growth.
4. Builds Valuable Skills – Participants practice public speaking, critical thinking, and empathy, boosting confidence and future success.
5. Provides a Supportive Environment – Peer mentors offer guidance and encouragement for better decision-making.
6. Offers Tailored Outcomes – Solutions focus on each student's needs, leading to lasting positive results and smoother school reintegration.

## Referral Process: Step-by-Step

1. **Complete Referral Forms** – Fill out the referral form and the Advice of Rights and Consent document. This is a voluntary program, so you must obtain signatures from the youth and their parent/guardian on both forms.
2. **Submit Referral** – Email the completed forms [info@ontariocountyyouthcourt.org](mailto:info@ontariocountyyouthcourt.org)
3. **Scheduling & Coordination** – The program Coordinator will contact the referral source to confirm that the referral has been received. Then, they will contact the family of the referred youth to schedule necessary meetings and the court hearing. They will keep the referral source updated and coordinate with them as needed throughout the process.

## Contact & Referral Information

For questions about referring a student to Ontario Cares Youth Court, please reach out by phone or email. Our team is happy to guide you through the process and provide any additional information you may need.

### **Contact Information:**

- Phone: 585-396-4519
- Email: [info@ontariocountyyouthcourt.org](mailto:info@ontariocountyyouthcourt.org)



## Ontario Cares Youth Court Referral

Please ensure you return the following documents:

- Referral Form (completed in full)
- Advice of Rights and Consent Form
- All applicable information related to the incident/case

Return to Ontario County Youth Court via:

Email: [info@ontariocountyyouthcourt.org](mailto:info@ontariocountyyouthcourt.org) (preferred)

Mail: The Partnership for Ontario, Inc;  
5297 Parkside Drive, Suite # 307  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

If you have any questions, please reach out to us at (585) 396-4519.

## Ontario Cares Youth Court Referral

Date of Referral: \_\_\_\_\_

Person making the referral (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to youth: \_\_\_\_\_

I (referral source name), \_\_\_\_\_, recommend that the following youth be allowed to have their case heard in the Ontario County Youth Court for the purpose of a sentencing hearing. I have attached all information that is pertinent to the incident (incident report, description of the incident etc.) and acknowledge that all documents will be shredded after the case is fully closed.

Youth's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian email: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Email \_\_\_\_\_

School District Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide an explanation of the incident/ why this referral is being made. (feel free to use the back of this form if needed):

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**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE:**

Youth Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Advice of Rights and Consent

- Ontario Cares Youth Court is an alternative diversion program for youth who have admitted guilt to a misdemeanor, violation, school code of conduct violation, or inappropriate behavior. You will personally appear at a hearing of the Ontario Cares Youth Court, you will be assigned trained peer defense counsel, your case will be presented, and the court will decide an appropriate disposition. You must dress professionally for an appearance in Ontario Cares Youth Court.
- Your participation in Ontario Cares Youth Court is strictly confidential. All information learned will be depersonalized and converted to data to measure outcomes such as the overall recidivism rate of Ontario Cares Youth Court participants.
- Ontario Cares Youth Court will advise the referral source of your case of the outcome of your participation. Failure to complete the sanctions assigned to you by the jury of Ontario Cares Youth Court will result in your case being sent back to the referral source.
- Ontario Cares Youth Court may require you to complete a designated number of community service hours, write letters of apology or an essay, attend workshops, or complete other sanctions appropriate to your case.
- By agreeing to participate in Ontario Cares Youth Court, you obtain certain benefits and waive certain rights that would be assumed in traditional criminal justice processing. Benefits include, but are not limited to, a hearing conducted by your peers, an opportunity to participate positively in the justice system, avoiding the cost of an attorney, and a dismissal of the case upon completion of assigned sanctions. In Ontario Cares Youth Court, you will not have an adult attorney represent you and you will not have a trial/hearing to determine the truth of the allegations that formed the basis for the referral.
- You have the right to discuss participation in Ontario County Youth Court with an attorney.

- You are not obligated to sign an agreement to participate in Ontario Cares Youth Court. Should you choose to not participate, your case will be handled through means deemed appropriate by the referral source.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I am guilty of the offense and/or violation with which I am charged and do hereby waive my right to have my case proceed in the traditional justice system (and all rights associated therewith) and voluntarily agree to have my offense and/or violation handled in Ontario County Youth Court.

Youth Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_