



Juvenile Diversion Program Leader Handbook

(Based on a successful program in the Viking Council, Minneapolis, MN)

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JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Juvenile Diversion Program provides a positive alternative to formal court processing for motivated first-time misdemeanor offenders. Through structured activities and community service, the program aims to reduce the recidivism rate among these participants.



PROGRAM BACKGROUND

THE JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM PROSPECTUS

I. PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of the Juvenile Diversion Program is to provide youthful offenders with a positive alternative to the court system. Young offenders will participate in structured activities and group interactions which are intended to improve their understanding and perception of the legal system and law enforcement, increase their self-esteem, teach them better methods of communication, and improve their decision-making skills. The goal of the program is to divert youth away from the court system and to reduce the recidivism among these participants.

II. PROGRAM DURATION

The diversion program runs for six months. During this six-month period a youth attends two meetings per month, completes 16 hours of community service work, and may participate in an outdoor adventure retreat. The group meetings and activities will address issues such as the legal system, the probation/parole system, law enforcement, the correctional system, alcohol and drug education, volunteerism, careers, personal awareness and growth, health and fitness, and current community issues.

III. VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

The use of volunteers is essential in the implementation of this program. Each group of youth will have two or three adult volunteers assigned to it. A broad volunteer base will allow the program director to focus on the administrative needs of the program.

The volunteer is responsible for arranging appropriate speakers, activities, and tours (coordinated by the program director). Additional responsibilities include making referrals to agencies for community service work, facilitating each program meeting, providing guidance and encouragement to the youth, and serving as a positive role model.

It is the duty of the volunteer to monitor the youth's participation on an ongoing basis. Participation is monitored by awarding points for each program activity, meeting attendance, punctuality, leadership responsibility, and community service completion. The overall point goal is 800. The point system was devised as a motivational and monitoring tool for the youth.

In addition to the volunteer group leaders, we anticipate many community professionals to volunteer their time to provide presentations to these diversion groups, e.g. judges, county attorneys, parole officers, drug and alcohol counselors, etc. We will seek community meeting locations for programs with no cost.

IV. PROFILE OF YOUTH

- a. Male or female, 14 to 17 years of age.
- b. The youth does not have a prior criminal conviction.
- c. Criminal offense cannot exceed that of a misdemeanor.
- d. Youth must be enrolled in school or alternative education program.
- e. Parents must be supportive of the program and agree to ensure transportation to the program.
- f. Youth may not have previously participated in a diversion program within that community.

V. REFERRALS

- a. A youth is referred to the program by the area police departments.
- b. Contact with the youth and his/her parent must be made by the program director or diversion personnel within two weeks of the referral. This is done by mail, in which an "initial letter" is sent to the parent(s) or guardian(s).
- c. The youth and his/her parent must undergo a pre-admittance interview with the program director or diversion personnel to evaluate his/her suitability for the program. Background history questionnaires will need to be completed by both the youth and parent(s) or guardian(s). A drug and alcohol supplemental questionnaire is added for related offenses. The questionnaires will be reviewed at this interview.
- d. Contact agreements will need to be signed by both the youth and parent prior to admission into the program. The program dues should be paid within one month of admission. Payment plans can be approved if there is financial difficulty in paying.
- e. Youth will be placed on a waiting list to begin a diversion group. Meetings are held in locations throughout the community (maximum capacity may vary based upon the size and need of each community).

VI. NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR OF PARTICIPANTS

A youth will be discharged from the program if he/she has been charged with and/or found guilty of a new criminal offense. The program director does have the discretion to discharge a youth from the program. This decision can be made without a guilty verdict actually being made by the court. If a youth is expelled from a school setting, he/she may be discharged from the program.

The diversion program does not permit chemical use, smoking, gang or satanic cult involvement, or weapon possession while at the program meetings or activities. If a youth is found to have been abusing alcohol or drugs while in attendance at a program activity, he/she risks being discharged from the program. Weapon possession at a meeting will result in automatic discharge.

VII. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prior to a youth being admitted into the program, parental support of such involvement needs to be obtained. A parent must accompany the youth to the pre-screening interview and required program meetings. Parental attendance at the various program activities for the program is optional yet encouraged. Transportation arrangements for the various group activities are the responsibility of the parent.

VIII. FUNDING

The youth is to pay a minimal fee in order to participate in the program. The overall program funding will need to be obtained through private donations, business contributions, local United Way chapters, or any available city, county, or state funding and grants.

This program is of minimal cost to each community as meetings can be held in various locations throughout the community. In addition, professionals in the field who donate their services give presentations. Finally, tours are at locations where a fee is not charged.

IX. EXPLORING OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Juvenile Diversion Program is operated through the Exploring program. Each youth is a participating Explorer and will be able to be involved in the various Exploring activities and functions if they desire.

X. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

An executive committee will be established for the diversion program. The purpose of this committee is advisory in nature and to provide guidance as needed. The members on this committee will be the program director, a local city or county attorney, and a representative from the legal, correctional, law enforcement, business, probation, mental health, substance abuse, and educational fields, and Exploring.

Areas the committee may address include:

1. Program development
2. Technical assistance
3. Public relations
4. Fundraising

XI. PROGRAM COMPLETION

Once a youth has fulfilled the program requirements by attending the meetings, completing the community service hours, and obtaining the 800-point minimum, he/she will be successfully discharged from the program. The program director will notify the police department of the youth's completion. The police department will dismiss the pending criminal charge once proper written notification is received.

Each youth should receive a certificate and/or letter signifying their completion of the program.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

Adult volunteers are selected by the program director to serve as leaders for a diversion group. Typically two or three adults are secured in this capacity. The leaders must be 21 years of age, have experience and/or an interest in dealing with teenage youth, and have knowledge of the court process.

The assigned leaders are responsible for facilitating the youth in securing locations to complete the community service requirements. In addition to attending the bi-monthly meetings and activities with the youth, the leaders will also meet with the program director once per month to review the progress of the youth and monthly programming. (optional)

The role of the volunteer leadership is divided into three separate components. The components include: administration coordinator, community service coordinator, and recordkeeping coordinator. (The duties of each role are outlined in the included materials.)

An adult leader presents himself/herself as a positive role model to the youth at all times. The leaders are expected to attend all meetings and activities with the youth. The appropriate clothing is business casual for meetings and comfortable clothing for outside activities. While interacting with the youth, a leader should never indulge in the use of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or smoking.

ROLE OF VOLUNTEER LEADERS

All Leaders

- Work as a team to plan activities and meetings on a monthly basis.
- Schedule two meetings per month with the youth which address the goals of this program.
- Ensure that all youth are abiding by the rules and regulations of this program.
- Meet with the program director on a monthly basis to review program planning, discuss progress of youth, and discuss problems and concerns.
- Provide youth with a program agenda and a total of points earned on a monthly basis.
- Serve as appropriate role models for the youth.
- Attend all meetings and activities with the youth.
- Serve as facilitators at the various meetings and activities.

Leader I - Administration Coordinator

- Secure and coordinate speakers, tours, and activities for the monthly meetings.
- Secure meeting sites along with audiovisual aids when needed.
- Prepare monthly program agenda for the youth.
- Have youth and speakers fill out an evaluation form following each meeting.
- Serve as liaison between group leader and program director.
- Monitor the progress of and provide assistance to the community service coordinator and the recordkeeping coordinator when needed.

Leader II - Community Service Coordinator

- Work with the youth to set up volunteering locations.
- Make initial contact to volunteer sites.
- Provide youth with name and phone number.
- Provide youth with community service locations list and hour forms.
- Monitor number of hours that the youth complete.
- Maintain chronological sheets on all youth to monitor contacts.

Leader III – Record-Keeping Coordinator

- Monitor attendance of youth at meetings and activities.
- Prepare point forms and provide to youth on a monthly basis.
- Mail program agendas, point forms, and other correspondence to youth when appropriate (retain copies of any correspondence mailed to youth).
- Contact youth when absences occur to stress importance of attendance.
- Inform program director of absence or behavior problems of the youth.
- Maintain chronological sheets on all youth to monitor contacts.
- Maintain organized records on each youth which contain any correspondence, record on contacts, and community service hour sheets.

PROGRAM

PLANNING

PROGRAM PLANNING

The adult leaders work in conjunction with the program director to ensure quality programming over the six-month period.

All of the leaders are encouraged to provide input and suggestions regarding their group's programming. Advance planning of program activities and presentations is advised.

Creative and innovative ideas for the group meetings are encouraged. Staying away from lecture formats will ensure more interest and participation on behalf of the youth. The leaders can incorporate the ideas of the youth when arranging programs.

(An overall program agenda and a listing of possible program presenters is included).

Once the programming has been determined, a schedule of the monthly events is to be distributed to the youth at the meeting preceding the new month. This provides the youth and their parent with ample notice of upcoming meeting dates, meeting locations, and topics to be discussed.

JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM SIX-MONTH PROGRAM AGENDA

Meetings occur two times per month for a six-month period. Each meeting has a topic that will be covered. Although the order of each topic is at the discretion of the team or group leaders, the following is the suggested format and list of topics to be addressed:

MEETING #1

This meeting will always be held first.
Parent's attendance is mandatory.
Held at the police station/community center

Introduction to the Program - Review

- a. Attendance
- b. Point system
- c. Conduct
- d. Group guidelines

Leader's Introduction - telephone number provided
Distribution of six-month meeting schedule
Discuss the program's volunteer requirements, 16-hour minimum, list of sites, verification
Collection of community service locations from youth
Questions and answers

Introduction to Legal System

Speakers arranged by diversion office

Possible speakers:

- a. "What it's like to be in juvenile court," explained by judge.
- b. County attorney's role in the decision and court process.
- c. Public defender's role in the juvenile court system.
- d. "Realities of probation," explained by probation officer.

MEETING #2

Introduction to Volunteer Duties

Presentations on benefits of volunteering and giving to your community
Speakers on volunteering
Get-acquainted games may also be played on this night (file of such at the diversion office)

MEETING #3

Community Concerns and Current Issues

Speakers from business and the police department talk about the effect crime has on the community and on the families of the youth.

MEETING #4

Self-Esteem: Personal Awareness and Growth

The focus of this program is on the individual and how a young person's self-esteem affects their behavior. The youth have a field trip COPE course. The youth then have an opportunity to talk about their feelings and process what they have achieved. Collect community service hours.

MEETING #5

Courtroom and Holding Cell Tour

Tour of the county courtrooms and the holding cells. Following tour, youth participants will have the opportunity to meet with a district court judge and ask questions.

MEETING #6

Presentation and/or Conflict Resolution Activities

Youth learn about the benefit of learning how to cope with difficult situations. Youth should have an opportunity to be presented with various difficult situations and have the opportunity to respond to each individual situation.

MEETING #7

Goal Setting and Personal Decision Making

Presentation from community speakers. Presentation will focus on choices in one's daily life, peer pressure. Presentations can include activities to improve participants' understanding of their decisions and the impact each makes on their future, goal setting, etc.

MEETING #8

Drug & Alcohol Education (Part 1)

Presentation on "Realities" of alcohol and drug use in an educational setting, e.g., chemical dependency counselor, C.D. evaluations. Can include film, activity, discussion, etc.

MEETING #9

Drug & Alcohol Education (Part 2)

Presentation may focus on impact of drinking, e.g., drinking and driving, speakers who have recovered from alcohol addiction or who have lost a loved one due to hazards of drugs or alcohol.

MEETING #10

Health & Fitness

Presentation on taking care of your body, safe and smart sex. Importance of exercise and eating right, not smoking, and other public health concerns.

MEETING #11

Careers & Planning for a “Bright” Future

Presentations by speakers from community.

Presentations focus on planning your future, job interviewing (how to dress, complete applications, etc.), retaining jobs, and getting along with your boss.

Activities may include role playing and mock interviews.

MEETING #12

Graduation

Participants may plan activity, e.g. bring treats.

Participants are encouraged to discuss program and benefits.

Participants are awarded a certificate verifying successful completion of the program.

Parents are encouraged to attend.

MEETING OPERATIONS

MEETING OPERATIONS

The group leaders are responsible for facilitating the bimonthly meetings. At the beginning of the group process it is recommended that activities be performed which would allow the youth to become acquainted with one another as well as with the group leaders.

(The procedures for a successful meeting and follow-up are included in this handbook.)

PERTINENT ISSUES

Rules and Guidelines:

Prior to a youth entering the program, the program director reviews with the youth and their parent/guardian the group rules, point system, and community service hour requirement. This information is further passed out to them at the first meeting.

Behavior Problems:

If a youth is disruptive during the group meetings, the leader must appropriately address this behavior. When addressing a youth, a leader must never use profanity or demeaning comments or be aggressive. A leader should meet with the youth to discuss their inappropriate behavior and what needs to be done to correct this behavior.

A leader can utilize options such as talking privately with the youth, requiring the youth to sit out of the meeting for a short period of time, and sending a youth home if the behavior does not improve. If a youth is to be sent home, a parent/guardian needs to be contacted prior to his/her dismissal from the meeting location. Meeting points can be withheld from a youth due to disruptive behavior.

Excessive behavior problems need to be reported to the program director.

Absences and Tardiness:

Attendance at all group meetings and activities is mandatory for all participants. Group attendance takes priority over other obligations such as sporting events and employment.

If a youth is going to be absent from a meeting, he/she must contact the leaders in advance to explain their absence. Every absence counts!

After the second absence, the youth will receive a written warning by the program director advising of program discharge if absences continue. Upon a third absence, the youth is subject to termination from the program. This matter is handled by the program director.

If a youth is tardy, i.e., 30 minutes or more, the group leaders have the option of not awarding points for attendance and punctuality yet still considering the youth present for the meeting.

Community Service:

Each youth is required to perform a minimum of 16 volunteer hours. The youth are given the opportunity to choose their location site and are not limited to one location. The youth make the initial contact to the agency and are responsible for scheduling their own community service hours. Assistance from group leaders and diversion staff is always available.

Volunteer work can be performed at one of the sites listed on the prepared sheet or at a different site that needs to be approved by the group leader. Once approval is obtained, the youth is responsible for meeting with the agency personnel to make schedule arrangements. Written verification needs to be obtained for each hour completed. The verification forms are turned in to the group leader once filled out. If written verification is not obtained, those hours are considered invalid.

A youth may have to complete additional community service hours if they are low on program points due to absences or tardiness.

Roles of the Youth:

The youth are encouraged to become active and assume leadership roles within their group. Opportunities are provided for them to introduce speakers and write thank-you notes to the speakers, be active in group discussion, and plan group activities when appropriate.

Office Support:

The Learning for Life office is available for any copying, typing, or mailings that need to be performed. A group leader does have the option to utilize their own personal resources if this is more convenient.

Youth Protection:

The group leaders are advised to abide by the Learning for Life policy of two-deep leadership with the youth at all times. This policy is enforced for both the protection of the youth and an adult leader against allegations of sexual or physical misconduct.

Contraband:

The group leaders are responsible for strictly enforcing the rules of no alcohol or illegal drug use, no smoking, and no weapon possession by the youth.

If a youth is observed smoking tobacco products, a leader is to inform the youth to extinguish it. If a youth appears to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, a leader is to discuss the matter with the youth to assess the appropriateness of sending the youth home.

If a youth is observed with alcohol, illegal drugs, or a weapon on their person, the group leader is to confiscate the item if it can be done in a non-volatile manner. The local police department should then be contacted to report the illegal activity. If such a situation should occur, the group leaders need to contact the program director immediately.

MEETING PROCEDURE

- ▲ Arrive 15 minutes early
- ▲ Have room arranged the way you want it (i.e., chairs, tables, VCR, TV)
- ▲ Have youth sign in on signature sheet
- ▲ Start meeting with any business matters
- ▲ Have a youth assigned to introduce the speaker
- ▲ Presentation given
- ▲ Activity following presentation (if appropriate)
- ▲ Have a youth write a thank-you note to the presenter
- ▲ Business matters (volunteering, point sheets, pass out schedules, discuss the next meeting)
- ▲ Meeting adjourned

FOLLOWING THE MEETING

- ▲ Leaders need to contact diversion staff with any problems or concerns that may have arisen at the meeting.
- ▲ Record keeper needs to contact any youth who was not in attendance to find out the reason and to remind them of the next meeting. Then contact diversion staff with the names of these youth.
- ▲ Administrator needs to mail the thank-you notes to presenters and point sheets or schedules to the absent youth.
- ▲ All mailings and typing can be done through the Learning for Life office.

JUVENILE DIVERSION POINT SYSTEM

GOAL: 800 points to successfully complete the program

Points are awarded for:	Possible Points
Mandatory Requirements-	
1. Attendance at bimonthly meetings (25 per meeting) (12 meetings - twice a month for six months)	300
2. Punctuality (10 per meeting)	120
3. Participation in class (5 per meeting)	50
4. Completion of (16) community service hours	320
5. Parent attendance at first meeting	10
Most possible from above-	800

Additional points must be earned by selecting from the following:

6. Extra credit/makeup activities:	
~Group service project (Hours count as community service credit)	50
~Social and educational projects or tours	25
~Write a thank-you letter to speaker	15
~Introduce speaker	15
~Prepare program essay	15

- * Additional community service: Extra points can be earned by completing more than the required 16 hours. 20/additional hr
- * Meetings are held on a twice per month basis and are scheduled during the week. There may be a periodic meeting and/or weekend day activity, which you will be notified of and expected to participate in.
- * Community service work other than those on the provided list must be pre-approved by the program director, officer, or group leader(s).

JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM

GROUP GUIDELINES

Show Respect at All Times

NO hitting.

NO screaming or yelling.

NO walking out of the room.

NO threatening.

NO swearing.

NO interrupting.

NO smoking.

NO alcohol or illegal drug consumption.

NO weapon possession.

NO beepers.

NO hats are to be worn in buildings.

Group is to be taken seriously.

Everyone will participate.

Everyone will be respectful.

Everyone will be a good listener.

Voicing your opinion is OK and encouraged.

Your friends or siblings are not allowed to
accompany you to the meetings, activities,
or volunteer work.

COMMUNITY SERVICE GUIDELINES

- Minimum number of hours needed is 16.
- All community service locations need to be approved by a group leader.
- A youth can choose a location site other than those indicated on our handout. This alternate site must be approved by a group leader.
- Unacceptable locations include working for a business (e.g., McDonald's, Rainbow Foods) or performing duties for a family member, friends, or neighbors.
- A youth can select more than one community service location.
- Written verification of the completed hours is necessary.
- A youth should have 16 hours completed two months into the program. (By meeting #4)

COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS

Location: _____

Phone Number: _____ Contact: _____

Name: _____

Responsibilities Include: _____

DATE WORKED

TIME WORKED

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

TOTAL TIME WORKED _____

This is to verify that on this _____ day of _____,
200__ I, _____, have successfully
completed _____ hours of service at _____

Group

Youth

GRADUATION

On graduation, the diversion program director or assistant will come to the meeting to hand out certificates to those participants who have successfully completed the program.

Prior to graduation you should:

Verify community service hours for all participants. Report to the diversion office if someone's hours cannot be verified or if there are suspicions that someone has cheated.

Add up all participants' points and make sure everyone will have at least 800 points by the night of graduation. Report to the diversion office if a youth will not have 800 points.

Speak to the youth and find out if they want to do something special for graduation, e.g., pizza party, pot luck, desserts, etc.

Graduation usually takes about ½ hour to one hour. If you want to play a game or have each youth stand up and tell what they have learned from the program that is up to you. Sometimes, group leaders have the youth prepare something ahead of time, such as their favorite and least favorite topics, speakers, or something like that.

CONTRACT AGREEMENTS

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

Confidentiality:

Participation by a youth in this program is confidential. This information is not to be shared with outside person(s) without written consent of the parent/guardian. A group leader is further advised not to reveal the names of participating youth in casual conversations with those person(s) not involved with this program. In keeping this confidentiality policy, photographs of youth cannot be taken without obtaining consent from the youth and parent/guardian.

Program Contracts:

Both the youth and parent/guardian sign contracts prior to the youth's participation in the program. These contracts are reviewed with the program director, and the participants are given copies of the agreements.

The parent/guardian will also be asked to sign a release of information form for school and mental health agency information. The schools are notified of the youth's involvement, and contract with the schools is made by the program director.

The program director maintains regular contact with the local police departments to monitor the recidivism rate of the youth. Any subsequent law violations will be discussed with the group leaders.

Case Files:

Files are maintained on the individual youth by the program director. Information found in the files includes the police incident report, correspondence with the families, parent and youth questionnaires, contracts, and release of information form.

The group leaders have complete access to these files. The leaders are encouraged to review them early in the group process to familiarize themselves with the youth.

JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM

YOUTH CONTRACT

I, _____ (Youth), do hereby stipulate and agree with the county attorney and his designee to undertake all of the duties specified hereafter by this contract in consideration of the county attorney's office refraining from the filing of any formal complaint or petition at this time on account of the following charge(s):

a) _____ b) _____

THE ABOVE NAMED YOUTH AGREES TO THE FOLLOWING TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

1. Not to violate any laws of the state or municipal ordinances.
2. To attend school (or an educational program) while involved with the Juvenile Diversion Program. I understand that any violation of school rules resulting in expulsion would also be considered a violation of this contract.
3. To totally abstain from the use of alcohol or controlled substances, unless prescribed by a physician.
4. To pay a \$35.00 registration fee as follows:
_____.
5. To complete sixteen (16) community service hours which must be turned in by Meeting #4.
6. Not to miss more than two (2) diversion meetings.
7. Not to wear, display, use, or possess any insignia, emblem, hat, scarf, bandanna or any article of clothing which is or may be considered evidence of affiliation with any street gang or satanic cult while at the program meetings, activities, or volunteer work. I agree not to wear any articles of clothing that promote drugs, alcohol, or any illegal activities.
8. To meet with the diversion officer any time upon his/her request.
9. The county attorney or his designee may make available to any court-affiliated agency or agencies specified in this agreement all records, notes, or dates of any kind that are made regarding my participation (or lack thereof) with the Juvenile Diversion Program.
10. Not to possess weapons of any description at the program meetings, activities, or volunteer work.
11. To maintain confidentiality regarding all participants and their referred offenses.
12. I may be brought before the advisory committee for review of my continued participation in the program if my behavior is negative. I may be terminated from the program at the discretion of the director.
13. If I do not successfully complete the program, the original criminal charge(s) will be prosecuted against me.
14. To complete the following additional condition(s) as outlined by the diversion officer:

The following signatures attest to the commitment of the youth to participate in the program and to comply with the conditions of participation in the program as outlined above.

Youth _____ Date _____

Learning for Life Representative _____ Date _____

JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTRACT

In consideration of allowing my son/daughter/ward to participate in the Juvenile Diversion Program as a substitute for more formal court action represented by the pending petition charging _____(youth) with _____(charge(s)), it is hereby agreed as follows:

1. My son/daughter/ward will participate in the various activities of the program.
2. As a parent/guardian of the youth, I will support the program, will provide transportation for my son/daughter/ward both to and from program meetings and activities, and will participate in any and all activities which may be required of me.
3. That my son/daughter/ward may be brought before the advisory committee for review of his/her continued participation in the program if his/her behavior is negative or does not comply with the duties undertaken by the youth as specified in the youth contract.
4. That if the youth is arrested for committing any new misdemeanor or felony violation, he/she can be discharged from the program. This decision is at the discretion of the program director or county attorney.

Conditions:

The following signatures attest to the commitment of the youth's parent(s)/guardian(s) to participate in the program and to comply with the conditions of participation in the program as outlined above.

Parent/Guardian

Date

For Learning for Life

Date

