

STATE OF ILLINOIS
CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY
JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

TIMOTHY C. EVANS
CHIEF JUDGE



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JUVENILE ADVISORY COUNCIL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

MISSION

The mission of Cook County's Juvenile Advisory Council (J.A.C.) is to create a forum for youth to assist the Probation Department in its efforts to (1) assess the effectiveness of its present supervision and services, (2) better understand the needs of its clients, and (3) enhance its programming to meet those needs.

J.A.C. is a dynamic partnership of probation staff and court wards (present and past), working together to develop a client-based perspective on the Department's programs and policies.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

J.A.C. began its work in December, 2002, when six young men and women, all of them involved at one time in the juvenile justice system, joined twenty probation staff in a unique collaboration between the Probation Department and the clients it has served. The hope that inspired this venture was that by working together, professional staff and young adults could provide a youth viewpoint for the Department to consider as it evaluates current service delivery and plans future programming.

J.A.C. relies heavily on its younger members (referred to as Youth Representatives) to guide its work by contributing their thoughts and insights to an ongoing examination of the many aspects of the probation experience. The council meets independently throughout the year, conceives and designs its own projects, and works with court management to implement its findings and recommendations.

J.A.C. PROGRAMS

On the final Saturday of each month, teams of J.A.C. Youth Representatives conduct two interactive programs for court wards throughout the Department. The **PROBATION ORIENTATION PROGRAM** provides clients and parents who are new to the court system with a multiple-impact introduction to probation. The program was designed to help enhance client understanding of probation's rules, expectations, consequences and services.

J.A.C.'s **EXIT INTERVIEW PROGRAM** offers clients preparing to conclude their probation with an opportunity to share their experiences, ideas and suggestions about their court involvement. Through survey questions and small group discussion, participants provide a client-based perspective that helps the Probation Department evaluate and strengthen its programming.

(OVER)

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

J.A.C.'s Youth Representatives

Youth Representatives are at the heart of J.A.C.'s operation. They are equal partners and enjoy the same standing, benefits and rights as adult staff members. Although their opinions are not binding on the council, they are given strong consideration and will often form the basis for J.A.C.'s decisions.

J.A.C. is open to all young men and women who have ever been involved in the juvenile justice system. As J.A.C. grows and progresses in its work, our Youth Representatives will be increasingly expected to assume leadership roles and determine J.A.C.'s future direction and goals. Youth Representatives are paid a stipend of \$25.00 for each full council meeting they attend.

J.A.C. Meetings

J.A.C. meets an average of once a month, generally in the evening to permit Youth Representatives to attend without missing work or school. J.A.C. meetings:

- a. begin promptly,
- b. last no more than an hour-and-a half,
- c. have a written agenda and specific goals, and
- d. are documented in written minutes.

Decision-Making & Sub-Committee Assignments

J.A.C. strives for consensus decision-making, whenever possible. When this is not possible, we will make decisions by majority rule. Every J.A.C. member has an equal voice, and all ideas, contributions and questions are welcome. J.A.C. members are expected to come to meetings prepared and ready to contribute.

A great deal of J.A.C.'s program development takes place in sub-committees. Sub-committee work is crucial to J.A.C.'s success, and all members are encouraged to participate. Sub-committees focus on specific tasks and assignments. They meet in between general meetings and continue to operate until they accomplish their stated goals.

J.A.C.'S FUTURE

In the months ahead, J.A.C. will be expanding its membership, developing additional programming tracks, and beginning a transition to greater youth leadership and ownership. The Council will soon draft its first Position Paper, framing policy recommendations for the Probation Department based on a full year of Exit Interview results. J.A.C. is also presently planning to establish satellite versions of its Probation Orientation and Exit Interview Programs in several of the Department's outlying offices.

As it expands its involvement and influence, the Probation Department's Juvenile Advisory Council has the potential to become a model for other jurisdictions and a touchstone for juvenile justice in many crucial areas of programming.