

Pierce County Juvenile Diversion Program



Diversion Program

Pierce County Juvenile Court

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Apply to be a Diversion volunteer at:

www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=1120

WHAT IS DIVERSION?

Diversion involves handling juvenile offenders outside Juvenile Court. Youth between the ages of 8 and 17 who do not have a prior criminal history and are arrested for offenses such as trespassing, shoplifting, simple assault, possession of alcohol or marijuana or malicious mischief are typically eligible for Diversion. After making an arrest, the police refer the case to the local Prosecuting Attorney or designee where it is reviewed to determine if there is probable cause. If probable cause is found, the case will be sent to the Diversion Program. The case is thus DIVERTED from the Court.

WHAT ARE THE JUVENILE'S RIGHTS?

The Diversion Unit is obligated to inform the juvenile of the availability of free legal counsel before entering a Diversion Agreement, or the youth and his or her family may choose to seek legal assistance from an attorney of their choice. Instead of signing the Diversion Agreement, the juvenile may request that his or her case be heard in Court. While the Diversion Unit *does not determine guilt or innocence*, the youth must acknowledge his or her willingness to participate in Diversion. While this is not a conviction, it will become part of the juvenile's criminal history.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF DIVERSION TO THE JUVENILE?

The Diversion process is *confidential and private*, unlike Court proceedings, which are public. Diversion is also more convenient and less time consuming than going to the Juvenile Court. The Diversion Unit normally conducts its meetings in the evening or at a time convenient to the youth and his or her family.

WHAT IS VICTIM COMPENSATION AND CIVIL ACTION?

When a juvenile's crime has caused a financial loss to a victim, replacement of that loss (restitution) may be required by the Diversion Unit. The Diversion Unit contacts the victim to determine the amount of the loss. The Community Accountability Board will assign restitution and determine a schedule for payment. The Diversion Unit deals only with criminal charges; the victim retains the right to initiate civil court action for additional damages. In shoplifting cases, a special statute allows the victim store to assess a civil penalty (fine) against the parents regardless of the actual loss.

WHAT IS THE LAW?

This brochure provides a description and is designed to educate citizens about one significant part of the law—the Diversion from Court of juveniles who commit minor criminal offenses. After reading this, we hope you will become better acquainted with the juvenile justice system's Diversion Program and how you may be able to help.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF DIVERSION FOR THE COMMUNITY?

Diversion is a means to deal with local problems by utilizing local volunteers who represent the community's best interest. It is considerably less expensive than formal court processing and provides a full community response to juvenile crime by working with community service organizations, counseling services, police, schools, juveniles and their families. In short, Diversion allows the community to assume responsibility for its juvenile crime problem, and makes the youth accountable for his or her behavior.



WHAT IS A DIVERSION ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD?

A Community Accountability Board is made up of several 3-person teams of volunteers from the local community. These teams are responsible for meeting with the juvenile and their parents/guardians to gather information, and determine the terms and conditions of a Diversion Agreement. The Diversion Agreements are the requirements that the community can expect from the juvenile offender.

Agreements may include restitution to the victim for losses, participation in various programs such as community service, personal counseling, and informational and/or educational sessions. They may also contain consequences such as required school attendance, observance of a curfew and/or having restrictions placed on where the juvenile can/can't go. The juvenile is expected to fulfill the terms of the Diversion Agreement within the allotted time or else the Diversion Unit must refer the case back to the Prosecutor for review and possible official Court action.

“We will put our energy and resources into the future. Our focus will be on what needs to be healed, what needs to be repaid and what needs to be learned.”



Pierce County Juvenile Court

Please visit us at our website www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=1112

IF YOU CARE...

Let an at-risk child steal a few minutes of your time!

Nearly 2,100 Pierce County youth has a second chance last year because someone volunteered for the Diversion Program. There are boys and girls, 8 to 17, facing charges for trespassing, shoplifting, possession of alcohol, and similar offenses. Diversion keeps kids from going to court. It gives a chance to learn from their mistake and in a few years to erase it from their criminal histories.

Diversion exists because of the volunteers that form six boards around the county. Each volunteer spends two evenings a month (from 6pm-9pm) participating on a board. They meet with kids in trouble and their families. Volunteers listen and decide how each child can best make up for what happened by assigning such things as counseling, educational seminars, community service and/or restitution. Involvement in the Lakewood, Puyallup, Sumner or Tacoma Community Accountability Boards provides an opportunity to understand the juvenile system, increase awareness of delinquent behavior, show the youth that they are accountable to their community, influence a teenager's life in a constructive manner, and show the youth that the community cares.

Any person from a junior in high school to a senior citizen in the community is encouraged to apply. For more information about being a Diversion Program volunteer, call the Pierce County Juvenile Court Volunteer Services Coordinator, Carrie Appling at (253) 798-3837 or email her at Carrie.Appling@co.pierce.wa.us.

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CAB (Community Accountability Board) Member

JOB SUMMARY: Participate as a member of a three-person Board which meets with juvenile offenders and their guardians for the purpose of explaining and offering Diversion as an alternative to Court proceedings. In those cases where families desire Diversion, the referring offense and circumstances surrounding it will be discussed. The Community Accountability Board (CAB) will then determine consequences designed to hold the youth responsible for his/her actions and provide accountability to the community and to the victim.

JOB DUTIES:

- Attend scheduled CAB meetings twice a month.
- Interview youth and guardian(s) in regard to the offense.
- Determine (with other CAB members) the consequences of the offense.
- Present consequences to the youth and guardian(s) in the form of a Diversion Agreement.
- Fill out the necessary forms and informational data sheets, which are pertinent to individual cases.

TRAINING, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

- Must be objective.
- Must be able to communicate with people and work in a group process.
- Must conduct oneself in a professional manner.
- Must maintain confidentiality of cases.
- Must be able to acquire a working knowledge of the legal aspects of Diversion.
- Must treat each case individually, without prejudice.
- Must complete a thorough study of the training manual prior to training.

PERSONAL TRAITS:

- It is imperative that individuals volunteering in this capacity be objective, dependable and patient.
- Possess the ability to establish a good rapport with at-risk youth, while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be at least entering as a high school junior or be an adult.
- Dress must be business-casual attire.
- If in high school, must have at least a 3.0 GPA or submit a written recommendation from school personnel.
- Must pass a thorough background check.
- Must attend a four-hour Cultural Diversity Training.
- Must attend the Diversion training session.

JOB RELATIONSHIP:

- Supervised by a Community Accountability Board Consultant and Diversion Supervisor.
- Responsible to the Volunteer Services Coordinator.

TIME COMMITMENT:

- Two weekday evenings per month 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for a minimum of six months.