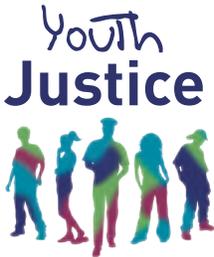




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YOUTH JUSTICE CONFERENCES AND COMMITTEES



The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) recognizes the importance of involving families, victims and communities in the youth criminal justice system. Two ways in which this is done are through youth justice conferences and youth justice committees.

This fact sheet contains general information regarding youth justice conferences and committees under the YCJA. This information is of a general nature and is not intended as a substitute for professional legal advice. For more information, see the *Youth Criminal Justice Act: Summary and Background* or the full text of the YCJA.

Youth Justice Conferences

A youth justice conference is a group of people who are asked by a decision-maker, such as a judge, to come together to give advice on the case of a young person who is involved in the youth criminal justice system.

Conferences can take many forms, such as a family group conference, a youth justice committee, a sentencing circle, or a professional case conference. Participants in these conferences can include the young person, his or her parents, the victim, community agencies and professionals with a particular expertise related to the case.

The purpose of a youth justice conference is to bring together a group of people with a wide range of backgrounds and experience in order to give the decision-maker a broad perspective on a case. As a result, the advice provided by a conference can lead to creative and effective responses to youth crime.

Youth justice conferences can offer a unique insight and expertise on a youth's case. While they are not decision-making bodies, conferences can provide advice and recommendations to decision-makers on a variety of issues, including:

- Appropriate extrajudicial measures;
- Conditions for release from pre-trial detention;
- Appropriate sentences;
- Plans for reintegrating a young person back into the community after being in custody; and
- Ways in which the young person can repair the harm done to the victim.

In order to be accepted by the decision-maker, any recommendations made must be consistent with the principles and purpose of the YCJA.

Youth Justice Committees

Many jurisdictions in Canada have set up a system of youth justice committees. Made up of community volunteers, these committees assist in various aspects of the administration of the YCJA and with the delivery of programs and services for young persons.

The YCJA identifies a wide range of possible functions for committees in the youth justice system, including:

- Acting as a youth justice conference;
- Advising on the appropriateness of extrajudicial measures;
- Supporting victims by soliciting their concerns and by facilitating reconciliation between young persons and victims;
- Helping coordinate the interaction between community agencies and the youth criminal justice system in individual cases, and ensuring that young persons receive community support;
- Advising the federal, provincial and territorial governments on policies and procedures related to the youth justice system; and
- Providing information to the public about the YCJA and the youth justice system.

