

# Hernando County Youth Court Handbook

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## IMPORTANT

Please read the following statements and sign below.

- I have received this Defendant Handbook from Youth Court which contains information necessary for the successful completion of my Youth Court sentence.
- I have read and understand the Youth Court Dress Code and Conduct Code which are included in this handbook. **Failure to comply with the Dress Code and Conduct Code will result in my being sent home without credit for attendance.**

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Juvenile's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

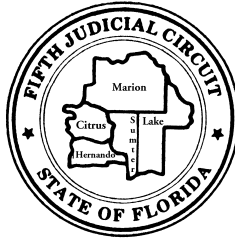
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

## Parental Permission

My child, \_\_\_\_\_ has permission to drive to and from Youth Court.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian



# Hernando County Youth Court Handbook

This handbook has been prepared to assist you in successfully completing your Youth Court sentence. Take the time to read all the information. If you have any questions, please contact Shana Felten, the Youth Court Coordinator at (352) 540-6263.

HERNANDO COUNTY YOUTH COURT  
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 (352) 540-6263  
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## Table of Contents

PREPARING TO ATTEND COURT	2
DRESS CODE FOR YOUTH COURT	2
CONDUCT CODE FOR YOUTH COURT	2
MANDATORY SENTENCE COMPONENTS	3
JURY DUTY	3
COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS	4
FINAL ESSAY & SPEECH	4
OPTIONAL SENTENCE COMPONENTS	4
EDUCATION PACKETS	4
LETTERS OF APOLOGY	5
WRITING ESSAYS	5
OTHER SANCTIONS	5
PAYING RESTITUTION	5

## **Preparing to Attend Court**

Dress Code and Conduct Code MUST be obeyed while Court is in person or on Zoom. You will be dismissed if you do NOT comply with the Dress Code and Conduct Code for Youth Court.

### ***Dress Code for Youth Court***

- All blouses and shirts MUST be buttoned
- All pants MUST be on the waist with NO under garments showing
- Absolutely NO tank tops, tube top, low cut tops, crop tops, shorts, spandex, sweat suits, or clothing with logos or writing are allowed
- No facial jewelry other than earrings, sunglasses, pagers, or headphones of any kind are NOT allowed.
- No hats, beanies, hoodies, do-rags/skull caps, shower caps, etc.
- No short skirts or dresses (2 inches above the knee is okay)
- Shorts are NOT allowed to be worn in the courtroom by anyone.
- T-shirts and jeans may be worn by Youth Court participants, as long, as they are neat, clean, and do NOT have any holes in them.
- Youth Court participants may NOT wear any clothing that has inappropriate writing, slogans, or logos, of any kind

**IF IN DOUBT ----DON'T WEAR IT!**

### ***Conduct Code for Youth Court***

It is a privilege to serve in and use the courthouse and courtrooms.

Please show your respect by following the court rules whether court is in person or on Zoom.

- NO cell phone or electronic media devices are to be used during court unless using the phone or tablet for court on Zoom
- NO food, candy, or gum
- Do NOT put your feet on the furniture in the courtroom.
- If you are on court through Zoom, NO laying down on your bed or couch. You MUST sit up
- Once court begins, there is NO talking permitted and you are to remain in your seat.
- If on court through Zoom, your video MUST be on at ALL times.
- NO side conversations
- Do NOT leave or enter the courtroom unless a recess has been called by the judge.
- Use the restroom before court
- If you are on court through Zoom, make sure your phone, tablet or computer is plugged in or fully charged
- Show respect to the courtroom officials, especially the Judge. Always address the judge and refer to them as "Your Honor"
- Treat others with respect at all times. Be polite to fellow jurors, participants, and staff
- All Youth Court participants will follow instructions given by the Youth Court Coordinator/Clerk and any Adult Volunteers. Failure to comply with the instructions and rules of Youth court will result in dismissal from the program.
- It is the policy of the Hernando County Youth Court program that all participants will be safe, secure, and free from harassment or bullying of any kind. Conduct that constitutes bullying or harassment is prohibited and may result in suspension or termination from participation in the program.

**THIS IS AN OFFICIAL COURT PROCEEDING, PLEASE ACT ACCORDINGLY**

## ***Jury Duty Participants***

- All Youth Court participants **MUST** arrive at the Hernando County Courthouse in person or through Zoom between 4:45 PM and 5:15 PM. Anyone arriving later than 5:15 PM will not be allowed to participate in the Youth Court proceedings.
- Parents/guardians **MUST** stay with the defendants during their Jury Duty sanctions when court is in person
- Youths who are licensed to drive themselves **MUST** ask the permission of the adult supervisor before leaving and sign themselves out.

## **Mandatory Sentence Components**

### ***Jury Duty***

- All defendants are required to serve jury duty nights in Youth Court.
- Everyone involved in the Youth Court program, juveniles, and adults, **MUST** comply with the Oath of Confidentiality. This means that you may **NOT** talk about any defendant, nor discuss any case that you have heard in Youth Court. Anyone who violates the Oath of Confidentiality will be removed from the program.
- As a juror on Youth Court, you will have an opportunity to participate in a very important part of our democracy. Jury duty is a privilege and a serious responsibility.
- A Youth Court jury member determines appropriate and fair consequences for the defendant. You **MUST** listen carefully to the facts of the case and pay close attention to the questioning of the Defense and Prosecution. You are required to base your deliberation upon the evidence as you hear it in court, and upon the law as the Judge instructs you in it. The sentence should be designed to hold the Defendant accountable for his/her actions to the community and/or the victim. The sentence should be proportional to the offense and the aggravating and mitigating factors.
- A Youth Court juror **MUST** be able to treat each case individually and without prejudice. You are obligated to perform honestly and conscientiously, without fear or favor.
- You **MUST** abide by the Oath of Confidentiality administered at the beginning of court.
- Acknowledge if you know the Defendant prior to the hearing.
- Listen to every question and answer.
- Do **NOT** discuss the case with anyone.
- Control your emotions – **NO** facial expressions, eye-rolling, laughing, etc.
- In carrying out your duty as a Juror, conduct yourself in such a way that no one can question your uprightness. You are a judicial officer through your participation in Youth Court and your behavior **MUST NOT** arouse the distrust of the most suspicious.

#### In the deliberation room:

- A foreperson will be selected by the jury to preside over the deliberation.
- The selected foreperson shall see that all Jurors have an opportunity to express their opinions.
- The business of the jury shall be conducted in an orderly, courteous, and respectful manner.
- Keep discussions on topic to save time.
- In case of any questions regarding the hearing, the Youth Court Coordinator or the Judge should be consulted. Both the Coordinator and the Judge are always ready and available to answer all questions of law pertaining to the case.

## ***Community Service Work Hours***

- You will be sentenced to perform community service as part of your Youth Court sentence. **These hours may NOT be performed while school is in session.**
- ALL community service hours MUST comply with Child Labor Laws
- Your Community Service time sheet will be emailed to you. You must print out one of these forms and keep it secure. Print your name and Youth Court case number on the time sheet. It is your responsibility to have the time sheet signed every time you work. All time sheets will be verified by the Youth Court Coordinator.
  - Dates and times MUST be documented accurately on the Community Service time sheet or formal letterhead.
  - If your timesheet is misplaced, it is your responsibility to get a new timesheet from Youth Court. If the lost timesheet contained previously recorded dates, times, and signatures, it is your responsibility to get all the missing information replaced.
  - If you are utilizing multiple worksites, community service hours must be documented on separate timesheets
- You may complete your community service hours at any non-profit organization(church,foodbank), elderly/disabled neighbor or grandparents' home, school concessions/events, etc.
- Choose your worksite carefully and be prepared to:
  - Maintain a schedule and be on time
  - Dress appropriately, according to the requirements of the worksite
  - Display a positive attitude, be polite and respectful
  - Work hard and show initiative
  - Accept direction from your supervisor and learn from this work experience

## ***Final Essay & Speech***

- All Hernando County Youth Court defendants are required to complete a 200-word essay and speech. The speech is to be delivered on the last night of Jury Duty.
- Your essay/speech must be handed in after you have given the speech.

## **Optional Sentence Components**

### ***Education Packets***

- All Education Packets will be emailed to you. Immediately after your hearing, you will receive a youth court contract that indicates which packets you will need to complete.
- Access and print out all the packets required to successfully complete your sentence.
- Use ink when completing the packets.
- **Write your name**, case number and the date on the front of each packet.
- Read all the information before completing the activities outlined in the packet.
- Complete all the activities required in the packet. This includes letters, essays, and personal surveys.

## **Letters of Apology**

- All apology letters should be typed or printed neatly in black or blue ink, and single spaced.
- All apology letters MUST be at minimum 150 words
- In the top right corner of the page, print the following information.
  - Your full name (first and last name)
  - Date
- All handwritten letters should only be printed on one side of the papers.
- *In your apology letter, you must take full responsibility for your actions.*

## **Writing Essays**

- All essays should be typed or printed neatly in black or blue ink and single-spaced.
- In the top right corner of the page, print the following information.
  - Your full name (first and last name)
  - Date
- All handwritten essays should only be printed on one side of the papers.

## **Other Possible Sanctions and Referrals**

You will be given a youth court contract regarding all components of your sentence immediately after your hearing whether in person or through Zoom. In addition to the above, you may also be sentenced to such activities as:

- Counseling Sessions
- Jail Tour
- Classes
- Drug & Alcohol testing
- Special sanctions for Traffic Court cases.

## **Paying Restitution**

*If your case is a Juvenile Civil Citation:*

- Restitution is to be paid by money order made payable to the victim.
- The money order is to be filled out and returned to the Youth Court Coordinator
- Restitution must be paid in full to successfully complete Youth Court.

*If your case is a Juvenile Criminal Case:*

- Restitution is to be paid to the Juvenile Clerk, Room 133, located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the government complex between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- A \$3.50 Clerk's fee will be added to the restitution amount.
- You must provide a copy of the restitution receipt to the Youth Court Coordinator as proof of payment.