



## **Peer Jury Program**

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### **Information Packet for Prospective Jurors and Parents/Guardians of Prospective Jurors**

**This information packet contains:**

- ✓ **Peer Jury Mission**
- ✓ **Peer Jury Program Description**
- ✓ **Peer Juror Job Description**
- ✓ **Juror Application Form**
- ✓ **Peer Jury Program Description  
(For parents/guardians of prospective Jurors)**
- ✓ **Parent/Guardian Consent Letter**

# Peer Jury Program

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## Mission Statement & Program Description (For prospective Jurors and parents)

*The Mission of Peer Jury is to provide a means for young offenders to account for their behavior to a group of their peers.*

*The ultimate goal is for the offender to consciously decide to avoid further illegal*

### What is the Peer Jury Program?

Peer Jury is a program operating under the auspices of New Trier Township police departments (Glencoe, Kenilworth, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka) which is designed to provide a meaningful and remedial method of dealing with selected juveniles (under age 18, with some exceptions) offenders without reference to the Juvenile Court. It does not determine guilt or innocence. A case is only sent to the Peer Jury for a hearing by six or more juveniles and an adult moderator when (1) the offender admits having committed the offense; (2) the responsible police officer determines that such a disposition is appropriate; and (3) the offender and his/her parent guardian consent in writing to such a disposition and sign a Waiver of Liability and Confidentiality.

When these conditions are met, the offender and his/her parent are scheduled for a hearing before a Peer Jury panel in a courtroom environment at a definite date and time. At the hearing, a police officer reads the charges, states the possible sentence if the offense were committed by an adult and summarizes the facts of the case. The offender is then questioned by the members of the panel. The offender and his/her parent or guardian then withdraws while the jury deliberates and fixes an appropriate punishment. The sentence usually includes some form of individualized community service.

The offender and his/her guardian are then recalled and informed of the sentence. Adjustments, if necessary, are made to allow for schedule conflicts and a completion date fixed. The offender is then given a written copy of the sentence and a date (usually 30 days later) for a status hearing or discharge hearing.

Upon completion of community service, a report on the offender's performance is forwarded to the Peer Jury Coordinator. By the offender's supervisor for the service project and any other assigned projects are turned into the coordinator.

At the discharge hearing, the offender and his/her parent or guardian again appear. The panel, which may or may not be the sentencing panel, reviews the offender's performance and questions the offender about his/her experiences while performing the sentence. If satisfactory, the offender is discharged. If the performance is incomplete or unsatisfactory, the discharge hearing may be continued or the offender remanded to the juvenile officer for appropriate court proceedings.

# Peer Jury Program

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## Juror Job Description

### Primary Responsibility

To serve on the Peer Jury and render decisions concerning appropriate sentencing of youth referred to the program by local police departments; to provide follow-up and closure with regard to youth performance of community service and other sentences.

### Qualifications

- Attend New Trier Township public or private High School (New Trier, Loyola, Regina Dominican or North Shore Country Day)
- Live in New Trier Township
- Possess an interest in helping peers
- GPA of better than 2.0 (C+)
- No misdemeanor arrest or felony arrest during last six months
- Good judgement, character a reputation
- Interest in program should be initiated by teen and have parental or guardian approval
- Recommendation letter from school advisor
- Ability to work with police, other teens and community representatives
- Willingness to respect and maintain confidentiality requirements and observe proper court decorum

### Specific Responsibilities

- Participates in peer jury training sessions
- Attends monthly meeting of peer jury
- Questions offenders and determines appropriate sentence
- Reviews offender performance of assigned sentence
- Acts as spokesperson for the court

Peer juror applications are received, reviewed and approved by the Peer Jury Coordinator and recommendations are forwarded to the local police departments. Each jury applicant will be interviewed by either the Coordinator or the Community Services Administrator. A police officer will also be present at juror interviews.

- All peer jurors must have parental permission to participate.
- All peer jurors must sign a contract specifying their obligations as members of the Peer Jury Program.

# Peer Jury Program

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## Frequently Asked Questions (For prospective Jurors)

**Will any of my friends or acquaintances be brought before a Peer Jury of which I am a member? (Will I be required to participate in the sentencing of a friend or acquaintance?)**

No! A list of offenders appearing is given to all prospective jurors, and they must disqualify themselves from any case in which they know or could know the offender.

**What kinds of sentences are imposed?**

Typically, the sentence involves the performance of a certain number of hours of community service at an agency such as a hospital, nursing home, child care agency or park district selected with the needs of the offender in mind. All sentences are performed as individuals and not as a part of a group. Sentences may also include projects and reports related to the offense.

**Will anyone outside the police department and the Peer Jury group know about anyone serving a sentence?**

Except for the supervisor at the community service agency, **absolutely not!** At the community service site, offenders are identified only as volunteer workers. The Peer Jury proceedings and records are absolutely confidential. A suspected violation of confidentiality results in dismissal from the program. No list of offenders appearing before the jury is published, and the press is not permitted to report individual cases.

**How are Peer Jury personnel selected?**

The Peer Jury Coordinator conducts the Peer Juror application, interview and selection process. New jurors are usually brought in during the summer.

**What's the attitude toward offenders?**

All offenders appearing before the Peer Jury are treated with dignity and respect. Demeaning and belittling attitudes and comments will not be tolerated. The object of the program is to develop a sense of responsibility and accountability in the offender.

**What are the program objectives?**

This program is to help the child and family deal with a problem situation in a constructive and positive manner.

**For further information contact:**

Brian Leverenz  
New Trier Township  
Community Services Administrator  
Peer Jury Coordinator  
(847) 446-8203

# Peer Jury Program

## Juror Application

First Name		Last Name	
Street Address			
City	State	Zip Code	
Home Phone Number		Email	
Birthdate			
High School Name	Grade/Year	GPA	
Advisor's Signature (if available):			
			Date
Your Signature			
			Date
Please write a brief paragraph about why you want to be a peer juror. Feel free to also use the back of this application if necessary.			

**Please attach signed Parent/Guardian Consent Letter. Your application cannot be processed without it.**

**Please return to:** Brian Leverenz  
New Trier Township  
Community Services Administrator  
739 Elm Street  
Winnetka, IL 60093-2586

# Peer Jury Program

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## Parent/Guardian Consent Letter

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter has expressed an interest in becoming a Peer Juror. This program is under the auspices of New Trier Township and the police departments of Glencoe, Kenilworth, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka.

Peer jurors hear cases in which an offender has admitted guilt to committing an offense. Peer Jury Cases are recommended by the responsible police officer and are an alternative to Juvenile Court. The offender and his/her parent or guardian must acknowledge guilt and sign consent to have the case placed before the Peer Jury. Punishment is determined by the Peer Jury and is in the form of community service.

Hearings are once a month, usually on the first Wednesday evening, at the New Trier Township Office, 739 Elm Street, Winnetka. While start times will vary (generally 5:30 PM), we aim to be completed by 9:00 PM. Depending on the caseload, Peer Jury has sometimes met twice in a month.

Please sign in the space provided below if you agree to let your son/daughter participate in the program. Have your son/daughter return this form to us at the Township office. We will then contact him/her for an interview.

Please contact Brian Leverenz at the New Trier Township office (847) 446-8203.

My son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to participate in the Peer Jury Program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date