

How do citizens form a youth justice committee?

1. Form a Steering Committee

Interested citizens should form a steering committee to determine local interest and support for a youth justice committee and to determine a process for the selection of youth justice committee members. The local police and probation personnel can be valuable resources to the committee. It is important to obtain the support of the local judge and Crown counsel at the beginning stages of formation. The steering committee should meet to discuss the geographical boundaries to be served and the role the committee should play (e.g. sentence advisory, extrajudicial sanctions, police diversion, and determine how to inform and obtain support from the community). Interested individuals or groups should [contact](#) the Young Offender Branch of Alberta Solicitor General for information regarding procedures and the roles fulfilled by committees in other communities.

2. Identifying the Needs and Interests of the Community

The committee should identify special needs and interests of the particular community and arrange a meeting with different groups in the community to determine issues with youth, the criminal justice system and the needs of young people. Groups canvassed could include the town council, the local police agency, community leagues, the Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, school associations, church clubs and youth groups. Based on the information gathered from meetings with community groups, determine how a youth justice committee would best serve the community.

3. Developing a Constitution

A [constitution](#) serves as a reference for the committee and is a document that formally establishes the committee. The constitution should outline the committee's name, purpose, legal authority, aims and objectives, membership, executive functions, meetings and procedures.

4. Formalizing the Youth Justice Committee and Providing Training

Decisions need to be made regarding who sits on the youth justice committee. An orientation session should be scheduled which would provide the members with information on the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, the principles upon which it is based, the sanctions which are permitted, the elements of the youth justice system, and the services presently provided by youth correctional services and contracted agencies. On-going training sessions may be beneficial to keep apprised of legislative and/or program changes. The local probation officer can assist as required.

5. Applying for Designation under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*

When the above steps have been completed, a letter is sent to the Executive Director, Young Offender Branch, Alberta Solicitor General to apply for official designation under Section 18 of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. A copy of the committee's constitution as well as letters of support from the local youth court judge, Crown counsel and police should be included with the request. This package will be reviewed by the Executive Director and forwarded to the Solicitor General for consideration.

6. Receiving Formal Designation

When the Solicitor General formally designates a youth justice committee, the committee will be provided with a copy of the Ministerial Order. Upon being designated, members of the youth justice committee are considered volunteers of the province and are eligible for liability coverage under the provincial risk management program. This coverage includes general liability insurance and some benefit coverage in the event the volunteer is injured in the course of performing volunteer duties. The general liability coverage is the same coverage as provided to all employees of the Alberta government.

7. Collecting Data and Submitting Reports

In order for Alberta Solicitor General to stay apprised of the work of individual youth justice committees, committees are asked to submit an annual report, which describes activities during the year.

8. Ongoing Evaluation

On an ongoing basis, youth justice committees must evaluate process, procedures and functions. As the committee gains experience with the youth justice system, it must take the time to evaluate what is being done and how it is being done. Changes are made or new activities added as deemed appropriate.