

Teen Court of Sarasota, Inc.  
Empowering Families through a Second Chance

As the entity that serves first-time misdemeanor youth offenders in Sarasota County, Teen Court of Sarasota's mission is to create a second chance for at-risk youth. Their **Empowering Families through a Second Chance** initiative will expand their services. The total initiative budget of \$109,000 will fund an additional client coordinator and support program coordinator for a year, giving more support to first-time misdemeanor youth offenders and their families.

Teen Court has seen an increase in referrals of 128% in the last four years, serving more than 800 this year, a challenge to manage for their existing four case managers. The additional staff will allow Teen Court to manage the increasing case load more effectively, reducing their ratio of client manager to participant closer to their goal of 1/100, which will lead to additional successful outcomes and community benefit.

With a Teen Court referral, young people in Sarasota County receive quality services and meaningful consequences with an assessment and individualized success plan. Students learn law-abiding behavior, coping mechanisms, de-escalation tactics and are empowered with peer-on-peer responsibility. The success plan could include the Peer-on-Peer Justice for Youth-by-Youth court process, Mental Health Counseling, a Social Media responsibility group, or a Life Skills Class.

Referrals come from school administrators and counselors, law enforcement agencies, parents, and school resource officers. For the over 70% of referred individuals who live on or below the poverty level, their services are free of charge.

The annual Teen Court recidivism study reflects a 90% success rate. Success means students do not re-offend after receiving Teen Court services. The individual, family, school, and community benefit. Schools can focus more on educating than behavioral issues. Law Enforcement officers have fewer minor juvenile crimes. Parents have support when their child acts out. And most importantly, local youth can misstep and still have a bright future. When they complete Teen Court successfully their case is dismissed so there is not a record of a conviction, charge, or arrest. They still qualify for college, scholarships, and the military without the stigma of a tarnish on their record. Success is also measured through evaluation forms filled out by the student and parent, which address changes the client and family are experiencing in and outside of their home.

Teen Court will sustain its success after the Impact100 SRQ funding period with continued mission-sharing, fund-raising and applying for grants.

Teen Court provides services to teens that change lives and support healthy outcomes. Last year alone Teen Court saved Sarasota County over 3.5 million dollars by diverting clients out of the Juvenile Court system. By using restorative strategies and introducing participants to volunteerism, they create a win-win in this community.