

THE YOUTH COURT
OF NEW ZEALAND | **TE KOOTI TAIOHI O AOTEAROA** |

Information for Victims



ACCOUNTABILITY RESOLUTION RESTORATION





What are Youth Courts and how do they work?

Youth Courts are courts that deal mostly with:

- young people aged 14, 15 and 16 years old, and
- children aged 12 and 13 years old who have been charged with serious offending.

Youth Courts are less formal than adult courts, but they are still courts. They deal with offending that is too serious to be dealt with any other way.

The Youth Court is about:

- making children and young people answer for what they have done
- taking into account your interests as the victim
- encouraging children and young people to face their victim and hear the consequences of their offending
- involving a child or young person's family/whānau and support people
- getting children and young people to think about their actions, how they affect other people and how they can be put right, and
- preventing children and young people from re-offending.



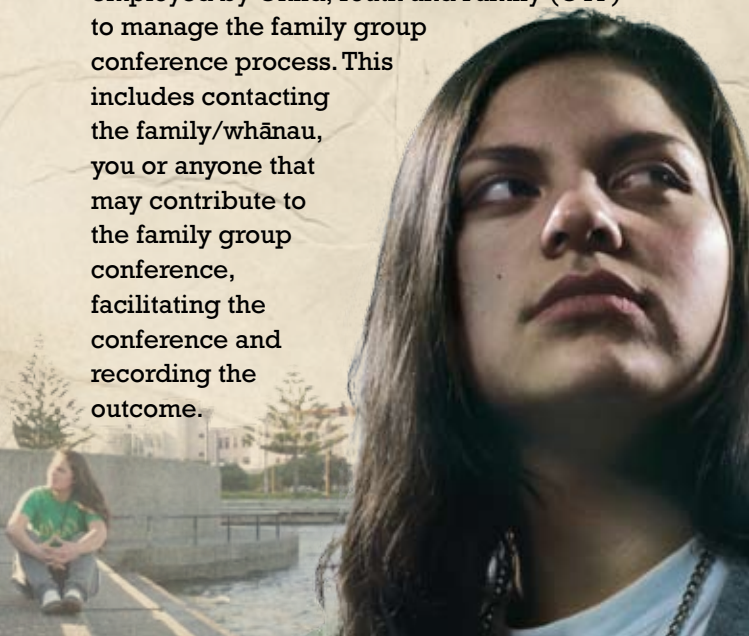
Who is involved in the Youth Court?

Youth Court Judges – these are specialist District Court Judges who are chosen for their training, experience, personality and understanding of the importance of different cultural perspectives and values in relation to children and young people.

Prosecutor – the person taking the court action. In the Youth Court, the prosecutor is nearly always from the police.

Youth advocates – a lawyer who is appointed by the court to represent the child or young person, help them with their case, and to assist them in court. The youth advocate is provided free of charge.

Youth justice co-ordinator – this person is employed by Child, Youth and Family (CYF) to manage the family group conference process. This includes contacting the family/whānau, you or anyone that may contribute to the family group conference, facilitating the conference and recording the outcome.



CYF social workers – a social worker may also be appointed to provide additional support through the family group conference process, assess needs and ensure completion of the family group conference plan.

Lay advocate – a child or young person may also have a lay advocate. This is a person appointed by the court who is not a lawyer. Their job is to support a child or young person in court, make sure that the court knows about all relevant cultural matters, and represent the interests of a child or young person's family if they are not already represented.

Parents/guardians, caregivers, and family/whānau of the child or young person are also encouraged to go to Youth Court hearings to support their child or young person.



As the victim of a crime, you may attend any court hearing, however you must ask the judge first. Permission is almost always given.

If you want to attend a court hearing, speak to the court registry officer at the court where the child or young person is attending. Try to do this before the hearing date so that the Youth Court Judge can consider your request before the hearing.

If the judge agrees, you may bring support people with you to court. If you have any questions or concerns, the judge will be happy to listen and help you in court.

Court staff will be able to explain what's likely to happen in court. The judge will make sure he or she knows who's in the courtroom and will ask you to speak if you've said you want to.



What are my rights as a victim?

Youth Courts deal with serious child and youth offending in a way that considers your interests. It does this in family group conferences and court hearings. You have a right to be involved in any part of the process. It is entirely your choice. You may attend Youth Court hearings, with the permission of the judge and you can ask to speak too.

Who else can attend Youth Court?

Youth Courts are closed to the public and any details that could identify a child or young person, their family, school or you cannot be reported in the media. Reporters can attend, but they must ask permission of the judge before publishing anything.

Family group conferences

As the victim of a crime committed by a child or young person, you have the right and are encouraged to attend a family group conference and have your say.

A family group conference is a meeting to get everyone together to talk about what the child or young person did, why they did it and how it can be put right.

You're entitled to have a say in how the child or young person should be dealt with. You'll also be given a chance to tell them exactly how their behaviour affected you.

During the conference, a plan is made for the child or young person, which is then considered by the judge at the next court appearance. The judge will give the child or young person enough time to complete the plan and meet with them again to ensure that it has been carried out.

What sort of decisions can a Youth Court Judge make?

A Youth Court Judge can make a wide range of decisions. Some examples of what the judge might order a child or young person to do include:

- completing a family group conference plan, sometimes with the chance to get a clean record
- returning or giving up property
- paying money to you or paying a fine
- being disqualified from driving
- doing community work
- doing a parenting education, drug, alcohol or mentoring programme
- being supervised with various conditions, including electronic monitoring of a curfew and judicial monitoring, either in the community or a residential facility.

In some cases, where the offending is very serious, the judge might decide that the child or young person's case should be transferred to the District Court for sentencing.

A judge may also order the parent or guardian of a child or young person to undertake a parenting education programme.





www.justice.govt.nz/youth



For further information about the Youth Court, speak to the court staff or visit the Youth Court website at: www.justice.govt.nz/youth

For further information about family group conferences, speak to a youth justice co-ordinator at the court or visit www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/CYF_30_VictimsInfoBrochure.pdf