



**San Francisco Peer Court**

**Restorative Justice  
for youth by youth**

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**Keeping kids in school and out  
of the juvenile justice system**



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**San Francisco Peer Court**

**Restorative Justice**

Within the world of criminal and juvenile justice, there is an international movement towards Restorative Justice.

Restorative Justice is a philosophy that focuses on repairing the harm that crime causes to victims, families, offenders and communities.

At SF Peer Court, middle and high school students complete a comprehensive training curriculum, then work with police officers, school administrators and community members to operate the student courts.

They work to repair harm, improve the community, reduce arrests and suspensions, and keep kids in school and out of the justice system.

SAN FRANCISCO  
**PEER COURT**

**Youth Leadership  
Restorative Justice  
Alternatives to Arrest  
Alternatives to Suspension  
Community Engagement  
Positive Peer Pressure  
Service Learning**



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COMMUNITY  
DISPUTE  
SERVICES**

502 Seventh Street, Second Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
[www.cacds.org](http://www.cacds.org)

**Tony Litwak: 415-264-2675  
peercourtsf@yahoo.com**

**Roel Blanco: 415-830-1570  
sfyouthcourt@yahoo.com**

# SF Peer Court Background, Programs and Features

## Background

Like in many cities across the US, the juvenile justice system in San Francisco faces a host of disturbing issues, including: packed facilities, high rates of recidivism, cumbersome bureaucracies, discredited agencies such as the California Youth Authority, and disproportionately high levels of confinement for minorities, poor people and those from underserved neighborhoods. The SF Peer Court program battles these issues



through a Restorative Justice approach to youth crime and misbehavior. Young people are trained to work with victims, offenders, families, community members, law

enforcement, teachers and neighborhoods to resolve incidents of youth crime in the community, without an over-reliance on the justice system.

## Programs

Peer Court is the umbrella program for a variety of Restorative Justice activities including: 1) the Middle School Peer Court Program, 2) the Summer Academy in Restorative Justice, 3) the Peer Trainers Program, 4) RJET—Restorative Justice Expediting Teams, 5) the Teen Advocacy Track, and others.

## Peer Trainers and Summer Training Academy

Peer Court volunteers generally train intensively over the summer months so that they can come back to school ready to serve on Peer Court. At the “Summer



Academy,” veteran Peer Court youth train new recruits about restorative justice, victim empathy, effective communicating, active listening, facilitation, and

other techniques they will need to run the program. By the end of the Academy, the team has bonded, trained, and is ready for action. Soon they will be running the Peer Courts in their schools.

## Process

When a case is referred to Peer Court, our youth and adult staff go to work. We interview participants to make sure they understand the program and are ready to participate. Peer Court’s youth volunteers work with victims, offenders and families to achieve a sensible resolution that repairs the harm caused by the incident. If the offender completes the Peer Court contract by taking action to repair the harm he has caused, then no further legal action is taken. If not, then his case is returned, and he must go back to face the traditional justice system.

## CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY DISPUTE SERVICES

502 Seventh Street, Second Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
E-mail: [peercourtsf@yahoo.com](mailto:peercourtsf@yahoo.com)  
Phone: 415-865-2524  
Fax: 415-865-2538  
[www.cacds.org](http://www.cacds.org)