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CRIMINAL DEFENSE | CIVIL LITIGATION

## **CENTRE COUNTY YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS PROGRAM (YOP)**

### **What is the Youthful Offenders Program?**

The Youthful Offenders Program is an alcohol and drug education program for persons cited for underage drinking, and similar offenses, in Centre County. Developed by Community Help Centre and approved by local District Judges, the program offers offenders an alternative to the standard fine and the permanent criminal record carried by underage drinking. Participants pay a registration fee to Community Help Centre in place of a more expensive court fine. Upon completion of the educational program, the citation is changed to a dismissed disposition.

### **How Does It Work?**

Requests for enrollment must be made to, and approved by, the presiding District Judge before a plea is entered. The District Judge will provide a written referral.

**The participant must bring this written referral to Community Help Centre to register in person. The \$225.00 fee is payable by check or money order at the time of registration unless alternate payment is arranged with the YOP Administrator. Cash will not be accepted.**

Class times are in the evenings or on weekends. Several different course schedules are offered in an attempt to accommodate registrants' schedules.

Each registrant will complete a pre-course interview, one-on-one with a YOP course instructor, prior to the first day of class.

The heart of the program consists of approximately 15 hours of classroom instruction, involving group discussion, presentation, research and lecture.

Each participant must also complete an exit interview, one-on-one with their instructor, following the last day of class.

Once all requirements have been met, Community Help Centre will notify the presiding District Judge, who can then give the registrant's citation a dismissed disposition. The registrant can then apply for expungement of the offense from their criminal record.

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## **Instructor Qualifications**

All instructors have completed our 180 hour training for hotline and crisis intervention support, which focuses on drug and alcohol information and intervention skills, communication skills, and appropriate referrals to community services. Instructors undergo a probationary period during which their abilities to utilize active teaching methods, provide appropriate guidance and boundaries for students, adhere to policies and procedures, and work constructively with co-instructors are closely monitored.

## **Philosophy**

Community Help Centre's Youthful Offenders Program is designed to increase self-awareness and monitoring skills as they relate to alcohol and substance use and abuse. All classes are conducted in a nonjudgmental, supportive environment. The program's goal is to encourage registrants to develop an objective, thought-out philosophy regarding alcohol and substance use, its impact on their own lifestyle and well-being, its impact on family members, and its impact on the achievement of long-term goals. This objective is obtained through education, self-assessment, group discussion and skills-based training.

The Youthful Offenders Program is not a treatment program. If the registrant is dealing with serious issues such as possible addiction, familial alcoholism, or co-dependency, it is recommended that the registrant seek long-term counseling. If these issues become apparent as a result of the pre-interview or during group discussions, the instructor will provide the registrant with appropriate referrals and encourage long-term counseling.

## **Who Can Benefit?**

This program is offered primarily for underage drinking offenders in Centre County. However, it is open to everyone. Non-Centre-County offenders may ask their local District Judge if they may enroll in the program in return for a dismissed disposition. All legal benefits of this program are offered at the discretion of the presiding District Judge and within the parameters set by the district justice.