



John D. Minton, Jr.
Chief Justice of Kentucky

Court designated workers provide opportunities to troubled youth

Court designated workers have given a second chance to thousands of Kentucky youth by helping troubled young people avoid formal court appearances through diversion programs. The diversion process teaches young people to be accountable for their actions and encourages them to avoid other encounters with the law.

The Court Designated Worker Program began in 1986 through an act of the Kentucky General Assembly. This program has become a vital part of the Kentucky court system.



The Mission of Court Designated Workers

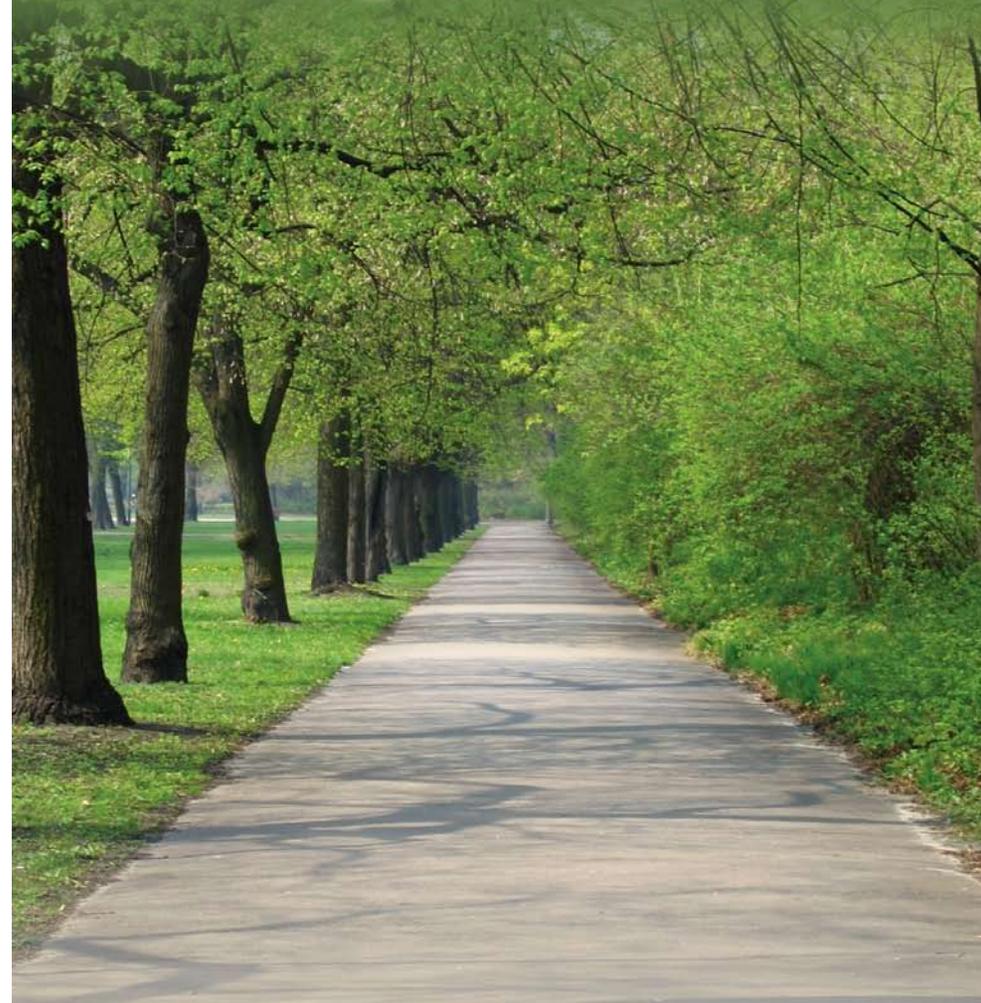
To reduce delinquency among Kentucky's youth through a collaboration of statewide precourt services and programs that promote education and accountability.



For more information, contact:

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Kentucky Court of Justice
Court Designated Worker Program
Making A Difference



*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

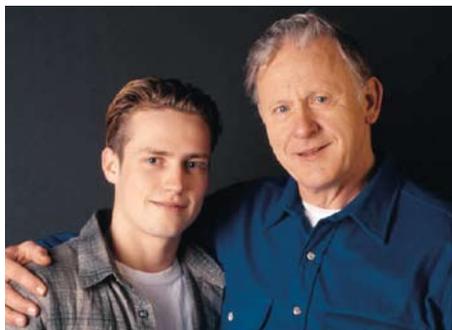
Robert Frost

Court Designated Workers Make a Difference

Positive intervention at a critical point in the life of a young person can often mean the difference between a bright future and a hopeless one. Court designated workers (CDWs) continually see their efforts change the lives of Kentucky's youth. Because they process juvenile complaints against youth under age 18, CDWs are in a position to influence children and teens who are in trouble.

These complaints fall into two categories, status offenses and public offenses. Status offenses are noncriminal forms of juvenile behavior, such as running away from home, skipping class, tobacco offenses or exhibiting beyond-control behaviors at home or at school. Public offenses are defined in the same terms as adult charges.

Uniform criteria determine which juvenile complaints must be forwarded to formal court and which are eligible for informal processing through the CDW Program. More serious offenses and repeat offenders are referred to formal court. Juveniles involved in minor offenses are generally eligible for informal processing and enter into diversion agreements. A diversion agreement is a negotiated contract between the CDW and youth that uses prevention, education, accountability and referral to treatment (if applicable) to resolve a complaint.



The Kentucky General Assembly enacted legislation in 1986 to provide a statewide Court Designated Worker Program under the direction of the Department of Juvenile Services of the Administrative Office of the Courts, the administrative arm of the Kentucky Court of Justice. CDWs are available to serve all 120 Kentucky counties 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"The court designated workers provide a wealth of services to juveniles and families in crisis. They help families communicate; they educate juveniles and their families about the dangers of tobacco, drugs and alcohol; and they match families with needed services. CDWs are the front line of intervention and prevention. They are the eyes and ears of the juvenile court system, facilitating communication among families, schools, law enforcement and the courts. By keeping juveniles out of the courtroom, limited judicial resources and precious docket time are reserved for the more difficult and serious cases, and many juveniles are spared the painful stigma of being branded a delinquent."

Daviess County Chief District Judge Lisa P. Jones

"The CDW Program is beneficial not only to the citizens of the Commonwealth, but to the judiciary as well. By reducing court caseloads through diversion, judges are able to spend more time with serious, and often repeat, juvenile offenders. Juveniles who are diverted learn from their mistakes and are able to see firsthand how the justice system works."

Campbell County Chief Regional District Judge Karen A. Thomas

Diversion programs provide a chance to change

The court designated worker and the young person define the terms of the diversion through a collaborative process. This takes place in a formal conference that parents are requested to attend. Diversion agreements consist of conditions that relate to the alleged public or status offense and often include one or more of the following:

Restitution • Community Service/Service Learning Projects • Curfew
Educational Seminar Attendance • Referral to counseling, drug/alcohol
assessments and/or mental health services

For example, a young person charged with criminal mischief in the third degree who enters a diversion agreement might be asked to participate in an educational program, complete 20 hours of community service, write a letter of apology, pay restitution for damaged items and stay off of the victim's property.

The diversion process is designed to educate, instill a sense of accountability and deter young people from getting into further trouble. CDWs monitor diversion agreements, which may last up to six months, to ensure that the youth comply with the conditions. If a young person successfully completes the agreement, the case is dismissed. If he or she fails to comply with the conditions of the diversion agreement, the case will be set for formal proceedings.

Juveniles who enter diversion can choose from several programs to help them gain confidence and get their lives back on track, such as:

Law Related Education. These lessons are designed to build a deeper understanding of the court system and general principles of active citizenship.

Leadership. These programs develop leadership skills and promote self-reliance.

Community Outreach. Young people create "I Care Kits," greeting cards and food baskets and carry out other projects to benefit senior citizens, individuals with disabilities and other community causes.

Being All You Can Be. This 4-H program develops responsibility and self-esteem.

Making It On Your Own. Young people learn independent living skills.

Creative Arts. Youth learn how to write, paint, act, sew, quilt and other artistic skills.

Community Garden. This program provides the opportunity to plant trees, shrubs and perennials to benefit the community.

ATV Safety. This workshop teaches youth how to safely operate all-terrain vehicles.

