



Alberta
Justice and
Solicitor General

Provincial Court of Alberta

Youth Justice Court And You



What is youth justice court?

If you are 12 or older and 17 or younger, and you break the law, you may have to go to youth justice court, where you will have to take responsibility for your actions.

I have been charged. What do I do?

You are required to appear in court. The document the police gave you tells when you must appear in court.

You may also be required to go to the police station to be fingerprinted and photographed.

OR

If a fine is indicated on the document from the police, the back of the ticket will tell you what you can do.

What will happen if I don't do anything?

If you are required to be in court or be fingerprinted but you do not show up, you may be arrested and charged with another offence.

If you do not pay the fine, the court will either issue a warrant for your arrest or give you an additional penalty.

Do I need a lawyer?

You have the right to free legal representation under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA).

Contact Legal Aid (1-866-845-3425) for information on obtaining a lawyer.

Do my parents have to know about this?

Normally your parent(s) or guardian(s) must be notified by the police for all serious offences. The participation of your parent(s) or guardian(s) is important. Parents can help by giving information in court and letting the judge know what they can do to help you at home. If your parent(s) or guardian(s) do not come with you, the judge may order them to show up.

You have the right to instruct your lawyer independent of your parents.

What do I wear to court?

There are no specific dress requirements. However, when you come to court, try to look and act your best.

What happens at the courthouse?

At the courthouse, lists of names are posted to tell people which courtrooms or counters to go to. If you cannot find your name, go to the counter and ask.

Who else will be in the courtroom?

The courtroom clerk, sitting at the front of the courtroom and wearing a black gown, will usually be the first person you see.

The prosecutor represents society and will present facts to the judge.

The defence counsel / duty counsel helps the young person.

Court Security officers keep everybody safe and guard prisoners.

The judge's job is to listen to everything that everyone says in court, and then make decisions.

Your parents or guardians are encouraged to attend and provide information that the judge may request.

Other people that may be in the courtroom are:

- Probation officers — they offer help when required
- Representatives from the Elizabeth Fry Society and/or Native Counselling— they can answer your questions and may give you directions
- General public and media

What happens now?

In court, your name will be called and the charge will be read to you. You may enter a guilty plea, a not guilty plea, or ask that the matter be put over for another date so you can talk to a lawyer. If your parents wish to tell the judge anything, they should go to the front of the courtroom with you.

In certain serious offences, you may also be given an election to be tried either by a youth justice court judge or by a Queen's Bench justice (with or without a jury).

What is a plea?

You should speak to a lawyer before entering a plea.

If you plead guilty, you are admitting you did it. If that is the case, the Crown Prosecutor will tell the judge what the police said happened.

If you plead not guilty, you will have to come back on another day for your trial. At the trial, the judge will listen to each witness. You may decide to also tell the judge what happened. The judge will decide whether or not you are guilty.

You and your parents will also get a chance to tell your side of the story. The judge may also ask a probation officer, doctor or other professional to prepare a report on your background. The judge will then decide on your penalty.

If your case is set over for any reason, you must attend at all times you are told to, or a warrant may be issued for your arrest and you may be charged with another offence.

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