**Overview of The Role of Restorative Justice in Teen Courts: A Preliminary Look**

By: American Probation and Parole Association, focus group including OJJDP, Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Program, National Youth Court Center, and four Teen Court programs (including Durham County in North Carolina).

**Alter the Focus:**

* **Making Teen Court more restorative:**
  + OJJDP – the majority of teen court programs have not implemented the elements inherent in this (balanced and restorative justice) promising approach to their full potential.
  + OJJDP – The balanced approach, a new mission, requires that juvenile justice systems devote attention to making amends to victims and the community, increasing offender competencies, and protecting the public through processes in which offenders, victims and the community are all active participants.
* **Accountability will not be totally achieved unless the respondent gains an increased awareness and understanding of his or her actions and takes an active role in repairing the harm caused. Punishment alone does not facilitate increased awareness and offers little opportunity for the respondent to make amends to the victim or the community in a meaningful way. (Punishment v. Restoration)**
* Youth volunteers are also exposed to a new way of thinking about justice, thus increasing the educational experience that teen courts can provide to them by raising their awareness of the effects of crime and facilitating the development of their empathy toward others.

**Recommendations:**

* Teen courts need to increase and rethink the role of victims and community in the programs’ practices and operations.
* Teen courts need to alter the focus of teen court hearing proceedings from punishment to restoration.
* Teen courts need to rethink or augment the types of sentencing options available.
* How the principles are implemented will vary based on local resources, traditions and cultures.
* All teen court program models have the potential to incorporate restorative justice-based practices if staff and program organizers are flexible and open to new ideas related to program policies, procedures, and practices.
* All programs can definitely be more restorative than they are currently.
* Restorative justice principles can affect all aspects of a teen court’s processes.