



**MAKE FAIR AND EQUITABLE DECISIONS**

Youth and families served by JHBs are confronting issues and behaviors that may expose them to the juvenile justice system. They must feel confident that their decision to forego the court process and instead trust that the community-based JHB process will treat them fairly and equitably. The JHB process is meant to hold youth accountable and “repair harm done”, restoring damage caused to the victim(s) and the larger community. Decisions made by the JHB are *not* intended as punitive.

**BUILD AND MAINTAIN TRUST WITH YOUTH**

Some youth may not trust adults. Some family members may not trust “the system”. JRB members must make an effort to build trust from the first contact and maintain that trust throughout the process. Trust is gained with professionalism, common courtesy, mutual respect and authentic engagement.

**BE FAMILIAR WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

To provide effective sanctions, JHB members should be familiar with the availability, purpose and eligibility requirements of services and programs available in their community. Each JHB should develop and maintain a current inventory of available local resources and services. As new services become available, agency representatives can present or send materials to the JHB for review. (In some JHBs, a social service/mental health agency representative attends hearings to provide direct access). Representation on the JHB from different service sectors is encouraged, to help this process.

**USE A STRENGTHS BASED APPROACH**

A strengths based, family centered approach that values the input of the youth and family and draws on successes should be a part of every case. Brief pre-screening tools such as the Clifton Strengths or Developmental Assets assessments can provide context and help in setting sanctions that help build strengths and address gaps. Participation by the youth and family in identifying individual strengths is critical to successful outcomes.

## **MODEL APPROPRIATE ADULT BEHAVIOR**

Youth and families who come before the JHB should see adults acting respectfully and responsibly. Any form of arguing with a youth or family member is inappropriate. Speeches are strongly discouraged, as speeches come across as parental, often, and tend to shut down dialogue. Some JHBs find it helpful to assign a “lead questioner” for each case. Others limit members to only one or two questions. If members disagree, it is critical to find common ground with fellow members on decisions about sanctions, cases, etc. The youth, family, and fellow JHB members should be addressed with the same level of respect. Members should also be aware of their body language and non-verbal cues to avoid creating a negative environment.

## **HONOR AND MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is critical to the success of a JHB. Except where disclosure is required by law or public safety, confidentiality must be protected. Repeating rumors, giving information on the identity, background or details of a case, or acknowledging that an individual or family has appeared before or been served by the JHB, to any person outside the JHB or other persons specifically authorized to receive such information, is strictly prohibited. Revealing the arrest to outsiders can bring stigma or other harm to the youth. Disclosure of confidential information violates the code of confidentiality, exposes clients to harm and can damage the reputation of the JHB.

## **EMPOWER FAMILIES**

Families should be empowered to seek appropriate services for their youth’s educational, emotional, mental and physical health and well-being. Youth and their families should have full information, consent and input on suggested outcomes and referrals.

**HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICE** Each member of a JHB brings different skills to contribute to the JHB’s overall success. Members should have at least a basic understanding of child, youth and family development and of restorative justice. They should demonstrate a willingness and ability to work with families, and to participate fully in the work of the JHB. For members with less experience, it is strongly suggested they attend appropriate training. Each JHB member must also have a basic knowledge of legal principles upon which our society is based and be able to explain relevant basic law and principles to the youth and family.

## **BE CONSISTENT WITH FOLLOW-UP**

On-going follow up with youth and family are as important to success as the intake process and hearing itself. Monitoring progress of the sanctions and providing support and encouragement are critical components of the JHB process. A few JHBs have a Coordinator or Case Manager to keep in contact with the youth and family. Other JHBs use the Chair or assign members to follow up with a family. Consistent case management provides accountability and often motivates the youth and the family to achieve success.

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*JHB Professional Standards are adapted from the “Juvenile Review Board Protocols and Procedures Guide” of the Connecticut Youth Services Association, June 2016 [www.ctyouthservices.org](http://www.ctyouthservices.org)  
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