

In order to develop the most authentic sanction for each youth offender, Teen Court Panelists need to use creative questions. Only when Teen Court Panelists 'dig deeper' will they learn about the youth offenders root cause for delinquent behavior. Teen Court panelists must use effective questioning techniques to create the most informed picture of a youth offender's offense and life at home, school and within the community.

**Open-ended questions** are those that seek additional information from the respondent. Closed-ended questions can be answered with either a single word, such as 'yes' or 'no', or a short phrase.

Open questions have the following characteristics:

- ✓ They ask the respondent to think and reflect
- ✓ The response often includes an individual's opinions and feelings
- ✓ Often begin with what, why, how and describe

**Lower level questions** can be used to:

1. evaluate respondent's comprehension of what happened
2. assess respondent's integrity
3. ask the respondent to restate or summarize what has already been said

Questions at **higher levels of the taxonomy** are usually most appropriate for:

1. encouraging respondents to think more critically about their actions
2. engaging in group or individual problem solving
3. fostering reflective discussions between individuals



## Questioning Techniques to Learn More

- Follow up a closed ended question with 'please tell me more.'
- Ask the same question again later in the case.
- Reword question in a different way.
- Ask probing questions like 'why do you feel that way?'
- Sequence questions in a patterned order to develop a purposeful response.
- Ask a balance of higher level and lower level questions to learn about the facts of the case and encourage the offender to reflect on their behavior.
- Build a hierarchy of questions from general to more specific; for example: Begin questioning by asking offender to tell what happened the day of the offense then ask more detailed questions about why the offender was there, how they got there and who was with them.
- Use plenty of wait time between questions. Some individuals need up to a minute to formulate a response. Silence is also golden and can prompt an offender to tell more.
- Adapt the question to utilize the language style and ability of the offender and parent.

