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Gateway to Opportunity: The City of Calgary's Response to Youth Diversion

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What is Gateway?

Partnership between the Calgary Police Service and City of Calgary Community and Neighborhood Services to address young persons involved in minor, non-violent criminal activity



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Youth Criminal Justice Act 101

- The Canadian Federal Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) replaced the Young Offenders Act on April 1, 2003
- The two primary objectives of the YCJA are:
 - To reduce the number of youth entering the formal youth justice system; and
 - To reduce the use of custody



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YCJA: Section 6

Where a program has been established or with the consent of the young person, **refer the young person to a program or agency in the community** that may assist the young person not to commit offences



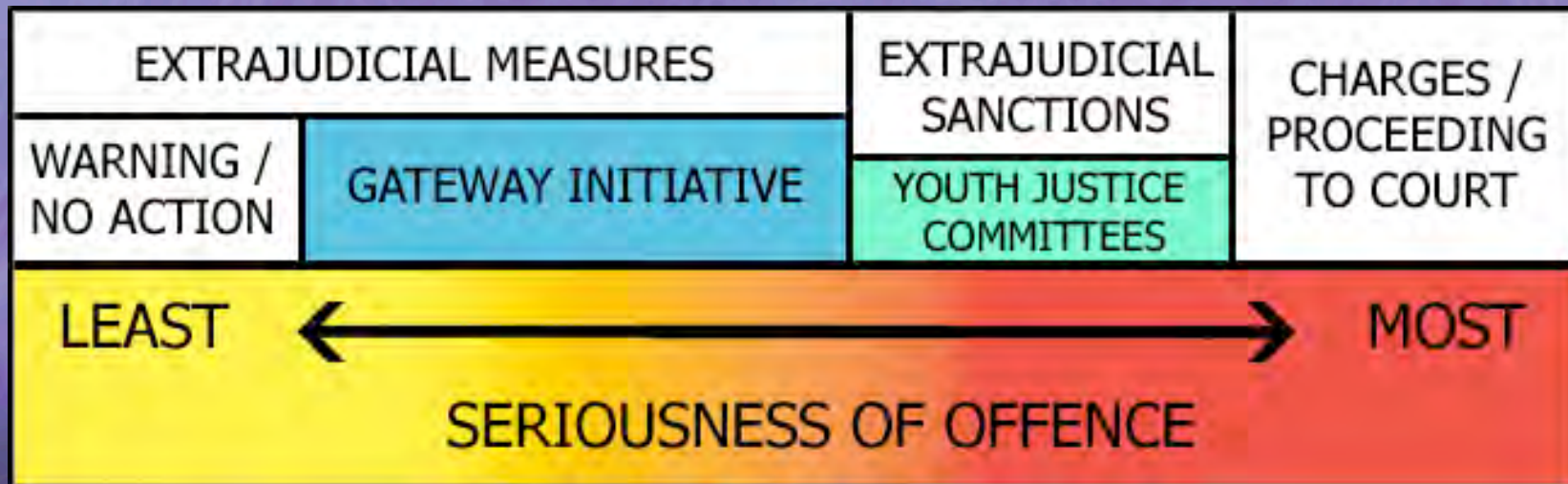
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Discretionary Abilities Available to Police Officers Under the YCJA



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Making Legislation Work

Gateway facilitates a connection between the police, young people, their families and appropriate community resources



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How to get referred to Gateway

- Police attend scene and conduct investigation
- Determine the offence, and if charges could be laid
- Identify if the young person is willing to accept responsibility
- Complete referral package and advise the young person to contact the program within 5 days



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Young Person Responsibility

- Must accept responsibility for actions
- Non-violent offence
- Have no history of criminal convictions
- Take responsibility by contacting the program



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Family Connection

- Young person and parent meet with staff at a police station, where interview takes place
- Look at offending behavior, family circumstances, school, extracurricular, drug use.....
- Importance of connection parent-child, listening to each other
- Make amends for wrong-doing



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Intervention

- Opportunity for young person and parent to problem solve
- Identify the 'issue' that is causing the young person to offend
- Refer to agencies in the community to support the young person to help address offending behavior



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Community

- Has an opportunity to get involved with the young person by involving them in community programs
- No limit on the time spent with the young person, it can be as little as one visit or years of connectedness to their service



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Timeliness

- Phone calls can be as quick as 1 hour after meeting with police
- Pending on the opportunity provided, young people can complete the program as soon as 1 day after meeting with Gateway staff



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Benefits

- Addresses youth crime and its underlying causes at the community level in a restorative manner
- Meaningful and practical consequences for youth
- Timely intervention for youth
- Agency workload is evenly distributed with community partners



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- Currently Gateway has service agreements with many community partners
- Frees up Field Officer time by limiting the need to refer to and follow-up with community agencies, thereby creating efficiency
- 7 youth have re-offended (3.44% recidivism rate)
- 189 youth have attended a Gateway appointment (94.58%)
- User friendly, easy to refer and administer



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Spirit of the YCJA is upheld!



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Youth Feedback

“I realized that in having a criminal record I wouldn't be able to pursue my dreams in the future, thanks to you I can do these things and many more later in life.”

“...you have really helped me in the last 3.5 months. Thank you for giving me a bit of a break on not having a criminal record. If you are ever at Robert Warren school maybe you could come say hi.”

“I would like to thank you for giving me an opportunity and a second chance. This is greatly appreciated by me and my family.”



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Calgary Youth Justice Society

- Vision

- Calgary Communities actively participate in the youth justice system to effectively reduce youth crime by focusing on the success of youth

- Mission

- The Calgary Youth Justice Society, through a community-development approach, contributes to the success of Youth Justice Committees by providing fundamental support through public awareness, resources, training and guidance

CYJS

Youth Criminal Justice Act: Section 18

- Provides an opportunity for citizens to become directly involved in the administration of youth justice by forming Youth Justice Committee

CYJS

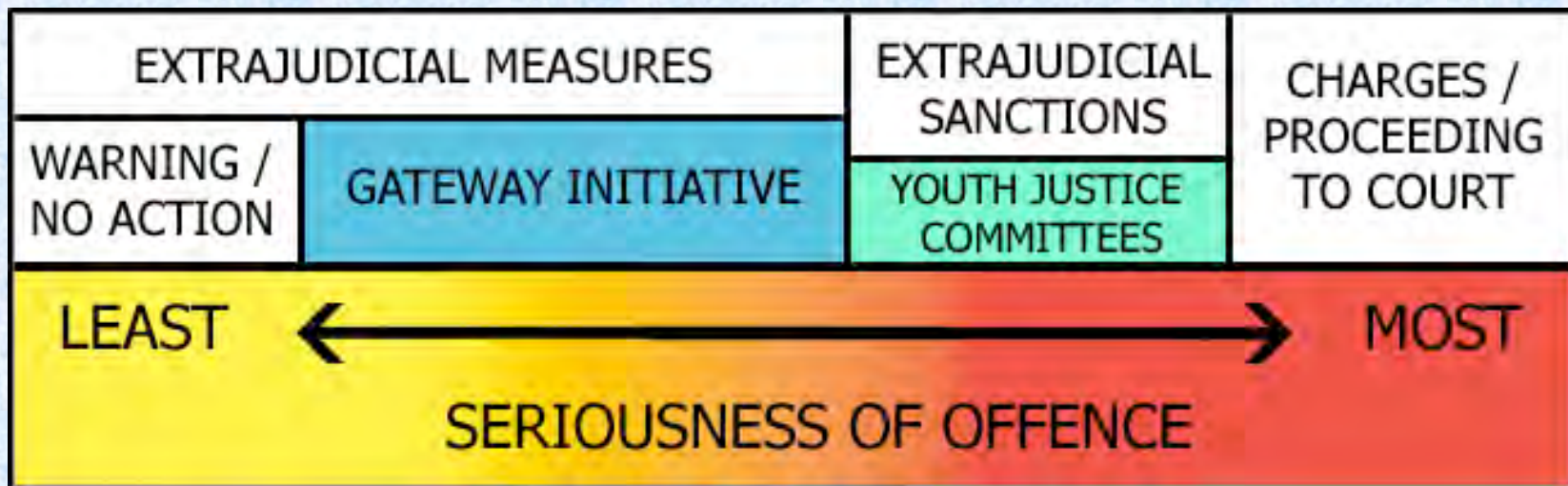
Youth Justice Committees

“Community neighbours helping kids to make amends and get back on track”

- A Youth Justice Committee (YJC) is an alternative to the court system for young people aged between 12-18 who have committed a less-serious type of offence
- Community volunteers meets with young people as well as their families, victims and the community to find appropriate, meaningful consequences for the young person

CYJS

Where YJC's fit in the Spectrum



CYJS

Possible Consequences:

- Apology Letter
- Restitution to the victim
- Community work
- Referral to a program

CYJS

Celebrating Success

- 350+ volunteers donate over 10,000 hours annually
- Over the past 9 years, more than 6,000 youth were diverted from the Court to the responsibility of the community
- More than 90% of youth successfully completed the program; after 3 years, 80% of those youth have not re-entered the justice system

CYJS

Future Savings

- Research shows that \$1 invested in preventative services saves \$12.90 in future costs such as policing, justice and addiction treatment
- Using this calculation, based upon the success rate of our program, YJC's launched a future savings of 1.27 million dollars in 2005 alone.

CYJS

It's all about Youth Involvement



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- The goal of both programs is simple:
- To inspire young people in making better choices
- Role is to mentor, encourage young person to take ownership of their wrongdoing and connect to resources in the community



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What can you do?

- Could these programs work in your community?
- How can you make a difference?



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To find out more:

- Gateway Initiative:
www.calgaryppolice.ca/gateway
- janice.bidyk@calgarypolice.ca
- Calgary Youth Justice Society:
www.calgaryyouthjustice.com



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