



Young Adult Court

208 participants referred since the program began¹

YAC currently serves **70** participants (max capacity)

34 graduates as of Nov. 2017

76% of participants are males

21% of participants are parents

YAC in the News:

[18-year olds can barely rent cars. Are they old enough for jail?](#)

[A California Court for Young Adults Calls on Science](#)

[Neuroscience is Changing the Debate Over What Role Age Should Play in the Courts](#)

[Too Young for Jail](#)

[Changing the Life Trajectory of Justice-Involved Young Adults in San Francisco](#)

San Francisco Young Adult Court

In 2015, SFDA partnered with the Superior Court, Public Defender's Office, Adult Probation Department, Felton Institute, Goodwill Industries, and treatment providers to develop a "Young Adult Court" (YAC) designed to address the unique needs of young adults—ages 18-25. YAC offers a "collaborative, problem-solving" model to young adults charged with both violent and non-violent felonies and misdemeanors. While excluding criteria do exist—including the use of a firearm and individuals with a prior strike—the San Francisco model seeks to address the root causes of more serious crime. Together with San Francisco's existing services for these "[transitional age youth](#)", YAC was created to ensure Bay Area youth grow up prepared to be engaged members of their communities and healthy, employed adults.

YAC: Much More than a Courtroom

The YAC model goes beyond mere court appearances and builds on the city's work of establishing "[collaborative](#)" courts that coordinate responses to promote law-abiding behavior. Through collaboration with justice system colleagues and community organizations, justice-involved young adults are supported through a four-phase process:

- 1. Engagement and Assessment:** Participants go through intensive intake, assessment, and orientation, and appear in court weekly to report on their progress. They work with their clinical case manager to address urgent needs – such as housing – and create their own Wellness Care Plan, which includes steps to meet their goals. The plan can include therapy, education, employment, parenting, drug treatment, and housing support, among other components.
- 2. Stability and Accountability:** Participants begin to implement their Wellness Care Plan and continue to appear in court.
- 3. Wellness and Community Connection:** Participants make tangible progress in their plan, demonstrating sustained connections to community-based resources and achieving goals that they have set around workforce, relationships, housing and other identified needs.
- 4. Program Transition (and graduation day):** Participants prepare to transition out of the program and develop an Aftercare Plan that includes both short-term resources and long-term goals.

Each stage of the process includes additional activities and milestones that must be met before advancing to the next, as well as coordinated support services from city agencies and community organizations.

Graduating from YAC

YAC justice partners conference weekly before court to discuss individual cases and coordinate responses. Participants then regularly appear before the YAC Judge to evaluate their progress, and are either rewarded or face admonishments for specific behaviors to maintain a close feedback loop between action and reward/response. Frequency of court appearances is reduced as participants demonstrate stability and engagement.

Depending on the individual's progress, a participant may spend between 2-5 months on each phase, with the entire program will lasting 12-18 months. Graduation from YAC provides participants with the ability to have clean or reduced criminal records, depending on their case.

1. Data as of October 31, 2017

Who's in YAC

As of October 31, 2017:

- **60%** of YAC participants were African American
- **76%** male
- **21%** are parents
- YAC participants also share significant histories of trauma and victimization and many struggle with housing issues.

Promising Results

While program evaluation is underway, initial results indicate some early success. Approximately **34** participants have successfully completed the program, and another **70** are actively engaged. Program participants have also lauded YAC for treating them with respect and caring genuinely about their progress.

For more information, please contact Katy Miller, Chief of Alternative Programs, San Francisco District Attorney's Office, at Katherine.Miller@sfgov.org.