

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

VUOTS

# VOICES TO VOTES

ITS A MOVEMENT



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# Voices to Votes

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## WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT REFERS TO THE WAYS IN WHICH INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATE IN THEIR COMMUNITY AND CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY. THIS CAN INCLUDE VOTING, VOLUNTEERING, ATTENDING COMMUNITY MEETINGS, AND BEING INVOLVED IN LOCAL ISSUES. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HELPS TO GIVE EVERYONE A VOICE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

## WHY IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

- **EMPOWERMENT:** BEING ENGAGED HELPS YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND EMPOWERS YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
- **INFORMED DECISIONS:** ENGAGING IN CIVIC ACTIVITIES ALLOWS YOU TO LEARN ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES AND MAKE INFORMED CHOICES.
- **COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT:** WHEN INDIVIDUALS WORK TOGETHER, THEY CAN ADDRESS COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE.
- **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:** CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HELPS YOU MEET NEW PEOPLE AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS WHO SHARE YOUR INTERESTS.





## UNDERSTANDING THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT THAT INTERPRETS AND APPLIES THE LAW. IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING JUSTICE AND UPHOLDING THE RULE OF LAW. HERE ARE SOME KEY COMPONENTS:

1. **COURTS:** COURTS ARE WHERE LEGAL CASES ARE HEARD AND DECIDED. THEY CAN BE DIVIDED INTO DIFFERENT LEVELS:
  - **TRIAL COURTS:** WHERE CASES ARE FIRST HEARD AND DECIDED.
  - **APPELLATE COURTS:** WHERE DECISIONS FROM TRIAL COURTS CAN BE REVIEWED.
2. **JUDGES:** JUDGES ARE THE OFFICIALS WHO PRESIDE OVER COURT PROCEEDINGS. THEY MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON THE LAW AND ENSURE THAT TRIALS ARE FAIR.
3. **JURIES:** A JURY IS A GROUP OF CITIZENS WHO ARE CALLED TO LISTEN TO A CASE AND DECIDE THE OUTCOME. THEY HELP ENSURE THAT THE COMMUNITY HAS A SAY IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS.
4. **LAWYERS:** LAWYERS REPRESENT INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS IN LEGAL MATTERS. THEY HELP CLIENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS AND NAVIGATE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM.

## HOW CIVIC ENGAGEMENT RELATES TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

- **UNDERSTANDING RIGHTS:** CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HELPS YOU LEARN ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM, SUCH AS THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL AND THE RIGHT TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION.
- **PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** ATTENDING TOWN HALL MEETINGS OR COMMUNITY FORUMS ALLOWS YOU TO VOICE YOUR OPINIONS ON LOCAL LAWS AND POLICIES, INCLUDING THOSE RELATED TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM.
- **ADVOCACY:** YOU CAN ADVOCATE FOR CHANGES IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM THAT PROMOTE FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE, SUCH AS SUPPORTING PROGRAMS TO HELP AT-RISK YOUTH.
- **EDUCATION:** ENGAGING WITH LOCAL COURTS, JUDGES, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS CAN PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO HOW THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM WORKS AND ITS IMPACT ON YOUR COMMUNITY.

## Ways to Get Involved

1. Attend Community Meetings: Join local meetings to discuss community issues and learn how the judicial system affects your area.
2. Volunteer: Get involved with organizations that support legal rights, youth advocacy, or community service.
3. Educate Yourself: Read books, watch documentaries, or participate in workshops about the judicial system and civic engagement.
4. Speak Up: Share your thoughts and ideas with friends, family, and community leaders about how to improve the judicial system.

## Remember!

Civic engagement is key to creating a better community and ensuring that the judicial system works for everyone. By getting involved and staying informed, you can play an important role in shaping the future of your community!

This fact sheet is designed to help middle school youth understand the importance of civic engagement and its connection to the judicial system. Encouraging awareness and participation can empower young individuals to make a difference in their communities.

## A Note from our CEO

*We are excited to share with you some thoughts on the importance of civic engagement and its profound connection to our judicial system. At the heart of our mission is the belief that an informed and active community can drive meaningful change. Attending community meetings offers a platform for you to voice concerns and better understand how the judicial system impacts our lives. Volunteering with organizations that champion legal rights and youth advocacy not only strengthens our community but also enriches your personal growth. Self-education through books, documentaries, and workshops can deepen your understanding of civic duties and justice. Finally, never underestimate the power of your voice—sharing your insights with peers and leaders can inspire transformative ideas and reforms. Always remember, your participation is crucial in crafting a just and equitable society. Together, we can ensure that the judicial system serves everyone fairly and effectively.*

*With appreciation,*

*Dr. Victoria Best*