

Overview

Brooklyn's Project Reset is a diversion program offering a response to low-level charges that is proportionate and effective while avoiding the potential harms of a conviction. Through Project Reset, participants avoid prosecution by completing community-based programming. The program's approach to misdemeanor charges holds people accountable for their actions while promoting well-being and strengthening public trust in the justice system.

Concept

Every year, thousands of people in New York City are arrested for low-level offenses. Traditionally, police and prosecutors have had only two responses to choose from: prosecution—and, in some cases, jail—or releasing people without a meaningful response from the justice system. Project Reset offers a third option: a community-based program that is impactful for participants and communities and avoids the potential harms of standard case processing.

Eligibility

Brooklyn's Project Reset serves people who are issued desk appearance tickets for specific low-level, non-violent crimes, including shoplifting, trespassing, and criminal mischief.

How It Works

Following an arrest by the New York City Police Department, the Brooklyn prosecutor's office reviews the case to determine if it is eligible for Project Reset. Eligible cases are referred to a public defense agency, which reaches out to potential participants to educate them about their options. Cases are then sent to Brooklyn Justice Initiatives, an independent non-profit organization, which offers people the opportunity to engage in programming rather than go to court. Those eligible may consult with a defense attorney at any point during the process.

Participants complete an intake interview with program staff and engage in two-to-four hours of programming. Participants may complete a group workshop on conflict and identifying triggering factors at Brooklyn Justice Initiative or they may complete an art-based program at the Brooklyn Museum that uses art to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences with the justice system and discuss perspectives on accountability. If appropriate, participants may receive individual counseling sessions instead of—or in addition to—group programming. Those who reside in or are arrested in the Red Hook Community Justice Center's catchment area may opt to engage in programming there. All participants are offered voluntary referrals to community-based social services providing support in job training, housing, and mental health treatment.

Participants who successfully complete Project Reset avoid ever having to set foot in a courtroom. Instead, the Kings County District Attorney's office declines to prosecute their case and it does not result in a criminal record.

Impact

An evaluation of 16- and 17-year-old Project Reset participants in Manhattan found that participants were significantly less likely than defendants in a comparison group to be convicted of a new crime within one year. The

study also documented faster case processing times, improved case outcomes, and positive perceptions of the program. More than 95 percent of participants said they had made the right decision by entering the program and that they would recommend Project Reset to someone in a similar situation.

Partnership

Brooklyn's Project Reset is a collaboration among the Center for Court Innovation, the New York City Police Department, the Kings County District Attorney's Office, the Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and the Brooklyn Museum.

For More Information

Contact Project Reset Brooklyn Program Manager Saadiq Newton-Boyd at sboyd@nycourts.gov or 347.401.9088.