

JUVENILE HEARING INFORMATION

Please review this information prior to arriving at court.

A juvenile defendant charged with an offense must appear in court along with the defendant’s parent, guardian, or managing conservator. A juvenile defendant is a defendant between the ages of 10 and 16. Upon entering the courtroom, the defendant must check in with the Court Clerk. After the judge has given preliminary information, each defendant will be called forward individually. When the juvenile’s name is called, he or she steps forward to the Judge’s bench with his/her parent or legal guardian. The defendant will be asked to enter his/her plea for each charge called for court. The following pleas may be entered on any charge:

- **NOT GUILTY:** This plea should be entered when the defendant does not believe that he/she committed the offense(s) charged. When pleading not guilty, the juvenile will need to select a trial by judge or by jury so that the case(s) may be set forward for trial or an additional pre-trial hearing.
- **NOLO CONTENDERE (NO CONTEST):** No contest is entered when the defendant does not wish to contest The charge(s). Although it will result in a guilty finding, the juvenile can request an option or program to avoid a conviction, which is reported on his or her record. The defendant may be allowed to present extenuating or mitigating circumstances to the Court, which may or may not affect the options available for that offense.
- **GUILTY:** A guilty plea is an admission of guilt for the offense(s) charged. Although the defendant will be found guilty, he/she can request an option or program to avoid a conviction, which is reported on his or her record. Defendants may be allowed to present extenuating or mitigating circumstances to the Court, which may or may not affect the options available for that offense.

Available Deferred Disposition Programs

After pleading guilty or no contest, a juvenile defendant may be considered for the following deferred disposition programs. Successful completion of the program will result in the dismissal of the violation(s). The Judge will determine if the defendant is eligible for a program.

Driving Safety Course (Defensive Driving)	A Driving Safety Course will dismiss a moving traffic violation. Defendants must pay the court costs, an administrative fee, cost of the class and a fee to DPS to obtain a certified copy of their driving record. The defendant has 90 days to submit the class certificate and driving record to the court. The defendant will be required to submit proof of a valid Texas Driver’s License and valid insurance. The insurance will be verified by the municipal court.
Deferred Disposition	With a payment of the court costs and a special expense fee, the defendant may request a term of probation from 30 to 180 days. Probation prohibits the defendant from receiving a similar violation during the deferral period. Other conditions may be imposed by the Court (ex: community service) on a case-by-case basis. A driving safety course is required for any person under age 25 to defer a moving violation.
Alcohol Awareness Class	Texas law (Sec. 106.115 Alcoholic Beverage Code) requires that all minors complete an alcohol education program. The class must be completed and the proof of completion (certificate) returned to the court within 90 days of the date of the sentence. Registration in a class must be done immediately to avoid delays and to ensure receipt of the certificate on time. In addition to the Alcohol Awareness Class, a minor receiving deferred adjudication for an alcohol violation will receive community service. Failure to comply with the court's orders may result in the suspension of the defendant's driver's license.
Tobacco Awareness Class	Texas law (Sec 161.253 of the Health and Safety Code) requires that all minors complete a tobacco awareness program. The class must be completed and the proof of completion (certificate) returned to the court within 90 days of the date of the sentence. Registration in a class must be done immediately to avoid delays and to ensure receipt of the certificate on time.