**Defense Attorney**

**Opening Statement Template**

Some things to remember when writing your opening statement:

* State the defendant’s name and inform the jury/judge panel that the defendant is aware that he/she made a mistake and that he/she is here in youth court because he/she wants to take responsibility for his/her actions.
* State what the defendant did; however, point out facts that you will be explaining during the hearing that mitigate (or lessen) the seriousness of what the offender has done or show the jury/judge panel that the defendant is sorry for what he/she did. For example, if possible, inform the jury/judge panel of what the defendant has already done to help make up for his/her behavior (e.g., paid restitution to a victim, apologized to the victim or his/her parent, been punished at home).
* If you will be using testimony from character witnesses (e.g., parents), include information that this person(s) will be presenting to the youth court related to the type of person the defendant is (e.g., honest, trustworthy).
* Either state your recommended disposition, or let the jury/judge panel know that you will be asking for a specific disposition at the conclusion of this case.

Write your opening statement in the space below and then print it and take it with you to the youth court hearing.

# **Opening Statement**

**\*\* IMPORTANT: After you finish writing your opening statement, save it on your computer’s hard drive so you can go back and make changes if necessary and can print it when it is time to go to youth court.\*\***

Once you finish your opening statement, [click here](http://www.youthcourt.net/Youth/prep4check.htm#b) to go to a checklist that will help you do a quick assessment of the content of your opening statement.