

OATH finds a better way to address minor offenses

The chart of minor offenses beginning on page 16 of this issue is a marvelous list of good manners and of prohibitions against inappropriate behavior in public places. Offenders disturb the peace and civility of City life. These are cultural offenses, and OATH, the City's administrative agency that hears the cases and imposes the civil penalty, has come up with a cultural remedy.

OATH may impose community service as a civil penalty on an offender, and, in many instances, the community service penalty can be as little as one hour. How can one hour of community service be managed? OATH, with the assistance of the Center for Court Innovation, has come up with an innovative answer.

The offender is required to view an e-learning, interactive video on the harms that minor offenses can cause. For example, not cleaning up after your dog is not only offensive and dirty, but puts at risk the health of children and others who play or walk in the area. Or, other examples include how riding a bicycle in a park endangers pedestrians and park users, and how a community is affected by excessive noise and littering. The e-learning module provides lessons, practices and learning outcomes aimed at preventing future offenses. Reflecting New York City's diversity, the module is offered in seven languages as it outlines the summons process and encourages offenders to avoid receiving a future summons. The idea is to make the offender aware of the most common quality of life offenses and their consequences for the community.

OATH elected not to impose physical work on offenders, but rather to use the hour to educate the offender. If two or three hours of community service is ordered, the additional time is spent doing clerical work at the OATH office following a viewing of the video and the e-learning module.

OATH began implementing the community service option in June 2017. By the end of March 2018, 625 offenders have accepted and completed the community service penalty. OATH and the Center for Court Innovation are still evaluating the results, but this effort is surely aimed in the right direction. None of the 82 offenses listed in the chart belonged in the criminal courts where jail, bail, fines and criminal records are the only outcomes.

Congratulations to OATH for daring to take on this innovative challenge.

Ross Sandler

CITYLAW		
Ross Sandler, <i>Editor</i> <i>Director, Center for</i> <i>New York City Law</i>	Malik Callender '18 Chaim Chait '18 Thomas Columbia '19 Letisha Gary '19 Avra Kutcher '19 Danielle Mabe '18 Christina Malamut '18 Erika Pedersen '19 Mary Solimine '19 Natchaya Vutrapongvatana '19 Steven Zuck '18 <i>Student Writers</i>	Lebasi Lashley <i>Art Director,</i> <i>Petting Zoo Design</i> Jesse Denno <i>Staff Writer,</i> <i>Production Asst.</i> Jeff Hopkins, <i>Illustrator</i>
Brian J. Kaszuba '04 <i>Managing Editor</i>		
Dorichel Rodriguez '17 Kelly Padden '17 <i>Fellows</i>		
Ayala Blumenkrantz '19 Jeannie Calcano '19		
CENTER FOR NEW YORK CITY LAW ADVISORY COUNCIL		
Stanley S. Shuman, <i>Chair</i> Sheila Aresty '94 Arthur N. Abbey '59 David R. Baker Michael A. Cardozo Anthony Coles Paul A. Crotty Richard J. Davis Michael B. Gerrard Judah Gribetz Eric Hatzimemos '92 Michael D. Hess Lawrence S. Huntington '64 Patricia M. Hynes William F. Kuntz II Eric Lane Randy M. Mastro	Robert J. McGuire Francis McArdle John D. McMahon '76 Thomas L. McMahon '83 Gary P. Naftalis Glenn Newman Steven M. Polan Gail S. Port '76 Frances A. Resheske Joseph B. Rose Ernst H. Rosenberger '58 Frederick P. Schaffer Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr. O. Peter Sherwood Edward Wallace Richard M. Weinberg Peter L. Zimroth James D. Zirin	
SUBSCRIPTIONS		
Annual subscription rate is \$235. <i>Group rates available upon request.</i>		
Contact the Center for New York City Law at nycitylaw@nysl.edu		
tel: 212.431.2115 fax: 212.941.4735 Web site: www.CityLaw.org		
<p>The Center expresses appreciation to the foundations supporting the Center's work: The Marc Haas Foundation, The Charina Endowment Fund, Fund for the City of New York, The Prospect Hill Foundation, and The Steven and Sheila Aresty Foundation. The views expressed in CITYLAW are those of the authors and not necessarily those of New York Law School or its funders.</p> <p>CITYLAW (ISSN 1083-3528) is published bi-monthly by the Center for New York City Law at New York Law School © Center for New York City Law, 2012. All rights reserved.</p> <p>POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CITYLAW, 185 West Broadway, New York, New York 10013-2921. Periodicals postage paid at New York, New York and additional post offices.</p>		