

CASE STUDY

Tri-County Mall • Cincinnati, Ohio

Overview

For the past several years, Tri-County Mall had seen an increase in groups of teenagers “hanging out” on Friday and Saturday evenings blocking mall store entrances. With this increase in unsupervised children came an increase in unruly behavior that was annoying and even intimidating to other mall customers and employees. Traffic patterns indicated an increase in youth on Friday and Saturday evenings and a decrease in family traffic. An increasing number of families and older adults seemed to be avoiding Tri-County Mall on Friday and Saturday evenings and had begun to shop earlier or elsewhere. Store managers and regional managers began bringing this situation to the attention of their leasing representatives, making it an issue in the process of renewing their leases.

Solution

After a review process that involved consultations with local city leaders, store managers, and security experts, it was decided that a youth escort program was needed in addition to the behavior-based policies already in place at the mall. A plan was then developed and preparations taken to put a program in place.

On Friday, August 6, 2010, Tri-County Mall implemented a Youth Escort Policy for the shopping center on Friday and Saturday nights after 4:00 pm. The program was designed around the same type of programs that had been very successful at other malls throughout the country. The policy requires youths under the age of 18 to be accompanied by a parent or guardian (adult escort) 21 years of age or older. Youth Escort Policy hours are designated as 4:00 pm to close on Friday and Saturday nights. Shoppers deemed under the age of 25 are requested to show valid identification (with photo and date of birth) such as a driver’s license, state identification card, military identification, passport or visa.

Tri-County released details of the program to all mall retailers 10 days before the program was started and on that same afternoon sent out press releases to the local media outlining the program.

With very few exceptions, merchants were very receptive and pleased about the program. The local media immediately ran with the story doing live interviews with the mall’s general manager. Most of the press coverage was very positive and all news outlets that surveyed viewers found that more than 80% felt that teens should be escorted at malls. The Cincinnati Enquirer ran a very positive front-page story on the program the day it was implemented.



TRI-COUNTY MALL
Youth Escort Policy

People of all ages are welcome to shop,
dine and enjoy the events at Tri-County Mall.

BUT if you're under 18
And it's after 4pm on
Friday and Saturday,
you must be accompanied
by an adult 21 or older.

Proof of age is required.

This policy is effective August 6, 2010
Please see Customer Service for complete guidelines.

A graphic element within the sign showing the silhouettes of an adult and a child walking together, with the adult's hand on the child's shoulder.

Outcome

The first weekend of the policy implementation went very well. Mall signage, information from the press releases and communications with community organizations seemed to reduce the number of people surprised by the program when they arrived at the center. Some unsupervised youths were asked to return to the mall when an adult over 21 years of age could accompany them and many customers under the age of 25 were issued wristbands as a convenience option to show that they were adults. The immediate response from the public during the first weekend showed vastly more positive comments about the program than negative and this continues every weekend of the program.

The number of customer visits to the center does not seem to have been affected in any way by the program, although youth are now supervised by adults, which means that there are more adults at the center, a primary goal of the program.