

Restorative Justice Conferences

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a philosophical approach that embraces the reparation of harm. A central practice of restorative justice is a collaborative decision-making process that includes harmed parties, people who caused harm, and others to seek a resolution that includes: (a) accepting and acknowledging responsibility for harmful behavior, (b) repairing the harm caused to individuals and the community, and (c) working to rebuild trust by showing understanding of the harm, addressing personal issues, and building positive social connections.

Restorative Justice Conferences (“Conferences”) provide an opportunity for participants to come together to address harmful behavior in a process that explores harms and needs, obligations, and necessary engagement. Conferences bring all parties together to meet, talk about what happened, and settle on a plan to repair the harm.*

Who’s involved?

- **Respondents**—the individuals whose actions have harmed others and/or the community
- **Complainants**—those who were directly harmed by the respondents’ actions
- **Affected Parties** (if applicable)—others who consider themselves or their community to have been harmed by the actions of the respondents
- **Supporting Parties**—support persons for either the respondents or the complainants
- **Facilitators**—trained staff who facilitate the Conference

Each participant will have at least one pre-conference meeting with the Facilitators. Then, at a typical Conference:

- Each person introduces themselves and their relationship within the Conference.
- **Respondents** share what happened before, during, and after the incident, and how they feel about what happened.
- **Complainants** and **Affected Parties** share what happened before, during, and after the incident, how they feel about what happened, and any questions they have.
- **Supporting Parties** are invited to share any thoughts or feelings about what they’ve heard.
- **Facilitators** will ask questions to help guide the process. Facilitators are *multi*partial, rather than *im*partial: they are committed to supporting and assisting all parties in helping each person tell their story well.
- Once everyone has spoken, the group will brainstorm a list of options for repairing the harm done.
- The facilitators will record the options chosen and compile the Resolution Agreement, which is signed by all parties.

*If parties do not feel comfortable coming together to discuss what happened, shuttle negotiation may be used. In shuttle negotiations, the facilitators meet separately with each party to talk about what happened, and settle on a plan to repair the harm. In this option, Respondents and Complainants will not directly interact with one another.