



“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation”

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a community-strengthening alternative to the current prison-industrial complex that has particularly ruined the lives of too many Black youths and young adults. It is an attempt to reverse the damaging impact of a criminal justice system that traditionally relied on a policy of punitive justice resulting in lengthy incarceration and the lifelong stigma of a criminal record. Restorative justice views crime not only as breaking the law, but also as violating the relationships among people in the community. The goal of restorative justice is to repair the relationships between the offender and the other members of the community.

Restorative justice involves three critical elements:

- (1) The offender must “own up” to the crime and commit to “making things right.”
- (2) The individual/s harmed by the crime are allowed to express how the crime has impacted their lives and have a voice in determining the restorative action plan,
- (3) The parties involved are assisted by community members (mediators) to identify measures that must be taken to repair the harm caused by the criminal acts.

Restorative justice programs across the U.S. have drastically reduced recidivism rates, increased the amount of compensation available to victims of crime, and avoided expensive incarcerations. Many parties have a stake in the success of restorative justice projects and the following actions support the successful transformation of our criminal justice system.

Legislative System:

- **Pass** legislation rescinding mandatory sentencing laws to give local judges independence to determine the most appropriate means for responding to criminal acts.
- **Fund** restorative justice programs with money that otherwise would be budgeted to support expensive incarcerations.
- **Fund** effective mental health services, school systems, job training programs, and job development projects which strongly support the goals of restorative justice programs for reducing recidivism.

Local Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice System:

- **Identify** and provide training, in collaboration with community groups, for individuals who express an interest in becoming restitution mediators.
- **Refer** all petty/non-violent/first-time offenders to community mediation as a pre-trial diversion and dismiss criminal charges. Consider the referral of cases involving more significant crimes on a case-by-case basis.

- **Balance** the need to protect the public safety, when considering sentencing, with respect for the action plan for restitution recommended by the community mediator.
- **Fund** compliance monitoring and case management services that confirm whether offenders are fulfilling their responsibilities for providing compensation, performing community service, and making progress with academic and/or employment goals.
- **Dismiss** criminal charges after completion of all components of the restorative justice action plan.

Community Mediators

- **Represent** and know the community's standards of behavior for building and maintaining peace.
- **Facilitate** the process in which victims and criminal offenders discuss the crime and its impact.
- **Develop** an action plan that will benefit *both* the victim and the offender.

Victims of Crime

- **Participate** in the restorative justice processes with the support provided by victim service centers.
- **Respect** the action plan recommended by the community mediators.

Offenders

- **Participate** fully in the restorative justice processes. Reflect on how criminal acts cause pain and loss in the lives of the victims.
- **Take** responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. Make suggestions regarding ways one could make amends for the crimes committed.
- **Respect** the recommendations of community mediators and commit to meeting the conditions of the action plan for making restitution.
- **Work** hard to achieve educational and/or employment goals intended to reduce the risk for recidivism. Ask for assistance from tutors, job coaches, and case managers when dealing with obstacles to set goals.

Parents / Guardians of Offenders

- **Request** that the offending child be offered an opportunity for restorative justice mediation.
- **Participate** fully in the restorative justice mediation processes.

- **Respect** the mediator's recommendations. Provide necessary authorizations for minors to participate in restorative activities.
- **Encourage** the offender to accomplish restorative activities.

Community Educational Institutions & Ecumenical Agencies

- **Engage** in community outreach to increase the awareness of, and provide support for, restorative justice processes as a viable alternative to the traditional punitive criminal justice system.
- **Provide** restorative justice training to community groups and individuals.

Foundations & Charitable Agencies

- Sponsor community outreach and education efforts to increase the awareness of and provide support for the use of restorative justice systems.
- Fund programs providing supplemental support to restorative justice systems including mental health and substance abuse treatment, remedial education, job training and job search assistance, and programs that provide opportunities for ex-offenders to perform community service and/or share their stories at forums that show the impact of crime on the community.