

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN CHESHIRE COUNTY

MISSION

To facilitate a community-based process of justice that engages all who have been affected by harm to seek solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and reassurance.



Restorative Justice in Cheshire County is a voluntary, confidential, accountability-based, and community-focused process based on the idea that all harmful acts are a violation of people, relationships, and community which create obligations to ***"make things right."***

REFERRAL CRITERIA

- The person who was harmed by the act must be a willing participant. Participation in the restorative justice process is always voluntary.
- The person who committed the harm must admit to the wrongdoing and be willing to demonstrate accountability for repairing the harm.

INITIAL INTERVIEW

Upon receiving a referral, separate interviews are scheduled with the affected individuals. The RJ team members explain the process, review the expectations and outcomes, and answer any questions or concerns that are raised. In terms of time, the restorative process can be completed within 45-60 days. If all individuals are willing to participate, an opening circle would be scheduled within 21 days following the interview. The initial interviews conclude with participants being asked to consider the following question prior to the opening circle: ***What do you think needs to be done in order to repair this harm for you?***

BENEFITS



The person who was harmed experiences a process of justice that empowers them as their voice is heard, their questions answered, and their needs fulfilled.

The person who committed the harm experiences a process of justice that supports them as they demonstrate accountability for repairing the harm done.

The community experiences a process of justice that promotes strategies for repairing and preventing acts of harm.

The legal community can offer a complementary process of justice that can occur in any criminal case (misdemeanors and felonies) and at any stage of the proceedings (pre-trial or post-conviction).

Because the restorative justice process is an "extra-judicial" initiative, how it affects the outcome of a criminal case would be determined on a case by case basis.



CIRCLE MEMBERS

Circle members include the people who were most directly affected by the harmful act, their support persons, the RJ team, and at least one community representative. Usually the circle is made up of 8-10 people.

Between each circle session, the RJ team members maintain regular and timely communications with the persons affected by the harm to ensure that their needs are met and obligations are fulfilled.

CIRCLE PROCESS

Circle 1: Harms & Obligations (60-90 minutes)

The opening circle focuses on understanding the harmful act, its impact on other people and relationships, and the resulting obligations that need to be fulfilled in order to repair the harm done. A detailed plan of restorative obligations and corresponding actions is identified and agreed upon. Depending upon the nature of the harm done and the needs of those who were harmed, all restorative obligations will be accountability-based and may include financial restitution, letters of apology, and community re-engagement projects.

Circle 2: Accountability (60 minutes)

This circle serves as a check-in and focuses on how well the person who committed the harm is doing in fulfilling their obligations. If the person needs help in resolving any barriers, circle members identify potential solutions and community resources, and offer appropriate guidance and support.

Circle 3: Reassurance (60 minutes)

In the final circle, all members reconvene to celebrate the obligations fulfilled, recognize the relationships that have been "made right", and provide assurance that this type of harm will never happen again.

IMAGINE

"My dream is of a justice system that consists of collaboration between lay people, the community, and justice professionals..."

All would ask restorative justice questions of each situation they encounter:

Who has been hurt?

What are their needs?

How can things be made right?

Who is responsible to meet those obligations?

Who has a stake, and how can they be involved in the resolution?"

– Howard Zehr

CONTACT INFORMATION

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