

Victim-Initiated Restorative Justice

A collaborative service provided by



Lutheran
Social
Services
of North Dakota



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice is a framework that engages victims, offenders and the community in repairing the harm caused by crime. It gives those most affected by crime options for participation in ways that promote healing. Restorative Justice seeks to restore victims of crime as much as possible, encourages accountability from the offender, and promotes safe and secure communities.

EXPANDED ROLE FOR VICTIMS

North Dakota began using restorative practices with juvenile offenders in the late 1990s. In 2010, the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) began a pilot project with Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota to provide restorative services for adult offenders and victims of their crimes. Because we are committed to victim-driven restorative justice, special attention is being given for victims to initiate services. While victim-initiated restorative practices may not be helpful or advisable for every situation, many have found it helpful to explore such practices after they have been a victim of a crime.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AVAILABLE

There are a number of options for communication between victims and offenders who are incarcerated or on parole/probation with the ND DOCR. Depending on the method chosen, various levels of preparation may be involved. Lutheran Social Services Restorative Justice maintains a staff of 25-30 statewide facilitators who are trained and available for these services.

Accountability Conferencing

Accountability Conferencing is a face-to-face meeting, in the presence of a trained facilitator, between the victim of a crime and the person who committed that crime. Before the Accountability Conference takes place, careful preparation is done with each participant. Participation is voluntary for all participants.

Accountability Conferencing provides a safe and structured setting for the offender and the victim to talk to each other about what happened, the effects of the crime on their lives, and their feelings about it. In some situations, the victim may choose to have family or other support persons involved in the process.

Other options are available if meeting face-to-face is not desirable. These options may include speaking through video or audio, or having written exchanges.

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

- Educate potential participants in pre-meetings about the opportunities offered by Restorative Justice so they can make an informed decision about whether to participate
- Create a safe atmosphere through preparation of participants, selection of physical space and facilitation of the Accountability Conference
- Listen to and support the needs of the victim and encourage accountability from the offender

GOALS AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Through these practices, crime victims have an opportunity to get answers to their questions about the crime and the person who committed it. It provides an opportunity to talk about what happened and may give the victim a sense of reassurance by having a choice in how they want to proceed with the process. Research indicates that victims who participate in victim offender mediations may receive more restitution and may feel safer and less fearful afterwards than those who do not.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you are a crime victim and want more information regarding victim-initiated restorative practices, please contact:

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The mission of the ND DOCR Restorative Justice Program is to create opportunities for offenders to repair the harm they caused to the victims of their crimes, to help reintegrate offenders as contributing members of society, and to increase opportunities for victim participation.