**Lamoille Precharge Program**

**Lamoille Restorative Center**

**Program Description**

**Purpose and Description**

* Precharge Program participants meet with community members and Precharge Program staff to talk about their offense.
* The Lamoille Precharge Program and program staff asks participants to take responsibility for the impact of their actions on individuals and the community at large.
* The Lamoille Precharge Program and program staff assists and empowers victims to share how they were impacted and what they think the participant could do to repair the harm.
* Lamoille Precharge Program participants actively engage in and complete a restorative process. Program participants will be asked to:
* Talk about their offense and describe what happened;
* Talk about what they were thinking about as the offense was taking place and what they have thought about since;
* Talk about who has been affected by their offense and in what way; and
* Agree to a contract focused on addressing the harm with input and guidance from victims, community board members and program staff.

**Target Population**

(A) Members of the community who are first time participants and who have committed civil offense or a low level non-violent crime.

(B) Members of the community with a substance use or mental health problem who have committed a crime and agree to engage immediately in treatment.

**Description of Program Operations**

* **Referral sources:** Lamoille County State's Attorney and Lamoille County Law Enforcement.
* **The referring agency will:** 
  + Give LRC the person’s name, date of birth, address and telephone number;
  + Give LRC copies of affidavits; and
  + Give the person a “Notice to Report” to the LRC Precharge Program.
* **LRC will:**
* Meet with the participant to learn more about them and the crime.
* Use evidenced-based risk assessments and need screenings to determine appropriate supports and interventions.
  + Youth: Youth Assessment Screening Instrument
  + Adults: Mini Modified mental health screening and the Simple Screening Instrument for Substance Abuse.
* Contact victims and invite them to participate. Victims receive a letter and a phone call. LRC explains that they may participate in person, on the phone, in writing, or not at all. If the person participates by questionnaire, LRC verbally shares that information with the participant with permission from the victim.
* Facilitate restorative panels with trained volunteers from the Lamoille County community.
* Communicate with the participant during the contract period to provide support and ensure that they are able to complete each condition.
* Obtain a new citation for those referred from *Target Population (B)* from the State’s Attorney and Pretrial Monitor.
* Communicate in writing with the referring agency upon case closure.
* Track referrals and case disposition.
* **Program participants will:**
* Take responsibility for their violation.
* Meet with program staff and the restorative panel while under contract.
* Pay a program fee.
* Successfully complete their agreement or have their case returned to the referring agency.
* **Program volunteers will:**
* Arrive on time and attend meetings regularly.
* Maintain confidentiality.
* Attend and participate in all trainings required by VT DOC and by LRC.
* Communicate with fellow board members, participants and LRC staff in a respectful way; and
* Acknowledge the needs of the participant, the victim and the community in each situation that comes before them.

**Methods and Design**

Services are provided by the LRC community members and staff. The volunteer board is made up of a group of three or more trained volunteer community members. The volunteer board and staff meet with the offender and offers support to victims. The precharge program generally takes place over three scheduled meetings:

* The intake: A meeting with program staff to talk about what happened and to administer appropriate screenings. The intake provides an opportunity for the participant to express a willingness to take responsibility and learn about ways to repair the harm.

*The participant will then be scheduled to meet directly with their victim or with a board of community members as outlined below.*

* First restorative meeting: A meeting with program staff and community board to develop the restorative agreement.

*The first few minutes of the meeting are spent getting to know the individual and building rapport. Victim impact information is shared. If there is no victim participation, the community board represents how the community was affected. Together, the group creates a contract that the program participant has 90-days to complete.*

* Final restorative meeting: A meeting with program staff. The participant hands in all completed conditions of the agreement.

**Working with Victims**

Within seven business days of receipt of the participant's signed application agreement, LRC will send a letter informing any victim named in the case that the referred participant has applied to participate in the Precharge Program. LRC will invite the victim to participate in the process. The letter to the victim will contain the following information:

* That the State’s Attorney has referred the case to the precharge program.
* The name and contact information for a specific person at LRC.
* Information about precharge.
* A blank victim impact statement.

LRC will contact the State's Attorney Victim Advocate upon referral, to gather information.

While the case is open, LRC will maintain communication with any victim named in the case to the degree the victim wants to receive it. The victim may continue to receive support from the Victim Advocate in the State’s Attorney’s Office if they choose to do so. Upon request, LRC will inform victims of:

* The restorative panel meeting date(s).
* Status of the participant’s case and status regarding any requirements that relate directly to the victim.
* Whether the participant completed the program successfully or was returned to court.

**Upon successful completion**

If the participant completes the program, LRC informs the victim that the participant successfully completed the program. LRC provides information on steps the participant has taken to repair the harm.

**If the case is returned unsuccessfully**

If participant does not complete the program, LRC informs the victim. The letter contains the following information and is copied to the Lamoille County State's Attorney's Victim Advocate:

* That the case has been returned to the State’s Attorney Office.
* Conditions of the participant's agreement that were met and not met.
* Contact information for the State’s Attorneys Victim Advocate.

Any victim information gathered prior to any unsuccessful return is provided to the State's Attorney Victim Advocate. The State’s Attorneys Victim Advocate will take over supporting the victim.

**Working with Volunteer Board Members**

Volunteers receive training as determined by the Restorative Programs Director. Volunteers attend at least two Restorative Panel meetings and observe, and will meet with LRC staff prior to joining the board.

* **Board Process:** an overview of the restorative panel process;
* **Restorative Justice: principles and practice;**
* **Risk, Need, & Responsivity:** an overview of the core principals of effective intervention;
* **Developing affective and restorative contracts;**
* **Working With Participants:** an overview of identifying strengths, youth culture, diversity, and gender differences;
* **Motivational Interviewing:** an overview of stages of change, core MI principals and engaging individuals in dialog**; and**
* **The Criminal Justice System:** an overview of the criminal justice system.
* Other trainings as determined by the VT Department of Corrections and LRC.

**Outcomes and Measures**

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| **Outcome** | **Measure** |
| **Victim** | |
| Victims participate at whatever level they are comfortable. | Questionnaires, meetings with Precharge staff members, face-to-face meetings with the person responsible for the harm. |
| Victims believe that they were heard and all attempts were made to reach a resolution they were satisfied with. | Victim survey. |
| **Community** | |
| Community members are involved and have the ability to impact crime. | Volunteer hours contributed by community members will be tracked. |
| Volunteers receive training and support. | Volunteers receive training from DOC and LRC. |
| Community benefits from those referred as they learn new ways to interact with their community. | Hours and types of positive community interaction will be tracked. |
| **Participant** | |
| Restorative justice principles are at the core of the program. | Contracts focus on making amends to victims and community. |
| Reduce the risk to re-offend by addressing any mental health or substance use problems related to the crime. | Substantial compliance with any treatment recommendations.  Participant survey. |
| Participants repair relationships and engage positively in the community. | Participants participate in meetings, agree to contract items that repair relationships and contribute their time in meaningful ways to the community. Participants complete agreements within the allotted time. |