

# The Restorative Justice Alternative

## What It Is

The Restorative Justice Alternative Program encourages people responsible for an offense and those who were affected by it to take an active role in determining what should happen as a result. Restorative responses to crime look at the effect on others and on the community and stress the importance of repairing harm and restoring relations.

To be accepted into the program, the person who committed an offense is expected to

- n **Admit wrongdoing and talk about it**
- n **Learn about the effects of the crime on others**
- n **Work with others to design and carry out a plan to make amends and to make better choices in the future.**

People affected by an offense are invited to participate directly or indirectly to

- n **Talk about what happened and how they have been harmed**
- n **Seek answers to questions**
- n **Have a say about what it will take to make things better.**

In some cases, where an offense is committed as a result of poor conflict resolution skills, parties may be referred to

- n **Complete a conflict resolution class**
- n **Participate in mediation, if appropriate**

## How It Helps

People affected by an offense have choices and a voice. People who participate are more likely to report that they feel the matter is settled than those who do not.

People who commit offenses get a chance to make an informed apology, make amends and learn new things that may help them develop an internal motivation to refrain from offending.

The community is strengthened when it provides a way for healing to happen.

## What It Costs

Persons accepted into the Restorative Justice Alternative Program are charged a non-refundable administrative fee.

## How It Works

School officials, the police, the State's Attorney or the courts may refer a person to participate in the Restorative Justice Alternative Program.

A Community Justice Center representative talks to the person who offended and the people affected by the offense to try to fully understand what happened and to choose the most appropriate restorative response.

Typically, the person who offended will complete one or more of the following activities:

- n Participate in educational programs
- n Attend a victim impact panel
- n Pay restitution
- n Write letters of explanation and apology
- n Perform community service

People affected by an offense choose whether to participate, and how. People responsible for an offense may either complete the program or face criminal charges and go to court.

If the person responsible for the offense chooses to participate in the Restorative Justice Alternative, the matter will be dealt with in one of these ways:

**1. A Restorative Conference:** The person who offended, those who were affected, and supporters of each come together for a carefully planned meeting arranged by the Community Justice Center and managed by a facilitator.

**2. The Reparative Board Program:** The person who offended meets with a group of trained community volunteers to create a plan to learn more about the harm, complete activities for making amends and develop ways to avoid re-offending.

**3. Conflict Education:** The person who is referred attends the two-part *Insights Into Conflict* class; participates in mediation, if appropriate; and contributes positively to the community through volunteering.