

# Smarter Solutions for Crime Reduction: The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Strategic Planning Initiative

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**R**estorative justice is a philosophy based on a set of principles that serve to guide the response to conflict or harm. In contrast to retributive and rehabilitative justice strategies that focus primarily on the offender (including relying on punishment and treatment, respectively, to change offender behavior), restorative justice provides a framework by which the system can respond more holistically to offenders and their victims and the communities in which they live (Ashley & Stevenson, 2006).

Restorative justice principles can guide responses to conflicts in many settings, not just those caused by a violation of law. The goal of the philosophy is to balance the needs of three parties—those identified as offenders or law violators, the crime victim, and the affected community (Ashley & Stevenson, 2006). Although developed with the juvenile justice system in mind, the principles and components set forth within the restorative justice philosophy are quickly being integrated into adult justice system practices.

### Restorative justice principals

The principles of restorative justice are:

- Crime is injury.
- Crime harms individual victims, communities, and offenders, and creates an obligation to address that harm.
- All parties should have an opportunity to respond to the crime, including victims, the community, and the offender.
- The victim's perspective is central in deciding how the harm should be repaired.
- Offender accountability means accepting responsibility for and acting to repair the harm done.

- The community is responsible for the well-being of its members, including both victim and offender.
- All human beings have dignity and worth.
- Restoration, repairing the harm, and rebuilding community relationships is the primary goal of restorative justice.
- Results are measured by how much repair was done rather than how much punishment was handed out.
- A high degree of crime control cannot be achieved without active community involvement.
- The justice process is respectful of age, abilities, sexual orientation, family status, and diverse cultures and backgrounds, whether racial, ethnic, geographic, religious, economic, or other. All are given equal protection and due process (Ashley & Stevenson, 2006).

### Evidence for restorative justice

Research has shown that restorative justice:

- Offers a more cost-effective means to handle crime over the traditional court system (NCSA, 2001).
- Significantly reduces recidivism rates (Latimer, et. al., 2001).
  - Reduction of recidivism rates prior to 1996 were at 4 percent as opposed to 25 percent after 1995 (Petr, 2009).
- Increases satisfaction of victims (Nugent, et. al., 2004; Maxwell & Morris, 2004) and offenders with the justice system (Umbreit, 1998).
- Improves competencies of offenders (Roberts, 2005).
- Increases completion of restitution agreements (Umbreit, 1998).

- Positively impacts victim motivations and emotions, with restorative justice decreasing unforgiving motivations and anger and increasing positive responses to the offender (Witvliet, et. al., 2008).
- Can decrease reconviction rates and is effective in both adult and juvenile criminal justice systems (Maxwell & Morris, 2004).
- Utilizes mediation. This provides a humanistic approach and is considered more effective than court processes (Petr, 2009).
- Increases community involvement (CITE).
- Provides individualized attention and services for offenders and their victims (CITE).
- Lessens the fear felt by victims of crime (Roberts, 1995). In many areas, restorative justice is prohibited from being used to address crimes against women (Ptacek, 2010).

### Restorative justice resources

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority has published a set of profession-specific balanced and restorative justice guidebooks. They include:

***Implementing balanced and restorative justice: A guide for prosecutors***

<http://www.icjia.org/public/pdf/BARJ/BARJprosecutors.pdf>

***Implementing balanced and restorative justice: A guide for law enforcement officers***

<http://www.icjia.org/public/pdf/BARJ/BARJ%20law%20enforcement.pdf>

***Implementing balanced and restorative justice: A guide for defense attorneys***

<http://www.icjia.org/public/pdf/BARJ/BARJdefense.pdf>

### Other resources

The Balanced and Restorative Justice Project  
Florida Atlantic University  
111 E. Las Olas Blvd.  
Askew Tower, Suite 613

Ft. Lauderdale FL 33304  
Phone: 954-762-5668  
E-mail: odixon@fau.edu  
Website: [www.barjproject.org](http://www.barjproject.org)

Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking  
School of Social Work  
University of Minnesota  
1404 Gortner Ave., 105 Peters Hall  
St. Paul, MN 55108-6160  
Phone: 612-624-4923  
E-mail: rip@che.umn.edu  
Website: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/rjp/>

International Institute for Restorative Practices  
P.O. Box 229  
Bethlehem, PA 18016  
Phone: 610-807-9221  
E-mail: info@restorativepractices.org  
Website: [www.iirp.org](http://www.iirp.org)

National Youth Court Center  
c/o American Probation and Parole Association  
P.O. Box 11910  
Lexington, KY 40578-1910  
Phone: 859-244-8193  
E-mail: nycc@csg.org  
Website: [www.youthcourt.net](http://www.youthcourt.net)  
Youth website: <http://www.youthcourt.net/>

Restorative Justice Online  
Prison Fellowship International Centre for Justice and Reconciliation  
P.O. Box 17434  
Washington, DC 20041  
Phone: 703-481-0000  
E-mail: rjonline@pfi.org  
Website: [www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)

### References

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