

Restorative Justice Services

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Restorative Justice (RJ) is an approach to addressing conflict and crime that focuses on empowering: the person who caused harm, the people impacted by the harm, and the community to create a solution. RJ practitioners focus on:

- 1.) What harm has been done?
- 2.) Who has been harmed and what are their needs?
- 3.) Who has caused harm and what are their obligations to repair the harm? What are their needs to be able to heal relationships?

Traditional criminal justice approaches focus on placing blame for law violations and doling out appropriate punishment for those violations. Through the restorative justice lens, we seek to address the needs of the victim, offender, and community in delinquency matters while also building responsibility, accountability, and relationships. This lens allows victims and community members to be central to creating the solutions to resolve the harm done. The offender is held accountable by taking responsibility for their actions and working to repair the harm done. This lens also allows for the community to support not only the victim in getting their needs met, but also the offender in building their capacity to repair the hurt in their community. This support from the community, when focused on youth who have committed an offense, is called Positive Youth Justice.

Positive Youth Justice is a comprehensive framework for supporting the development of adolescents as they make a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.¹ This model asserts that youth need the opportunity to learn new skills, take on new roles and responsibilities, develop self-efficacy, become an active member of pro-social groups, develop and also enjoy a sense of belonging, and begin to place value on serving others in the larger community. This means that restorative justice practitioners working with victims, communities, youth, and their families also must focus on linking youth with the supports and services needed to increase their capacity to take responsibility and do the work of healing the harm from their behavior.

The Restorative Justice team for Lucas County Juvenile Court is responsible for the implementation and facilitation

of Restorative Justice Circles, Positive Youth Justice Opportunities, and Community Service Opportunities.

RJ Circles Explained

The circle is a dialog process that works intentionally to create a safe space to discuss very difficult or painful issues in order to improve relationships and resolve differences. The intent of the circle is to find resolutions that serve every member of the circle. The process is based on an assumption of equal worth and dignity for all participants and therefore provides equal voice to all participants. Every participant has gifts to offer in finding a good solution to the problem.

The circle process is deliberate in discussing how the conversation will be held before discussing the difficult issues. Consequently, the circle works on values and guidelines before talking about the differences or conflict. Where possible the circle also works on relationship building before discussing the difficult issues.

From The Circle Keepers Handbook by Kay Pranis

The Restorative Justice Peace Circle program was started in Lucas County in 2016 as an approach to address conflict and crime that focuses on empowering the person who caused harm, people impacted by the harm, and the community to create a solution. The program is open to any youth, family, victim, or community supports that are seeking to resolve a conflict or crime through a facilitated and supported discussion.

Accomplishments

2018 was a year of growth and expansion for the Restorative Justice Team here at LCJC! At the start of 2018, our team set out to engage more delinquency offenses in the Peace Circle Process, develop protocol to engaging families and victims, and engage more community partners to provide service learning opportunities for youth in the juvenile

¹ Butts, Jeffrey A., Gordon Bazemore, & Aundra Saa Meroe (2010) Positive Youth Justice—Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development. Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

justice system. The Court is pleased to share to the Lucas County community that we met our goals for last year. As a team we were able to engage more youth, families, communities, and victims in the Peace Circle process to find solutions to delinquency matters that included and empowered all of the parties impacted by a youth's offense. We reached out to more community partners to support, train, and inspire restorative justice practices in a variety of settings where youth and families are served. More of our court-involved youth participated in positive community events and volunteered their time to give back to our community in an effort to repair the harm they have done. Finally, we have focused on sustainability of restorative justice practices through development of procedures, drafting curricula, and fiscal support.

In calendar year 2018 there were 141 youth referred to the RJ Peace Circles Program with the most common referral being for Safe School Ordinance Violation. The most referrals due to Safe School Ordinance came from Rogers, Woodward, and Start High Schools. Of these 141 youth, 72 were male, 65 were female, and 4 youth gender demographics were not listed. During the course of 2018 the Restorative Justice Team closed 122 referrals with 57% of these being closed with a successful resolution. The remaining 43% of closures either could not successfully reach consensus on a solution or the youth and family refused to participate. The Restorative Justice Coordinator successfully developed a procedure for receiving and processing referrals including victim notification, family engagement, and case closure to ensure all parties are informed during the course of services. Finally, the Court has successfully utilized grant dollars to be able to offer trained Circle facilitators a stipend for their work in the Peace Circle Program.

Additionally, the Community Development Leader worked throughout 2018 to engage youth in Community Service or Positive Youth Justice Opportunities in an effort to connect justice involved youth with pro-social opportunities in the community. As a result justice involved youth participated in 16 pro-social community events and provided over 300 hours of community service aimed to teach youth new skills while nurturing a sense of belonging in the community.

The Community Development Leader also successfully led the facilitation of an all-girls Boat Building and Girls Circle Program during the summer months. The Girls Circle program is an evidenced based structured support group for girls that reduces risk taking behaviors while building self-efficacy skills. The Boat Building Program is a program where youth work with a boat building instructor to hand build a 14 foot cedar strip canoe. The canoe is fully functional including hand woven cane seats and oars. In 2018, in addition to building the canoe, the girls participated in Girls Circle facilitated by the Community Development Leader and a Social Work intern from Bowling Green State University. The Girls

Circle met once a week for 8 weeks with each week having a structured discussion around topics such as "Who I Am," "How I Relate", and "Personal Growth/Assertiveness"².

Further, 2018 marked the second year the Lucas County Juvenile Court has collaborated with Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and The Junction Coalition to build restorative justice oriented, safe spaces in the community for youth. In 2017 the partnership between The Junction Coalition, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and Lucas County Juvenile Court led to the pilot of the Circles and Verses Program; a community based program that infuses elements of circle, music, dance, and civic engagement to serve at risk youth primarily in the 43607, 43608, and 43609 area codes. These zip codes were selected due to the high number of delinquency filings in Juvenile Court. Referrals to the Circles and Verses Program more than doubled from 2017 to 2018 with 50 youth being served in 2018.

Additionally, the staff and circle facilitators from The Junction Coalition took part in a 4-day training on implementing Girls Circle and Boys Council; 2 gender specific structured support groups for youth that reduce risky behaviors. Girls Circle and Boys Council training was facilitated by One Circle Foundation whose mission is to promote resiliency in children, youth, families, adults, and communities by offering circle program models that create, restore, and sustain healthy relationships (<https://onecirclefoundation.org/mission.aspx>). This training and subsequent implementation of programming seeks to provide research-informed, gender specific programming to young people at risk or involved in the juvenile justice system. In addition to the facilitators from Circles and Verses the Restorative Justice Team was honored to have participation in the training from Center of Hope Family Services, Toledo Mennonite Church, LCJC Mediation Department, and LCJC Youth Treatment Center.



A youth and her parents stand behind the cedar strip canoe completed in the work space at Sofia Quintero Art and Cultural Center.

² Hossfeld, Beth & Giovanna Taormina (2009). Who I Am: 8-Week Facilitator Activity Guide Girls Circle. San Rafael, CA: One Circle Foundation.



Moving Forward

While 2018 was an incredible year of growth, LCJC looks forward to spending 2019 refining programming and opportunities, deepening community engagement, and further expanding restorative justice opportunities to the community.

Lucas County Juvenile Court is collaborating with national consultants to pilot the SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression) Initiative with the goal of ensuring that LCJC is informed and responsive to the needs of LGBTQ and Gender Non-Conforming youth in the justice system. As such the Community Development Leader will be focusing community outreach efforts on engaging support networks, advocates, and organizations serving LGBTQ and Gender Non-Conforming young people. This focused outreach is to ensure that Court staff have the appropriate resources available to make referrals and engage community partners in serving the needs of our youth.

Additionally, the Community Development Leader will be continuing to support and facilitate linking youth involved in the justice system with positive, pro-social, and service opportunities in the community. In 2019, the Restorative Justice Team will aim to exceed the more than 300 community service hours youth provided to the Lucas County community in 2018.

In the Peace Circle Program, the Restorative Justice Coordinator will continue to refine programming to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of participants. This will include developing and piloting satisfaction surveys for participants to provide the Court with feedback on opportunities to strengthen the program. The program will also research and collaborate to investigate opportunities to expedite serving Safe School Ordinance Violations. The goal of this is to ensure students returning to school after a Safe School Ordinance Violation are prepared to re-engage safely and successfully in the learning environment as quickly as possible.

Further, Lucas County Juvenile Court will continue researching restorative justice programming and training facilitators to ensure the Lucas County community has best practices in the field of juvenile justice available to our youth. The Restorative Justice Coordinator will be researching Peace Circle and Conferencing models and/or programs from other jurisdictions to expand restorative justice options for youth, victims, and the community. The Court is also planning a facilitation training to recruit more Peace Circle Facilitators and improve capacity to quickly serve individuals referred to the program.

Finally, Lucas County Juvenile Court is continuing to develop and pilot opportunities for expanded Girls Circle and Boys Council programming. Boys Council programming is being piloted in the Juvenile Detention Facility to engage the young men in activities and dialogue that will increase their social and emotional literacy. Girls Circle will continue to be an in-

tegral part of the Boat Building program in the summer of 2019. The Restorative Justice Team is also exploring opportunities to expand Girls Circle and/or Boys Council to youth in the community outside of the juvenile justice system.

The Restorative Justice Team looks forward to serving our colleagues and our community in the upcoming year.

Positive Youth Justice Partners:

- Toledo Bikes!
- Michael Claus - Boat Building Instructor
- ToledoGROWS
- Youth Advocate Program
- Sofia Quintero Art and Cultural Center
- University of Toledo - Renee Obrock
- Toledo Museum of Art
- Oregon Fest
- Ohlman Farms
- Ohio Theater
- Open Arms Community Center

Peace Circle Sites:

- Toledo Lucas County Public Library
- Worship Center Church
- Sylvania Schools
- Toledo Mennonite Church
- Frederick Douglass Community Association