

Minnesota Department of Corrections Restorative Justice Initiative

Possible steps in developing community involvement in a restorative justice initiative

1. Gather information about restorative justice and possible models in community.
2. Educate yourself about the community you will be or are working with.
3. Identify credible leaders in the community or neighborhood, attend community gatherings, read local papers, ask local residents about issues and leaders.
4. Educate yourself about victim services in the community; establish contact with those services.
5. Clarify your own goals and values in approaching the community. (What are you trying to achieve? What is important to you about what you are doing and how you do it?)
6. Assess potential support in the criminal justice system and educate key leaders about restorative justice
7. Working with community leaders plan informational sessions to explore community interest. Invite participation by victims representatives.
8. At each session recruit volunteers who would like to be involved in creating a new approach in the community based on restorative values.
9. Form a task force or steering committee including community members, key system representatives and victim representatives to begin exploring options and creating an approach tailored to that community. Seek a way to allow membership in the planning group for any interested party. Take time to identify underlying values of the group and discuss the shared values which will guide the community based process. Shared values will become the foundation for working together from very different perspectives.
10. Continue sharing information with the community and gathering community input, especially from community subgroups who are not usually involved in decision making.
11. Seek out information on existing processes in the community which might be a foundation for restorative approaches.
12. Recruit additional community members to participate in the process, making sure all key stakeholders are represented (victims, offenders, communities of color, young people, elderly, low income residents, churches or other faith organizations)
13. Provide basic training on the justice system, restorative justice, conflict resolution, community building.
14. Through the participatory task force activities choose specific strategies or processes to be piloted in the community and develop a plan for implementation.
15. Share the plan with the community and system and get feedback. Be sure to identify links between the plan and the underlying shared values. Make adjustments as appropriate based on feedback.
16. Provide training for both criminal justice system staff and community members in the process(es) chosen for implementation.
17. Develop referral system and protocols, etc.
18. Clarify responsibilities of all parties.
19. Pilot several cases.