

SECURE FACILITIES AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Prisons, jails, juvenile facilities or similar forms of secure custody are still necessary in the restorative justice framework. One of the harms of crime is the loss of a sense of safety in the community. In order to restore a sense of safety in the community it is necessary to hold violent predatory offenders away from the community.

However, even when offenders are in a prison or jail setting there are still ways to implement a restorative justice approach. For example:

1. Providing information to crime victims/survivors, for instance, about movement of the offender from one facility to another, and eligibility for release. The need of victims to know is much greater than people not in that situation would assume.
2. Offenders can participate in community service projects even while in prison or a juvenile facility and in that way make a contribution to the community.
3. Inmates who work in prison industry can pay restitution and in that way repair some of the harm they caused.
4. Victim sensitivity classes and victim/offender awareness groups can be conducted in prison to encourage offenders to take responsibility and understand the harm their victims experienced. Appropriate apology letters can be developed for storage in an apology letter bank in case the victim wants to receive the letter.
5. Support by the prison system for community based programs which come into the facility (AMICUS, prison ministries, AA) helps maintain bonds between the community and the offender, and can make the offender's transition back to the community more successful.
6. Classes, training, treatment (GED, vocational, college, anger management, parenting, cognitive skills, chemical dependency treatment, sex offender treatment) all build offender competency which increases the offender's potential to function as a law abiding citizen.
7. Involving community volunteers, community businesses in some way, for instance, advisory groups, assistance with special events, transition planning, etc. strengthens community/facility partnerships and communication.
8. Facilitating maintenance of family/community ties through supportive visiting policies can minimize breaking of bonds.

Moving Toward Restorative Justice: Guiding Questions

In secure facilities - whether dealing with harm committed outside or inside the facility, - as in communities, change toward a more restorative response to crime is guided by the following questions:

- How can we increase opportunity for victim involvement in defining harm and possible ways to repair the harm?
- How can we acknowledge the harm to the victims and confirm that the victim is not responsible for what happened?
- How can we increase offender awareness of injury to the victim and the community?
- How can we encourage offender acknowledgement of the wrongness of the behavior?
- How can we involve the offender in repairing the harm?
- How can the community provide opportunities for the offender to repair harm?
- How can the community send messages of disapproval while not banishing offenders?
- How can the community be involved in the process of holding offenders accountable?
- How can we ensure that the offender leaves the system more competent to function effectively in the community?
- How can we increase connections between the offender and conventional community members?