
APPENDIX H

BALANCED AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE STRATEGIES

Following is a listing of generally accepted balanced and restorative justice strategies. Balanced and restorative justice strategies may be used at the discretion of the principal in lieu of, or in addition to, certain other interventions set forth in the SCC, when all parties voluntarily agree to participate and the appropriate resources are available to support a meaningful effort. This list is not exhaustive of all balanced and restorative justice strategies.

Circles **(Also called Peacemaking Circles, Circles of Understanding)**

Circles - sometimes called peacemaking circles - use traditional circle ritual and structure to involve the victim, victim supporters, the offender, offender supporters, police, and all interested community members. Within the circle, people can speak from the heart in a shared search for understanding of the event, and together identify the steps necessary to assist in healing all affected parties and prevent future offenses.

Circles typically involve a multi-step procedure that includes: (1) application by the offender to participate in the circle process; (2) a healing circle for the victim; (3) a healing circle for the offender; (4) a circle to develop consensus on the elements of a healing plan; and (5) follow-up circles to monitor the progress of the offender. The healing plan may incorporate commitments by the school, community, and family members, as well as by the offender. Specifics of the circle process vary from community to community and are designed locally to fit community needs and culture. Circles also may be used in schools to improve school culture and build relationships.

Goals

The goals of circles include:

- Promote healing for all affected parties
- Provide an opportunity for the offender to make amends
- Empower victims, community members, families, and offenders

by giving them a voice and a shared responsibility in finding constructive resolutions

- Address the underlying causes of offense behavior
- Build a sense of community and its capacity for resolving conflict
- Promote and share community values
- Improve school culture

Implementation

A successful circle process depends upon a healthy partnership between the school and the community. Participants from both need training and skill building in the circle process, peacemaking, and consensus building. The school can subsequently customize the circle process to fit local resources and culture.

Circles are not appropriate for all offenses. The connection of the offender to the community, the sincerity and nature of the offender's efforts to be healed, the input of victims, and the dedication of the offender's support group are key factors in determining whether a case is appropriate for the circle process.

Community Service

Community service is work performed by an offender for the benefit of the school community as a formal or informal sanction. Just as neighborhoods and school communities are harmed by criminal and delinquent activities, they can be at least partially restored by meaningful service that contributes to their improvement. Community service offers one way an offender can be held accountable to repair some of the harm caused by his or her criminal or delinquent actions.

Goals

The goals of community service are to:

- Hold offenders accountable for the harm they have caused to the school community
- Provide school communities with human resources that can assist in maintaining a positive school climate
- Allow victims a voice and occasionally some direct benefit by recommending the type of community service performed

Implementation

Successful community service programs require a true partnership. Offenders in a school community can enhance efforts of the community by providing meaningful contributions. Examples of community service include: programs that beautify a community's environment

such as cleanup efforts or graffiti removal. Truly restorative community service offers crime victims the opportunity to provide input into the types of community service they would like to see the offender perform, including activities that directly benefit the victim or a charity or project of the victim's choice.

Peer Juries

(Also called Youth, Teen and Student Courts)

Peer Juries are programs in which youth work together with youthful offenders, victims and the community which is most often the school setting, to repair harm, build competencies and help to create safer schools and/or communities. Youth Courts typically are set up in different configurations resembling courts, while peer juries often resemble BARJ models of Peacemaking Circles or Community Panels. They usually deal with minor delinquent and other problem behaviors.

Most programs require youth to admit guilt or accept responsibility prior to participation. When the program or disposition is completed, charges or consequences are typically dismissed. Agencies operating and administering youth court programs include juvenile courts, juvenile probation departments, law enforcement, private nonprofit organizations, and schools.

Goals

The goals of peer juries are to:

- Determine a fair and restorative sentence or disposition
- Supervise the disposition and monitor the outcome

Implementation

Successful peer juries consist of students who are trained in restorative justice practices, including circles, conferencing and community panels. Students who participate in peer jury sessions as victims, offenders or community members should be encouraged to participate as volunteers on subsequent panels.

Restorative Group Conferencing (Also called Family Group Conferencing or Accountability Conferencing)

Restorative group conferencing involves the community of people most affected by the offense — the victim and the offender; and the family, friends and key supporters of both — in deciding the resolution of an incident. These affected parties are brought together by a trained facilitator to discuss how they and others have been harmed

by the offense and how that harm might be repaired. To participate, the offender must admit to the offense. Participation by all involved is voluntary. The facilitator contacts the victim and offender to explain the process and invites them to the conference; the facilitator also asks them to identify key members of their support systems, who will be invited to participate as well.

The conference typically begins with the offender describing the incident, followed by each participant describing the impact of the incident on his or her life. It is preferable to allow the victim to start the discussion, if they wish. Through these narrations, the offender is faced with the human impact of the behavior on the victim, on those close to the victim, and on the offender's own family and friends. The victim has the opportunity to express feelings and ask questions about the incident. After a thorough discussion of the impact of the behavior on those present, the victim is asked to identify desired outcomes from the conference, and thus help to shape the obligations that will be placed on the offender. All participants may contribute to the problem-solving process of determining how the offender might best repair the harm he or she has caused. The session ends with participants signing an agreement outlining their expectations and commitments.

Goals

The goals of restorative group conferencing include:

- Provide an opportunity for the victim to be directly involved in the discussion of the offense and in decisions regarding appropriate sanctions to be placed on the offender
- Increase the offender's awareness of the human impact of his or her behavior and provide an opportunity to take full responsibility for it
- Engage the collective responsibility of the offender's support system for making amends and shaping the offender's future behavior
- Allow both offender and victim to reconnect to key community support systems

Implementation

In implementing any restorative conferencing program, the facilitators, who may be students or school personnel, must be trained in conferencing preparation techniques. It is critically important that the facilitator do everything possible to ensure that neither the victims nor offenders are harmed in any way. Additionally, the victim's participation must be completely voluntary, as should the participation of

the offender. Whenever possible, the victim should be given choices concerning decisions such as when and where the conferencing session will take place, who will be present, who will speak first, etc. The facilitator should conduct in person, pre-conferencing sessions with both parties and make follow-up contacts, including the monitoring of any agreement reached.

Victim Impact Panels

Victim impact panels provide a forum for victims to tell a group of offenders about the impact of the offense on their lives and on the lives of their families, friends, and neighbors. Panels typically involve three or four victim speakers, each of whom spends about 15 minutes telling their story in a nonjudgmental, non-blaming manner. The offenders of the victim presenters are not present. While some time is usually dedicated to questions and answers, the purpose of the panel is for the victims to speak, rather than for the victims and offenders to engage in a dialogue.

Goals

The goals of victim impact panels are to:

- Help offenders understand the impact of their offenses on victims and communities
- Provide victims with a structured, positive outlet to share their personal experiences and to educate offenders, and others about the physical, emotional and financial consequences of offenses
- Build a partnership among victim service providers and community agencies that can raise the individual and community awareness of the short- and long-term impacts of crime

Implementation

Many criminal and juvenile justice agencies have institutionalized victim impact panels as a sentencing option. Victim service organizations either implement the program for the court, or work in collaboration with justice personnel to conduct panels. Whatever the structure, victim service agencies are usually best prepared to perform the critically important role of screening victims to ensure they are sufficiently healed from their victimization experience not to be re-traumatized by participating in the panel. Other implementation tasks are to prepare the victims for participation, moderate the panels, gather participant feedback information, and provide records of participants and program activities to the sentencing authority.

Victim Offender Conferencing (Also called Victim-Offender Mediation, or Victim-Offender Dialogue)

Victim offender mediation is a process that provides interested victims an opportunity to meet their offender, in a safe and structured setting, and engage in a mediated discussion of the offense. With the assistance of a trained mediator, the victim is able to tell the offender about the offense's physical, emotional and financial impact; to receive answers to lingering questions about the offense and the offender; and to be directly involved in developing a restitution plan for the offender to pay back his or her financial debt.

This process is different from mediation as it is practiced in civil or commercial disputes, since the involved parties are not "disputants" nor of similar status - with one an admitted offender and the other the victim. Also, the process is not primarily focused upon reaching a settlement, although most sessions do, in fact, result in a signed restitution agreement. Because of these fundamental differences with standard mediation practices, some programs call the process a victim offender "dialogue," "meeting," or "conference."

Goals

The goals of victim offender mediation include:

- Support the healing process of victims by providing a safe and controlled setting for them to meet and speak with the offender on a strictly voluntary basis
- Allow the offender to learn about the impact of the offense on the victim and to take direct responsibility for their behavior
- Provide an opportunity for the victim and offender to develop a mutually acceptable plan that addresses the harm caused by the offense

Implementation

In implementing any victim offender mediation program, it is critically important to maintain sensitivity to the needs of the victim. First and foremost, the mediator must do everything possible to ensure that the victim will not be harmed in any way. Additionally, the victim's participation must be completely voluntary, as should the participation of the offender. The victim should also be given choices, whenever possible, concerning decisions such as when and where the mediation session will take place, who will be present, who will speak first, etc. Cases should be carefully screened regarding the readiness of both victim and offender to participate. The mediator should conduct in person, pre-mediation sessions with both parties and make follow-up contacts, including the monitoring of any agreement reached.