

What is the Peacemaking Court?

The Washtenaw County Peacemaking Court Program is a model created to replace the limitations of an adversarial court system with more comprehensive, harmonious and balanced solutions that integrate the repairing of harm, healing of relationships, and restoration of the individual within their family and community.

Honoring tribal court traditions, the Washtenaw County Peacemaking Court Program integrates four intrinsic values **Relationships, Responsibility, Respect, and Redirection** as a means of resolving conflict and returning balance and harmony to human relationships.

Participants of the Peacemaking Court will have their cases facilitated by trained persons from the Dispute Resolution Center servicing Washtenaw and Livingston Counties and other practitioners. Agreements made during the peacemaking circles are binding as a contract.

Outcomes

In suitable Peacemaking Court Cases:

- 94% of cases resulted in an agreement from both parties.
- 82% agreed or strongly agreed that the result of the peacemaking meeting were fair as compared to what might have occurred in a court setting.
- 91% agreed or strongly agreed that after hearing everyone talk, the participant had a better understanding of the other person's perspective
- 94% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend peacemaking to others

Participant Comments

- “I learned that the others and myself all had truth; it just needed to be pieced together”-*Peacemaking Circle Participant*
- “I learned never to say never...we did something that I thought impossible”-*Peacemaking Circle Participant*
- “That there are many different versions/perspectives to the truth...you need to be open to being empathetic and make an effort to accept the other's views/beliefs...not to try to change them but to accept them as their truth”-*Peacemaking Circle Participant*
- “I have no doubt in my mind, that if this guardianship petition would have gone through the normal court procedure, there would be no mother/daughter relationship today...the Peacemaking Court saved one of the most important relationships one can experience – the parent/child relationship”-*Attorney*

Contact Us

Peacemaking Court/Judge Tim Connors
101 E. Huron
P.O. Box 8645
Ann Arbor, MI 48107
734-222-3020

The Dispute Resolution Center
4133 Washtenaw Ave. Suite B125
P.O. Box 8645
Ann Arbor, MI 48107
734-794-2125
www.thedisputeresolutioncenter.org

The Washtenaw County Peacemaking Court Extends our gratitude to:

Jeri Hollister for the creation and contribution of the Peace Horse
jerihollister.com ©2014

Jainelle Robinson for the creation of the Peacemaking Court Brochure
robinsonja@washtenaw.org

The Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office

Relationships

Responsibility

Respect

Redirection



Washtenaw County Peacemaking Court

Est. 2013

State Court Systems & Peacemaking

Current State Court Justice Systems are structured around "either-or" decision-making

The adversarial system looks at problems through the narrow lens of X vs. Y, guilty or not guilty. An individual or relationship is then judged and labeled solely by a single event. The label replaces the person, and we are prevented from solving the whole problem and all that underlies it.

Current systems create division within the community. When we label an individual, we separate and isolate him from the community. He is no longer a colleague, neighbor or community member, but a juvenile delinquent, felon, offender, neglectful parent, or abusive spouse. The justice system sets him aside and the community will continue to exclude, divide, and separate itself from the person.

Labeling and dividing continues the cycle of wrongdoing. By labeling, separating, and dividing, we do nothing to restore the individual, the community, and the actual harm that was done. Neither the person who caused the problem nor those who were impacted get their needs met by decisions that seek to punish without repairing harm and restoring relationships.

Because we've resolved and restored nothing, the individual eventually accepts the label as truth and continues to live accordingly. This leads to recidivism, polarization, and harmful relationships that tear the fabric of family and community. It is why we can expect the majority of children who enter the justice system to re-enter the system. It is why disputing families leave the courtroom more polarized than when they entered.

Peacemaking: A Horse of a Different Color



"Aabiwe Wendamowin"

"To Forgive, Reconcile, Absolve"-Odawa

The Peace Horse has all four colors of the Medicine Wheel; all four colors of the races of man; all four colors of the four directions in life. The Peace Horse stands in repose, in balance with the universe and all living things, with all of our relations.

Peacemaking exemplifies the Navajo justice theory of "what I do has an impact on you, and what you do has an impact on me."

How can it benefit me?

Peacemaking is confidential. It is a voluntary option for parties who want to commit to try to understand other perspectives, resolve their dispute peacefully, and heal important relationships. The emphasis is on making peace, rather than engaging in adversarial conflict.

How does it work?

The Peacemaking Court broadens its relationships with children, families and communities. The court utilizes peacemaking while cases are in court, but also nurtures and supports peacemaking outside of court. The court has partnerships with The Dispute Resolution Center servicing Washtenaw and Livingston Counties, Washtenaw County Youth Center, and continues to cultivate relationships with neighborhoods, schools, law enforcement, juvenile detention and child welfare providers, including: University of Michigan Advocacy Law Center, Michigan Department of Human Services and Eastern Michigan University as well as other local organizations.

The peacemaking approach to problem solving will be applied to child protection cases before, during and after the court process. Ongoing problem-solving "circles of support" will be used to prevent the need to file a petition and to remove children from their homes during the jurisdiction of cases that have entered the system.

This will remove barriers during jurisdiction and post-jurisdiction for children who are transitioning out of the foster care system to help them build a support network as they make plans to move forward in their lives. The peacemaking program is active with the juvenile detention center and juvenile wellness court in Washtenaw County.

The current adversarial model simply does not work in every case as well as it should. Too often, it harms important relationships instead of healing them. It cannot always bring the closure and relief that litigants expect. And it does not always solve the whole problem, so that conflict is too often renewed between the litigants after becoming more polarized through the court process.