

# THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

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The Dispute Resolution Center will provide your Restorative Justice Program services in compliance and partnership with the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office.

We are a separate 501(3)(c) non-profit organization that provides mediation and facilitation services for the community.

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## OUR MISSION

The Dispute Resolution Center offers affordable, constructive, restorative and healing approaches to conflict resolution for the residents of Washtenaw and Livingston counties.

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## CONTACT US

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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### **Why would I want to have contact with the person who harmed me?**

*Restorative Justice offers an opportunity for the survivor of a crime to be heard, talk about what happened, how everyone involved has been affected and what should happen next. Many times, the person who caused the harm has things which they want to explain to the people who they hurt, and to try to make amends for their actions.*

### **What if the person responsible doesn't accept responsibility?**

*Restorative Justice only proceeds with both people's consent. In normal circumstances, it can only happen if the person who committed the harm accepts responsibility and expresses remorse about the incident. However, if you have been the survivor of crime from someone who doesn't accept full responsibility, it is still valuable to go through the process.*

### **What if I meet the person who committed the harm and don't feel comfortable proceeding?**

*Restorative Justice is an entirely voluntary process, and both people can pause or end the process at anytime. Within a session you can take a break and decide to proceed or end the session. It is common for people to be nervous before a circle session, but people often tell us that meeting the person who harmed them was not as frightening as they expected, and that it allowed them to regain power over the situation.*

### **What if I do not wish to proceed with the Restorative Justice?**

*This is a voluntary process for both the survivor and the person who caused the harm. You do not give up your legal rights to due process of the law.*



# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM

REPAIRING HARM  
PROMOTING HEALING  
REBUILDING TRUST



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# WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE? WHAT'S NEXT

Restorative justice is an alternative to the traditional criminal legal system and offers a survivor centered and healing model to address wrongdoing, harm or crime.

The restorative justice approach is deeply rooted in North American Indigenous cultural and sacred practices to address harm or wrongdoing between all involved.

Restorative or healing circles aim to:

- Create a safe space for all involved to address the harm(s)
- Provide a safe space for the survivor to be heard
- Provide a safe space for the person who committed the harm(s) to make amends
- Assist the survivor and the one who caused the harm to create a plan for re-entering their communities.
- Create understanding, connection, and reconciliation.

Upon first contact with a survivor, Victim Advocates will present restorative justice as a **free option** to the traditional criminal legal system. If a survivor decides to use the restorative justice process, the Prosecutor's Office, through Victim Advocates, will refer the survivor to the Dispute Resolution Center.

## THE PROCESS

**All court proceedings will be placed on hold.**

The Dispute Resolution Center will prepare the survivor and the person who committed harm for meetings in which a plan to make amends can be discussed.

The person who harmed will be expected to:

- **Acknowledge the harm or wrongdoing,**
- **Accept responsibility,** and
- **Make amends** in a manner that is satisfactory to the survivor.

If the restorative justice process fails—or the person who harmed fails to make amends—**criminal charges may continue to be pursued by the Prosecutor's Office.**

If the restorative justice process succeeds, amends are made, and the person who harmed does not commit a new offense for 18 months, **charges will be dismissed** by the Prosecutor's Office.

## STEP 1 - INTAKE

The survivor and person who caused harm will be introduced to their DRC Restorative Justice Coordinator who will explain the basic principles, values, and next steps of the restorative justice process.

Intake is an opportunity for all involved to express concerns and ask any questions and identify any support they would like to invite into the process.

Everything discussed is completely confidential and only shared with a later-assigned facilitator who will guide all involved through step two and step three of the process.

The DRC Restorative Justice Coordinator will contact the person who has harmed about participating in the process.

## STEP 2 - ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

Once everyone has agreed to participate and all parties feel comfortable moving forward, the DRC will introduce everyone to their Restorative Justice Facilitators, who will initially meet with each person individually to guide and provide one-on-one support through the process.

During this phase, there will be several restorative circle sessions that will create space for everyone to be heard and begin to identify their needs moving forward.

The three phases of a restorative circle are:

- Understanding
- Co-creating an accountability plan
- Reviewing success of the plan

The survivors and person who caused harm will co-create an accountability plan that will help guide the 18-month restorative process and beyond.

## STEP 3 - FINAL CHECK-IN

At this stage, the hope is that the harm has been repaired, the outcomes are satisfactory to both parties, and everyone is restored and healed from the incident.

Upon successful completion of this program, the DRC Restorative Justice Coordinator will contact the Prosecutor's Office to dismiss the criminal charges and the case closed.

