



Restorative Justice Project
Maine

What is the Community Harm Repair Program?

Restorative justice responds to wrongdoing and crime from the perspective that it is people and relationships that are centrally affected. All restorative justice work is based on values of voice, choice and dignity for all people, placing those most directly involved at the center of decision-making around what needs to be done to make things as right as possible. The Community Harm Repair Program can bring together the person(s) harmed with the person(s) who caused the harm—as well as supporters, family and community members—to talk about the incident and to come to an agreement for how the person(s) who caused the harm can take responsibility for their actions. Generally, a referral comes to the Restorative Justice Project Maine (RJP) through a Juvenile Community Corrections Officer, a lawyer, the District Attorney's office, or a school, but citizens are also welcome to self-refer. Upon referral, RJP facilitators guide participants through the following:

The Community Harm Repair process involves five main components:

- **Preliminary meetings** (restorative reflection) with the person referred and their family or support person(s) and - separately - with the person(s) who were harmed and their family and support persons. This is a confidential opportunity to share about restorative justice philosophy and process, to answer any questions, and to prepare for the restorative process if the parties decide they would like to move forward. Crucial to know that all restorative justice processes are voluntary. There are different types of restorative processes that may take place, depending on the needs of the participants, such as a support circle, a dialogue or a larger group process; however, all will include this preliminary conversation, the process itself, and likely a separate closing process.
- The **Harm Repair Process** involves the person(s) referred, their family members and/or support people, the person(s) and their family members and/or support people, community members, a trained volunteer mentor for the referred party, and facilitators from RJP. There are varying degrees in which the person harmed may choose to participate. As long as they do not strongly oppose with the referral itself, the process can take place with a surrogate participant in the place of the person(s) harmed when needed. This is a formal, guided conversation which gives everyone involved the chance to answer and reflect on the 5 primary restorative questions:

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- o What happened?
- o What were you thinking and feeling at the time of the incident?
- o What have you been thinking and feeling since this incident?
- o Who was affected and how?
- o What needs to be done to make things right?

This process will result in a collaboratively compiled “Repair Agreement”—detailing how the person referred will take responsibility for repairing their part of the harm that occurred.

- **Repair Agreement Completion Phase.** The duration of this varies; typically, it is 8-12 weeks for a juvenile, and 6-12 months for an adult. During this time, participants have the option - and young people are strongly encouraged! - to meet with a trained volunteer mentor once a week for an hour. The mentor’s primary role is to provide both support and accountability towards completion of the agreement; this said, these volunteers have a tremendous amount to offer. They can be a listening ear, a source of feedback, a connection to job training skills or housing or other elements a person might be in search of. Together, the goal is that participants steady progress towards fulfilling the obligations listed in the Repair Agreement.
- **Closing Process** with the original participants to discuss whether the Repair Agreement has been completed and to determine, collectively, if justice has been achieved and whether the referred participant has met their obligations and the case can be closed.
- **Wrap-up:** RJP staff composes a formal letter to the referring party notifying them of the participants’ outcome and, when successful, acknowledging that they have earned the good outcome offer.