

# So, You Want to Start a Restorative Justice Program in Your Community: An Overview

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National Association of Criminal Legal Defense Attorneys (NACDL)

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# Overview



**Background**



**Emerging Trends in  
Restorative Justice**



**Snapshot of the  
Webinar Series**



**Future Directions  
of the Work**



**Background:**  
Who Are We, Research Supporting Efficacy of RJ,  
Context of Our Work

# NYU Center on Violence and Recovery (CVR)

- A research center dedicated to advancing knowledge on the causes and consequences of violence and trauma and developing solutions that foster healing among individuals, families, and communities.
- **To achieve our mission, we:**
  - Innovate
    - Develop cutting edge solutions to promote healing and transformation.
  - Study
    - Conduct research on critical issues related to trauma and restoration
  - Educate
    - Offer trainings, workshops, and lectures on topics related to trauma and healing.
- Collaborators: judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, treatment providers and community-based organizations, victim advocates, and community members
- In 2004, we developed the first and only rigorously tested model for domestic violence crimes, Circles of Peace.

# Context of Our Work: Applying Restorative Justice Principles and Practices to Domestic Violence

Circles of Peace is the first program of its kind in the United States to use RJ principles to treat those arrested for DV crimes.

Bring **individuals who have been abusive** and the **victim (if they choose to participate)** together with **willing family members, support persons, a trained professional facilitator** and **CP-trained community volunteers**, to **monitor safety** to seek a **more effective treatment outcome**.

## **Circles of Peace**

- encourage dialogue about the current and previous incident(s)
- uncover gender dynamics and family history
- create longer term change

# Emerging Trends in RJ

- **Intervention programs for crimes/harms including DV is an area primed for innovation**
  - Punitive responses to DV crimes are generally ineffective and are being questioned for other crimes/harms
  - Interest in the use of RJ is increasing for DV and other types of crimes/harms
- **There is a benefit to starting with domestic violence crimes**
  - DV is among the most pervasive crimes within our criminal legal landscape
  - DV is linked to many other crimes and social issues (gun violence, homelessness, etc.)
  - DV is viewed as among the most complex crimes/harms to address and this is also the case in RJ; if you can innovate here, it paves the way for RJ to be used for all types of crimes and harms
- **There can be multiple referral pathways to RJ programs**
  - Self-referrals
  - Community referrals (faith-based organizations, social services organizations, victim advocacy organizations, etc.)
  - System referrals
- **RJ can be used at different points within the criminal legal system process**
  - Pre-arrest
  - Pre-charge
  - Post-charge
- **RJ can be used to address the broad range of cases coming into contact with the criminal legal system**
  - Domestic violence broadly (intimate partner violence, family violence, violence between roommates, etc.)
  - Property Crimes
  - Assault

# Emerging Trends in RJ



## **Different RJ modalities can be used**

Peacemaking Circles  
Conferencing  
Mediation



## **Partnerships with community-based organizations are crucial and a broad range of community-based organizations are suitable for this work**

Meditation Centers  
Behavioral Health Organizations  
Social Services Organizations  
Victim Advocacy Organizations (DV context)  
Restorative Justice Organization



# Emerging Trends in RJ

- **You need buy-in from multiple stakeholders not just the system partner referring cases. This might include:**
  - Prosecutors
  - Defense Attorneys
  - Judges
  - Victim Advocacy Organizations (Crucial in the DV context)
  - Community-based organizations
- **Finding a champion is crucial. Potential champions can include:**
  - Prosecutors
  - Defense Attorneys
  - Victim Advocates



# Snapshot of the Webinar Series: What to Expect



## So, You Want to Create an RJ Program



1. A History of RJ for DV
2. Introduction to Circles of Peace
3. RJ in Rural and Remote Communities
4. Perspectives from an RJ Practitioner
5. Part 1: Essential Stages of RJ Program Development
6. Part 2: Essential Stages of RJ Program Development



# Snapshot of the Webinar Series: What to Expect



## So, You Want to Create an RJ Program



7. Conducting a Community Readiness Assessment
8. In-person, Virtual, and Hybrid Programs
9. Perspectives from a Victim Advocate
10. Partnering with Indigenous Communities
11. Perspectives from a Public Defender
12. Perspectives from a Program Participant and His Spouse
13. A Focus on Sustainability



# Future Directions of the Work



- What are the issues and concerns impacting communities and how can RJ be used to address those issues?
- Advocating for policy changes that allow us to pilot alternatives
- Partnering across those involved in policy, practice, research, and those directly impacted



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