



Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program Frequently Asked Questions

Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program Offender Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program is an alternative to the traditional Criminal Justice system. Instead of prosecuting the case in Criminal Court in Santa Barbra, the District Attorney's Office refers appropriate low-level misdemeanor and infraction cases to Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program. At Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, Panelists, who are residents that live and or work in the community where the incident occurred, hear the cases in a Conference. A trained Facilitator manages this Conference. There are no judges, defense attorneys, or prosecutors. The panel uses restorative justice to problem-solve and address any harm caused to the community by the crime. All Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program Conferences are voluntary and confidential.

2. How do cases get referred to Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

If a misdemeanor case is appropriate for Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, the District Attorney's Office will send a letter to the person cited. If the person declines to participate or would like to dispute the incident in question, or there is no contact, the case will proceed to the criminal court system at 118 E. Figueroa St. in Santa Barbara.

3. What is a Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program Facilitator?

The Facilitator is a neutral third-party volunteer mediator with training in Restorative Justice. The Facilitator's primary role is ensuring that the process is safe for all participants in the Conference. This is accomplished through agreed-upon and enforce ground rules for the Conference. The Facilitator, acting as a neutral party third, facilitates the Conference between the Panelists and the Offender to enable the parties face-to-face to name the harms caused by the offense and develop a mutual agreement about what should be done to make things right as possible.

4. What happens when I go to Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

Prior to your Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program Conference, you will be contacted by the Facilitator who will manage your Conference. At the Conference, Panels of two to five residents will meet with you, read you the arrest report, and discuss the incident with you. The Conference's goal is for the Panel and the Offender to reach a mutual agreement to make things right. The agreement can include but is not limited to community service, restitution, a letter of apology, an educational project, or a treatment program. To be successful in Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program and get your case closed, you must complete the agreement.

5. Do I need to go to Criminal Court too?

If you attend Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, you do not need to go to Criminal Court in Santa Barbara. Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program is an opportunity to resolve your case without going to Criminal Court. If you successfully complete Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, you will not be charged with a crime, and you will not have a criminal conviction on your record. In Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, you cannot be sent to jail or fined.

6. Why am I being offered the opportunity to participate in Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

The District Attorney's office has determined that you are eligible to resolve your case through the Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program diversion program. Participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or fail to comply with the Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program agreement, the case is referred back to the District Attorney's Office for a filing decision. If you participate and successfully complete the agreement, the District Attorney's Office will not charge the case, and it will be closed.