



Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program

Volunteers: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

A: Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program is a Restorative Justice Program initiated by the Santa Barbara County District Attorney in cooperation with local city governments and Law enforcement. Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program addresses nonviolent and low-level crimes through community-based solutions. This program aims to address criminal violations that impact the quality of life in our communities.

In Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, volunteer Facilitators and Panelists, trained in the principles of Restorative Justice, participate in conferences with criminal offenders and victims (when participating) to address the harms caused by criminal violations. Together, they seek to reach an agreement on how to make things right in a restorative setting that allows the harm caused by these offenses to be swiftly resolved outside of the traditional criminal justice system.

Q: How are the principles of Restorative Justice utilized?

A: Restorative Justice defines crime as acts that cause harm to people and communities. Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program emphasizes the offender's reparation of the harm done to the individual and/or the community. Another goal of the Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program is for all parties to understand the root cause of the crime so that the victim, community, and offender can move forward in a positive direction. Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program strengthens neighborhoods impacted by criminal activity in four ways:

Restore Victim: Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program is victim-centered and emphasizes the victim's needs. It is focused on offenders making things right to the greatest extent possible with their victims. Offenders pay restitution to victims who have suffered monetary losses or property damage.

Restore Community: Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program creates an atmosphere of inclusion and responsibility by providing a direct role for residents to oversee the resolution of offenses in their city.

Restore Offender: Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program offers offenders an opportunity to change by avoiding a criminal conviction on their record upon successful completion of the program. Offenders are also restored by helping them understand the consequence of their actions and giving them the opportunity to pay back the community they harmed.

Educate Offender: Offenders can be educated in alcohol use, anger management, and how to be considerate to their community, as well as other topics designed to change or modify their behavior.

Q: What is the role of a Panelist?

A: Panelists play an important supportive role within the Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program. They represent the community's needs, interests, and perspectives concerning the crime(s) committed. Panelists agree to meet with the offender in a face-to-face conference facilitated by a trained, neutral mediator. During the conference, panelists 1) name the harms the community experiences as a result of the crime, 2) ask questions seeking to understand the circumstances around the crime, and 3) decide, together with the offender, the steps that are necessary to make

things right (as much as possible). This face-to-face dialogue is designed to encourage accountability on the offender's part and to arrive at the steps necessary to remedy the situation as fully as possible.

Q: What is the role of a Facilitator?

A: Facilitators play an important leadership role in the program. Their duties include leading pre-conference meetings with victims (when participating), offenders, and community panelists to prepare all parties for restorative dialogue during the joint conference. During the conference, the Facilitator guides offenders through a restorative 3-Step Process in which victims, offenders, and community Panelists: 1) name the harms created by the crimes in question; 2) determine how to make things as right as possible, and; 3) develop a specific agreement that clearly states how things will be made right and declare future intentions to assure that the actions are not repeated.

Q: What qualifications do I need?

A: We ask that volunteers meet a few requirements to ensure that they are familiar with the community and appropriate for this program:

§ Reside or work in the community for a minimum of three years and be familiar with different neighborhoods.

§ Ability to work with others to solve problems.

§ Complete a Live-Scan prior to participation and must have no felony convictions or recent misdemeanor convictions.

§ Ability to commit to participation in the program for two years (students one year).

Q: What is the time commitment for Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program volunteers?

A: Training is the largest time commitment for Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program. Volunteers will be asked to attend a 12 hour (Panelist) or (Facilitator) training course on Restorative Justice Concepts and the Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program process, as well as an informational pre-training meeting and mock conference, role-play training. Therefore, the total time commitment during training is approximately 12 hours for both Panelist and Facilitators. Once training is complete, volunteers typically serve two nights or 6hrs per month.

Q: How do cases get referred to Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

A: If a misdemeanor case is appropriate for Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program, the District Attorney's Office will contact the person cited. Suppose the person declines to participate or would like to dispute the incident in question, or there is no contact. In that case, the case will proceed to the criminal Restorative Justice Program system.

Q: What happens at Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program?

A: A panel of 3 volunteer residents meets with the offender and victim (if applicable) to discuss the case. The panelist and offender address the harms caused by the criminal violation. Together, the panelists and offenders may issue one or more "directives" or actions that repair the harm caused by the incident. Directives can include but are not limited to restitution, a letter of apology, a research project, or an online counseling program.

Q: How can I find out more or apply to volunteer?

A: To find out more, visit our website http://countyofsb.org/da/cp_NRJP.html, email SBDANeighborhoodRJP@co.santa-barbara.ca.us, or call 805-403-0448 and speak to the Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program Coordinator.