



**Criminal Justice Commission’s Restorative Justice Grant Program**  
A Report by the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon (RJCO)  
October 2023

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# Introduction to Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a survivor centered approach to accountability that focuses on promoting healing for those who have been harmed and on fostering true internal accountability for those who have caused harm. Restorative justice facilitators work with both the harmed and responsible parties to prepare them for a healing dialogue that typically results in a plan for how the responsible party will repair the harm, to the extent possible. This community-based approach to harm serves as an alternative to traditional prosecution. Restorative justice thereby creates a mechanism for relieving the pressure on Oregon's overburdened court system and reducing the state's reliance on incarceration, while also making communities safer.

Data from restorative justice programs across America and other parts of the world indicate high levels of success when compared to the current criminal legal approach. Reduced recidivism, increased survivor satisfaction, and long term cost savings, are the most common results of restorative justice programs. By focusing on equity and by taking a relational approach to justice, restorative justice helps reduce racial and ethnic disparities and increases participants' connectedness to their family, friends, and greater community.

Oregon is poised to be a national leader in restorative approaches to harm. This impressive accomplishment can be attributed to the state's investment in restorative justice through the Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program, which funds the programs discussed in this report. Even in their early development stages, these programs are demonstrating their potential to dramatically change Oregon's approach to public safety for the better. By focusing on healing and true accountability, the state has the opportunity to empower and support crime survivors, while effectively reducing the likelihood of reoffending. This can only happen if the legislature continues to invest in the Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program.

Here's a short explainer [video](#) of a restorative justice program being piloted in Portland.

# Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program

In 2021, in response to priorities set by the Racial Justice Council's Criminal Justice Reform Committee, the Oregon legislature allocated \$4 million to the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) to develop a dedicated fund for restorative justice programs. This effort led to the creation of the CJC's Restorative Justice Grant Program (RJGP), which made its initial grant awards in July 2022 and, in so doing, planted the seeds of transformative change for public safety and victim assistance. Eight programs serving over thirteen counties received funding to initiate and/or expand restorative services intended to keep people out of the criminal legal system and provide greater support for crime survivors. Of these eight programs, five came into existence because of the RJGP and are in their design or pilot stage. The three programs that existed prior to the RJGP have witnessed significant expansion in services, which have led to higher participant success rates, thanks to the increase in funding from the RJGP.

Unfortunately, the RJGP did not receive continued funding in the 2023 legislative session. Being left out of the 2023-2025 biennial budget for the CJC has left the eight developing programs without a reliable funding stream, and threatens to end these innovative approaches to harm before they are able to take root. **In the 2024 session, the Oregon Legislature has the opportunity to allow these programs to survive by appropriating \$4 million to this critical program.**

## A Note on Person Centered Language

This report utilizes "person first" language. Restorative justice seeks to maintain each party's humanity by refusing to define them by a specific action or experience. It also remains sensitive to the often false dichotomy between "victim" and "offender." Many people who cause harm have experienced victimization themselves. Unhealed trauma can lead someone to commit similar harms. Restorative spaces recognize that "hurt people hurt people." Terms such as "survivor," "person harmed," "responsible party," or "person who caused the harm" are preferred to terms such as "victim" or "offender."

# Oregon's Restorative Justice Programs

Eight programs, serving over thirteen counties, were funded through the RJGP. These programs range in their degree of development with most programs being in their design or pilot year. While each program takes a unique approach to providing restorative services, all programs meet on a regular basis, through monthly cohort meetings facilitated by the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon (RJCO). At these meetings, programs discuss program development and share resources related to best practices as well as lessons learned. Oregon's restorative justice community is highly collaborative and invested in collective success. This level of collaboration combined with the support of national restorative justice experts, speaks to the strong foundation for effective restorative justice services that is being built in Oregon.

## Center for Dialogue and Resolution (Lane County)

Since 2015, the Center for Dialogue and Resolution (CDR), in partnership with the Lane County District Attorney's office and with some financial support from the Lane County Public Safety Coordinating Council, has operated the longest running adult restorative justice diversion program in Oregon. With funding from the Restorative Justice Grant Program (RJGP) in 2022, CDR has significantly expanded its services and capacity. Due to these advances, CDR has been able to accept a more robust stream of referrals. The funding also expanded the scope of services CDR is able to provide its participants and, for the first time, gave them the ability to extend these services to crime survivors. This expansion in services includes social support and case management services to connect clients with resources for mental health, substance use disorder, housing, financial support, transportation, and employment. In the last year, CDR has completed over 60 cases with over 90% of the participants successfully completing the program. This rate has an associated increase of 10% thanks to the increase in case management (and other wraparound) services that the organization has been able to provide. Additionally, the funding from the RJGP gave CDR the ability to partner with Western Oregon University's Restorative Justice and Reentry Center, tracking program data in order to analyze performance, success, and client need.

## Conflict Artistry (Statewide)

Conflict Artistry LLC's Direct-Action Diversion project was developed by a team of graduates from the University of Oregon's Conflict and Dispute Resolution master's program. Using their education and experience from the field, Conflict Artistry developed a restorative dialogue program that accepts referrals from individuals and community organizations before contact with the criminal legal system. They have an in-person presence in Lane and Lincoln counties and can provide virtual services to other areas. Over the past year, they have focused on building capacity, designing their program, and participating in numerous trainings to prepare to address a variety of case types. Conflict Artistry is now a leadership team of three Coordinators and seven Facilitators across the state. They are actively developing relationships with community-based organizations to spread awareness about the program, build partnerships, and establish referral sources. In Lane County, partnerships with White Bird (CAHOOTS) and Community Supported Shelters are being considered. In Lincoln County, Conflict Artistry is collaborating with local nonprofit partners to revive Teen Justice Panels referred through the juvenile department, as well as pre-citation referrals from law enforcement agencies. They have worked on three pilot cases which have each resulted in unique successes including a restitution payment from a responsible party to a harmed party, a restorative dialogue between family members, and a harmed party's participation in a restorative dialogue facilitation training so they can be part of providing services in the future.

## Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians Peacegiving Court

CCBUTI is using the grant it received from the Restorative Justice Grant Program to restore traditional peace giving practices. The Tribe is currently in the design phase of program development and has partnered with the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) to recruit and train peace givers. NARF is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit law firm devoted to protecting and advancing Indian rights. One of their projects is the Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative, which supports tribal efforts to revive native dispute resolution processes, typically referred to as peacemaking. NARF employs trainers with up to 30 years of experience in peacekeeping to train facilitators and help with program implementation. [In April, CCBUTI held its first NARF training,](#) which led to the successful recruitment and training of eight peace givers. These peace

givers will attend additional NARF trainings later this year, after which they will begin facilitating cases within the tribe. All peace givers are tribal members; however, several were adopted out as children and robbed of their culture due to assimilation efforts. The ability to engage in peace giving is of particular importance for these individuals, who are using this unique opportunity to reconnect with their heritage.

## **Emerging Adult Program (Deschutes County)**

The Deschutes County District Attorney's office piloted the first iteration of their Emerging Adult Program (EAP) in 2021. While the initial pilot program was operated on a shoe-string budget, funding from the CJC's Restorative Justice Grant Program in 2022 allowed the DA's office to significantly expand the scope of the program. After receiving the funding, the DA's office, in partnership with Community Solutions of Central Oregon, launched the second phase of EAP in January of 2023. Phase two involved a considerable expansion in services for both responsible and harmed parties. It led to an increase in capacity and the ability to recruit volunteers. Additionally, the new funding provided an opportunity to deepen relationships with community partners to strengthen training, service delivery, and community engagement.

EAP began taking referrals for the second phase of the program in December 2022 with the first participants enrolling in January of 2023. EAP has since enrolled 31 people with 8 others pending enrollment. 6 participants have successfully completed the program and 23 are still actively engaged. As of October of 2023, none of the phase two participants have recidivated after enrolling in EAP.

Many program participants face significant barriers, including housing instability, substance use disorder, domestic violence, and mental illness. The CJC funding has given the program important resources to address these root causes of the responsible parties' criminal behavior. Additionally, the funding has allowed the program to provide services to harmed parties, who often face similar barriers. The program has received a great deal of positive feedback from participants who are receiving services and have found the resources to be beneficial. EAP has also received a positive response from the community, with over 15 people committing to volunteer as community facilitators for a minimum of two years. The grant has also allowed EAP to engage researchers at Portland State University to track program data and analyze success rates.

## Lutheran Community Services Northwest (Multnomah County)

The Portland Police Bureau (PPB) has partnered with Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) to pilot a pre-arrest restorative justice diversion program. This partnership is supported by the Longmont Community Justice Partnership, which has provided training and technical assistance in implementing an evidence-based model of restorative justice with 16 years of data backing its efficacy. For many years, LCSNW has provided restorative services to Multnomah County through their contract with the juvenile department. With the new partnership with PPB and Longmont, they are applying their skills to adult cases, which are referred to restorative justice in lieu of being sent to the district attorney's office.

With the funding from the Restorative Justice Grant Program, LCSNW has doubled the number of volunteers working on the program and increased their overall capacity by hiring six additional staff members. They have developed a key partnership with a peer mentor organization to give participants added support in completing the accountability plans that come out of the restorative dialogues. This support is critical as many participants face significant barriers such as housing instability and mental illness.

LCSNW has spent the last year building capacity, designing their programming, and collaborating with PPB to create effective department-wide trainings for officers. Though the program is still in the design phase, it expects to move into its pilot year soon and has successfully completed two pilot cases. One of these pilot cases, which involved a carjacking, became the subject of [LCSNW's training video](#). This video explains the program and follows the first case, with interviews from both the harmed and responsible parties. These interviews show that having options outside of traditional prosecution are important for rehabilitation, public safety, and survivor empowerment.

LCSNW is working with other agencies to develop more referral sources for the program. Most recently, the organization has initiated a partnership with the DOJ's Bias Crime hotline and is developing a process to meet the needs of callers, who may be interested in a restorative approach.

## **Resolve Center for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice – Victim Assistance, Youth Accountability Program (Jackson and Josephine Counties)**

Resolve has been providing restorative justice services to Jackson and Josephine counties since 1990. With the funding from the Restorative Justice Grant Program, Resolve was able to dramatically expand its Victim Assistance, Youth Accountability (VAYA) Program. VAYA uses facilitated dialogue to support justice-involved youth in taking responsibility for the harms they have caused, understanding the impacts of their actions, and developing a plan to repair the harm to the extent possible. The facilitated dialogue also provides an opportunity for interested victims to tell how they have been affected, receive answers to questions about the crime, and be directly involved in developing a workable plan for repair. This process is proven to have a significant impact on criminogenic thinking and youth behavior moving forward.

Past data on the VAYA program reflects high satisfaction rates for both harmed and responsible parties with percentages in the high 90s. In addition, the program has been proven to reduce recidivism, demonstrating improved outcomes when compared to the juvenile system. With the additional resources provided by the grant program, VAYA has witnessed a significant increase in participation with nearly all justice involved youth now having access to the program. The increase in funding has also led to collaborative efforts between Resolve and the Jackson County District Attorney's Office to pilot a young adult program modeled after Deschutes' Emerging Adults Program.

## **Restorative Roots Project (Multnomah County)**

The Restorative Roots Project (RRP), in collaboration with Multnomah County District Attorney and Metropolitan Public Defender, has piloted a post charge, pre-indictment restorative justice program that addresses violent felony offenses. The decision to start with these crime types came from the evidence backing restorative justice's heightened efficacy when applied in situations where there has been a serious harm or a threat of serious harm. In order to create an effective and safe process, RRP partnered with Impact Justice for training and program implementation. Impact Justice is a training and technical assistance provider that collaborates with community-based organizations



and system partners across the country to implement their model of restorative justice, which is specifically geared toward more serious offense types. This model, known as Restorative Community Conferencing, has been shown to reduce recidivism, increase survivor satisfaction, and save costs when compared to the criminal legal approach. Impact Justice has implemented this model in various jurisdictions across the country. Multnomah County is a part of their cohort of programs and benefits, not only from the expertise Impact Justice provides, but also from the lessons learned and best practices developed by the other Impact Justice sites.

Over the last year, RRP has built its capacity and undergone intensive training. They began accepting cases in August of 2022 and have continued to make adjustments to program eligibility and operations, throughout the first pilot year. Entry into the Restorative Roots Project requires the consent of the harmed party. In addition, the responsible party must express a willingness to take responsibility for their actions and engage in an intensive accountability process. To date, the program has enrolled five responsible party participants. The program also provides services to the harmed parties on a voluntary basis. This assistance focuses on ensuring participant stability, safety, and access to basic needs.

All the responsible party participants in the program remain in good standing and are making progress towards their accountability goals. Though most cases are still in the preparation phase (with conference and repair stages to follow), the first community conference occurred in October and was highly successful. The length of the preparation stage, which can last over a year, speaks to the high degree of intentionality and care that facilitators invest in ensuring that the conference is a healing space for the harmed party, where an effective discussion about the impacts of the harm and what is needed for repair can happen.

Examples of the assistance RRP has provided and feedback they have received:

- RRP provided rent and utility assistance to a harmed party, in addition to referrals for legal services, therapy, and career counseling. Reflecting on their participation in the program, the harmed party said, “For the first time since coming to this country, I finally feel welcome.” And, “Without your program and your support, I couldn’t have made it through these last few months.”
- While enrolled in the program, one of the responsible parties reached her 100<sup>th</sup> day of sobriety from controlled substances. RRP provided her with bus passes, access to health care, and clothing. They also attended her recovery ceremony. She reflected on her time in the program, saying, “[RRP] has become my support in life and they feel more like friends and family. Thank you for showing me kindness I haven’t received in a long time.”
- Another responsible party received housing and employment assistance, as he struggled to find quality employment while struggling with homelessness. RRP counseled this individual through hard times and worked to ensure that his basic needs were met, while he completed vocational training. This responsible party ultimately got his commercial driver’s license, which gave him the necessary qualifications to secure a stable job. In so doing, they addressed the underlying causes of his crime and put him in the best position possible to focus on his need for accountability and his obligation to repair the harm he caused.
- Another harmed party said this about their participation in the program: “I really appreciate how friendly and personable you guys are. It makes it easy to feel comfortable in an otherwise uncomfortable situation. The program does a great job at making me feel heard and supported and, most importantly, safe.”

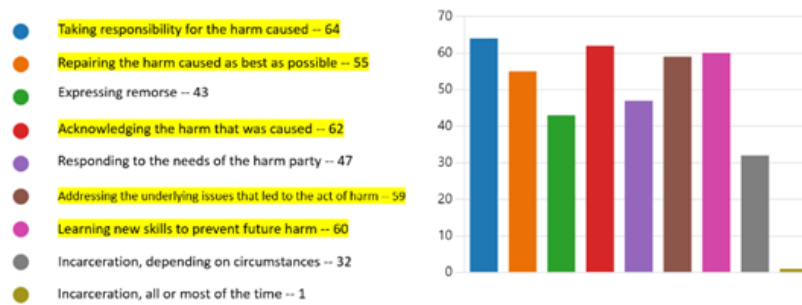
## **Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center - Circles of Peace (Wasco, Hood River, Gillam, Sherman, and Wheeler Counties)**

Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center received a grant from the RJGP for a planning and design year with the program pilot expected to start later this fall. They are working in partnership with the Wasco County District Attorney’s office and are in active conversations with local law enforcement in Hood River County, Wasco County, and

adjacent tribal regions. With the funding from the RJGP, Six Rivers hired new staff and began a partnership with NYU’s Center on Violence and Recovery (CVR). NYU’s CVR is a nationally renowned training and technical assistance provider, with deep expertise in restorative justice as well as an evidence-based model that has demonstrated success in other jurisdictions across the country. NYU did a site visit in May 2023 and returned to the Gorge in October to conduct trainings for facilitators, system partners, and volunteer community members.

The design of this program involved a deep level of community engagement. In centering the community and the specific needs of a rural jurisdiction, Six Rivers engaged in a community readiness assessment, which included interviewing several community leaders and other stakeholders. These interviews revealed a strong interest in cultivating approaches to harm that are grounded in restorative values. Six Rivers also circulated a survey to the general population, to understand the community’s perspective on healing and accountability for crime survivors. The results of the survey (see chart below) similarly indicate a strong interest in approaches to accountability that are in line with restorative justice.

What does accountability look like to you? Check all that apply.



In addition to cultivating community buy-in and preparing for program launch, Six Rivers is developing critical resources for survivors of harm. It has trained its facilitators in victim advocacy and will be offering survivor support circles. There will be separate circles focused on English speakers, Spanish speakers, and Indigenous communities.

For more about the Six Rivers program, see [this presentation](#) given to the Dalles Chamber of Commerce. (presentation starts at 8:36).

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