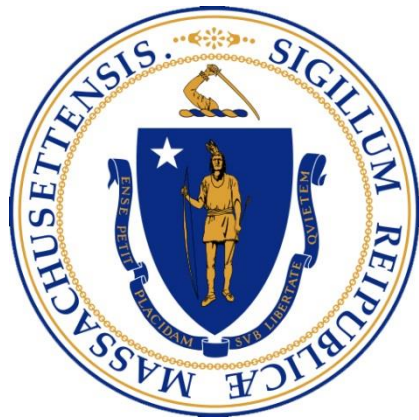


The Restorative Justice Advisory Committee

2024 Annual Report



Submitted by: The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Restorative Justice Advisory Committee

Seat	Member	Appointed By:
Secretary, EOPSS	Undersecretary Andrew Peck	Ex Officio
Secretary, HHS	Cecely A. Reardon Replaced Scott Taberner on 11.12.24	Ex Officio
House of Representatives, Speaker	Representative Simon Cataldo	Legislature
Senate, Senate President	Senator Robyn Kennedy	Legislature
President, MA District Attorney's Association	DA Marian Ryan	Ex Officio
Chief Counsel, Committee for Public Counsel Services	Attorney Kristen Graves Replaced Attorney Allison S. Cartwright on 11.12.24	Ex Officio
Commissioner of Probation	Brad McNichols Replaced Pamerson Ifill on 11.12.24	Ex Officio
President, MA Chiefs of Police Association	Ret. Chief Fred Ryan	Ex Officio
Executive Director, MOVA	Stephanie McCarthy	Ex Officio
MA Sheriff's Association	Andrea Berte	Ex Officio
Retired Trial Court Judge	Hon. Peter Agnes (ret.)	Governor
Restorative Justice	Kara Hayes	Governor
Restorative Justice	Vacant as of 11.12.24 Formerly Dennis Everett	Governor
Restorative Justice	Susan Jeghelian	Governor
Restorative Justice	Samuel Williams	Governor
Restorative Justice	Vacant	Governor
Restorative Justice	Vacant	Governor

RJAC Statute

The Restorative Justice Advisory Committee (hereinafter “RJAC” or “the Committee”) was established by Section 202 of Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018, An Act Relative to Criminal Justice Reform (hereinafter “*The Criminal Justice Reform Act*”):

“The advisory committee shall consist of 17 members: 1 of whom shall be: the secretary of public safety and security or a designee who shall serve as chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of health and human services or a designee; 1 of whom shall be a member of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker; 1 of whom shall be a member of the senate appointed by the senate president; 1 of whom shall be; the president of the Massachusetts district attorneys association, or a designee; 1 of whom shall be the chief counsel of the Committee for public counsel services or a designee; 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of probation or a designee; 1 of whom shall be the president of the Massachusetts chiefs of police association, or a de-signee; 1 of whom shall be the executive director of the Massachusetts office for victim assistance or a designee; 1 of whom shall

be the executive director of the Massachusetts sheriff's association, or a designee; and 7 of whom shall be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a retired trial court judge and 6 of whom shall be representatives of community-based restorative justice programs or a member of the public with expertise in restorative justice. Each member of the advisory committee shall serve a 6-year term."

Section 202 of the Criminal Justice Reform Act charges the RJAC with the following obligations:

"The advisory committee may monitor and assist all community-based restorative justice programs to which a juvenile or adult defendant may be diverted pursuant to this chapter."

"The advisory committee shall track the use of community-based restorative justice programs through a partnership with an educational institution and may make legislative, policy and regulatory recommendations to aid in the use of community-based restorative justice programs including, but not limited to: (i) qualitative and quantitative outcomes for participants; (ii) recidivism rates of responsible parties; (iii) criteria for youth involvement and training; (iv) cost savings for the commonwealth; (v) training guidelines for restorative justice facilitators; (vi) data on gender, racial socioeconomic and geographic disparities in the use of community-based restorative justice programs; (vii) guidelines for restorative justice best practices; and (viii) appropriate training for community-based restorative programs."

"The advisory committee shall annually, not later than December 31, submit a report with findings and recommendations to the governor, the clerks of the house of representatives and senate and the house and senate chairs of the joint committees on the judiciary and public safety and homeland security."

RJAC Mission, Vision, Values

The mission of the RJAC is to promote and expand restorative justice education, practices, and programming statewide in collaboration with practitioners, participants, sponsors, stakeholders, and the general public, for the purpose of fostering healing for people and communities impacted by harm and systemic/structural violence and with an aim towards promoting public safety and accountability.

The vision of the RJAC is a Commonwealth where community accountability for harm is based on healing and not on retribution, and where effective restorative practices are embedded within schools, public institutions and communities and supported by public policy, programming, funding, and infrastructure.

The RJAC has adopted the following restorative justice values:

- Victim-centered
- Trauma-informed
- Public safety-oriented
- Accountability and healing for all
- Meaningful dialogue

Year in Review

In 2024, the RJAC continued its mission to promote and expand restorative justice practices throughout Massachusetts. Restorative justice (“RJ”) represents a paradigm shift in how harm is understood and addressed within communities. By prioritizing healing, accountability, and community involvement, RJ provides an alternative to punitive measures traditionally employed in the criminal justice system. The work of the RJAC has focused on advancing these principles, informed by research and best practices from within Massachusetts as well as other states. In 2024 the RJAC’s recommendations for the creation of a state-level office of restorative justice, developed in a 2023 research report, were submitted to the Governor and Legislative leaders with a request for adoption in the state budget process. During 2024, the RJAC continued its work with the Executive Office of Public Safety & Security (“EOPSS”) on a grant program that awards restorative justice grants to community-based RJ programs. Additionally, Roxbury Community College completed survey of Massachusetts community-based programs. Finally, in 2024 the RJAC began investigating the critical need for best practices standards and guidelines to ensure the safety of parties and communities who participate in RJ processes within the Commonwealth.

State RJ Office

In 2023, the RJAC created its recommendation for the establishment of a state Office of Restorative Justice, after researching RJ initiatives in MA and 25 other states. The RJAC’s research showed that MA community-based RJ programs need resources, that current MA state-funded restorative justice grant programs are limited in scope and not well funded, and that other states have publicly funded offices that support local and statewide RJ initiatives.

The RJAC recommended a framework for a comprehensive state-level office with the following key components: that the office be a knowledge-based statutory entity with statewide jurisdiction serving communities and all three branches of government; that it be located in a neutral place within state government; and that it be funded by state appropriations in addition to grants and fees; that the office function as the primary administrative and funding agency for all public RJ initiatives in MA and that it have authority for policymaking, fundraising, grant-making, standard setting, program development, research, technical assistance, training, capacity-building, public education, and convening; that it have a statutory advisory committee of system holders and community representatives for guidance; that the operating budget be \$3 million to cover salaries for ten full-time staff and grants for agency, court and community-based programs; and that state funding for the office come from justice reinvestment initiatives and the Cannabis Social Equity Trust Fund. This framework was outlined in a research report data November 2023 which contained a detailed program design, operating budget, proposed enabling statute and implementation plan. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/restorative-justice-advisory-committee-state-office-of-restorative-justice-research-report-2023/download>

In 2024, the RJAC advocated for state support to establish the MA Office of Restorative Justice in the FY2025 state budget process, presenting research findings and recommendations to key policymakers. These efforts included meetings with state legislators and staff from the Governor's office to discuss funding mechanisms and operational frameworks. The RJAC requested initial funding for office operations in a FY2025 budget request and the adoption of the office’s enabling

statute through an outside section of the budget. This request was later adjusted during the budget process to a request for the enactment of the enabling statute only without an appropriation given the tight fiscal situation. Due to the late engagement of the Governor and Legislative leaders in this request as well as funding constraints, the RJAC was not successful with the FY2025 budget. Advocacy efforts have been renewed by the RJAC through its legislative members to seek the office's funding and establishment in the FY2026 budget as well as through the filing of legislation in the next legislative session starting in January 2025. See [Attachment A](#) for the updated enabling statute and [Attachment B](#) for the updated budget request justification and breakdown.

RJ Grant Program

The RJAC continued to partner with the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) under EOPSS on the Commonwealth Restorative Justice Grant Program launched in FY2023 to deliver state funding to community-based organizations providing RJ programming in low-income communities. For FY2024 state funding of \$380,000 was awarded through a competitive application process to 13 nonprofits for a range of RJ activities. Those that applied as a single entity were eligible to apply for up to \$20,000, while two or more organizations could apply for a shared award of up to \$40,000. The following is a list of the FY2024 grantees:

- Action for Boston Community Development, Boston
- beheard.world, Chelsea
- Brothers in Arms Men's Support Circle, Lawrence
- Communities for Restorative Justice, Boston
- LightHouse Holyoke, Holyoke
- Maverick Landing Community Services, Boston
- Metropolitan Mediation Services, Brookline Center for Community Mental Health, Brookline
- MetroWest Mediation Services, Natick
- Mothers for Justice and Equality, Roxbury
- The Greater Framingham Community Church, Framingham
- The Mission Inc., Springfield
- THRIVE Communities of Massachusetts via fiscal sponsor Community Teamwork, Lowell
- Tufts University, Boston

Throughout 2024, these grants enabled the RJAC and EOPSS to engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including community members, government representatives, and restorative justice practitioners. This engagement was crucial for understanding the needs and perspectives of those impacted by harm and systemic violence and those working to promote healing and accountability.

In addition to outreach and engagement, EOPSS surveyed grantees on the impact of RJ grants and provided a summary of the responses for the Legislature and budget analysts in support of budget advocacy efforts (see [Attachment C](#)). However, due to fiscal challenges, the Legislature did not appropriate funds for the Commonwealth Grant Program in FY2025.

RCC Survey

During FY2024, Roxbury Community College (RCC) continued its work from 2023 under contract with EOPSS to create an inventory of MA community-based restorative justice programs for the RJAC. The purpose of the inventory was to identify the types of clients these institutions serve, understand the range of services they provide, and assess their operational challenges. At the July 2024 RJAC meeting, RCC Dean of Institutional Instruction, Jeff Van Dreason, made a presentation on the survey methodology and results to the RJAC and in December 2024 submitted a year-end report. The report summarizes data collected from 50 respondents engaged in restorative justice work across the state. This data is expected to help the RJAC in better understanding of the current landscape of RJ within the state and help guide future initiatives and recommendations for improving these practices. See [Attachment D](#) for the full RCC report.

RJ Standards

At the November 2024 RJAC meeting, RJAC member, Kara Hayes, the Director of Restorative Justice at District Attorney Kevin Hayden's Office, made a presentation on the importance of having restorative justice standards for a healthier, more resilient restorative justice community in the Commonwealth. The presentation emphasized that standards create a culture of accountability critical ensuring safety and best practices for all involved. It highlighted the significant risks involved in RJ practice for victims and offenders because RJ work often deals with trauma, conflict and intense emotional experiences. These risks need guardrails, i.e., best practice safeguards, because without them participants may suffer unintended harm. Standards create safe and supportive spaces for everyone. See [Attachment E](#) for the full presentation.

Following the presentation, the RJAC decided to form a Standards Subcommittee to work on developing recommendations for RJ practice and training standards to ensure that practitioners have knowledge and skills to facilitate RJ processes safely and effectively. The Subcommittee intends to review current standards of RJ practice in the United States and beyond and engage stakeholders in creating a set of standards that can be used by practitioners, communities and public agencies who are sponsoring, funding and delivering RJ programs for the state. The Subcommittee will begin meeting in 2025.

Looking Forward

The RJAC has made significant strides in promoting restorative justice within Massachusetts in 2024. The establishment of a state-level office is crucial for enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of RJ initiatives. The Committee remains committed to fostering healing and accountability through restorative practices and looks forward to continued collaboration with stakeholders across the Commonwealth. The RJAC extends its gratitude to all members, community representatives, and stakeholders for their dedication and contributions to this vital work. The RJAC hopes to initiate a public awareness campaign in the coming years to educate communities about the principles and benefits of restorative justice. This includes hosting forums, workshops, and educational events aimed at promoting understanding and fostering community dialogue.

Annual Report Subcommittee

1. Dennis Everett
2. Susan Jeghelian

Attachments

Attachment A: RJAC Proposed Office of Restorative Justice Enabling Statute

Attachment B: RJAC Funding Request Justification for the MA Office of Restorative Justice

Attachment C: Summary of Impact of 2024 EOPSS RJ Grant Program Funding

Attachment D: RCC 2024 End of Year Report on Survey of Community-Based RJ Programs

Attachment E: Presentation: *Safe and Effective Facilitation: Standards of Practice from Nebraska, Colorado, and Beyond (see below)*



RJAC Presentation
November 12 2024 S

ATTACHMENT A

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE Proposed Office of Restorative Justice Enabling Statute

SECTION 1. Chapter 7 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:

Section 63. There shall be an office of restorative justice within the executive office for administration and finance. The office shall be under the supervision and control of a director who shall be appointed by the secretary of administration and finance. The director shall be a person with substantial training and professional experience in restorative justice and shall maintain complete impartiality with respect to the matters coming before the office and devote their full time to the duties of the office.

The office of restorative justice shall build restorative justice capacity across multiple disciplines and serve as the primary administrative and funding entity for publicly sponsored restorative justice initiatives in the commonwealth. The office shall be available to assist the legislative, judicial and executive branches, counties, cities, towns, community organizations and members of the public with developing and expanding restorative justice initiatives. The office shall promote the implementation of chapter 276B of the General Laws and any other laws that provide for the use of restorative justice.

For purposes of this section, the term “restorative justice” shall have the same meaning as in section 1 of said chapter 276B and include restorative practices rooted in community values and incorporating restorative principles. Restorative practices under this section shall include, but not be limited to victim-offender conferences, family group conferences, circles, community conferences and other similar victim-centered practices. Restorative practices may be used at any point before, during and after court involvement, to prevent court involvement and to support the healing of harm within communities.

The office, in collaboration with communities and government agencies and consistent with restorative justice values, may: (i) design, develop, launch or fund restorative justice programs; (ii) create standards and guidelines for best practices for administering, providing training on and facilitating restorative justice programs operated or funded by the office; (iii) conduct restorative justice educational programs and provide other technical assistance; (iv) serve as a centralized repository for restorative justice resources; (v) establish policies and procedures to effectuate the purposes of this section, including, but not limited to, provisions for grant making, data collection, and evaluation of restorative justice programs operated or funded by the office; and (vi) take other actions to promote restorative justice within local communities and public entities of the commonwealth.

The director shall convene a statewide advisory committee to guide the office of restorative justice in carrying out the purposes of this section. The statewide advisory committee shall consist of not more than 18 members trained in restorative justice practices; provided, that there shall be an equal number of government members and non-government community members on the committee; provided further, that the government members shall be from the legislative, judicial and executive branches and government-related statewide associations, including, but not limited to, representatives of public safety, law enforcement, victim services, health and human services, education, child welfare and legal agencies; and provided further, that the non-government community members shall be representatives of indigenous communities, survivors, formerly incarcerated, incarcerated populations, community-based restorative justice programs and practitioners working with juveniles and adults in communities, schools and criminal justice systems. Members of the committee shall be selected from diverse ethnicities, races, religions, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, socio-economic statuses, differently abled, and geographical backgrounds from throughout the commonwealth. The members of the committee shall

receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

The director may establish reasonable fees to be charged to public agencies for the provision of restorative justice education, consultation or other services authorized under this section, and may apply for and accept on behalf of the commonwealth any federal, local or private grants, bequests, gifts or contributions to aid in the financing of any of the programs or activities of the office. Fees, grants, bequests, gifts or contributions shall be received by the office and deposited in a separate account and shall be expended, without further appropriation, at the direction of the director for the cost of operating the office, including personnel, and for programs funded by the office. The office may make agreements with public agencies and officers and may contract with other persons, including private agencies, corporations or associations, to carry out any of the functions and purposes of this section.

Annually, the office shall annually prepare a report on its activities, including all income and expenditures, and file the report with the governor, the secretary of administration and finance, the secretary of public safety and security, the secretary of health and human services, the secretary of education, the chief justice of the supreme judicial court, the chief justice of the trial court, the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and means, and the chairs of the joint committee on public safety and homeland security, the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery, the joint committee on the judiciary and the joint committee on education not later than December 31.

ATTACHMENT B

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FY 2026 Budget Request & Justification

The Restorative Justice Advisory Committee (RJAC), established under Section 202 of Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018 to provide policy recommendations for the use of restorative justice (RJ) in the Commonwealth, has found that MA community-based RJ programs need resources and that other states have RJ offices that provide funding and operational support to local and statewide RJ efforts. The RJAC is therefore recommending the establishment of *a new state agency, the MA Office of Restorative Justice*, under the Executive Office for Administration & Finance, through an outside section enabling statute in the FY 2026 state budget tied to a new \$3 million annual line item.¹

Massachusetts Office of Restorative Justice

The goal of this new state office is to serve as a knowledge-based resource that fosters community healing and accountability for harm by building RJ infrastructure drawing on restorative practices rooted in indigenous cultures and promoting effective RJ policy, education, research, practices, and programming within communities, schools, and public institutions in collaboration with practitioners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

Proposed State RJ Office Framework

Statutory: Demonstrates the state's commitment to making RJ a public resource available to all, institutionalizes RJ to ensure effectiveness and sustainability, creates infrastructure to build RJ capacity within communities and public institutions, and provides funding framework for investment in RJ.

Statewide jurisdiction in neutral location: Public mandate to assist all branches and levels of government and communities with RJ initiatives; housed under a neutral administrative agency to enable work across multiple disciplines (public safety, human services, education, and criminal justice).

Administrative and funding agency: Centralized administration and funding of public RJ initiatives ensures accountability, safeguards RJ practice independence against pressures of any one set of sponsors/funders, ensures consistency of standards, minimizes competing priorities, and captures statewide impacts.

Comprehensive functions: Authority to secure diverse RJ funding sources to leverage public investment; develop and fund government and community-based RJ initiatives; set standards to ensure the quality of public RJ programming; provide training, maintain repository of RJ resources; host educational events; conduct research to demonstrate RJ impact; and convene dialogues to address systemic barriers.

Guided by advisory committee: Collaborative body of government and community members, drawn from public safety, law enforcement, victim assistance, health & human services, education, indigenous communities, survivors, returning citizens, incarcerated populations, and RJ programs and practitioners working in communities, schools and criminal justice systems, recruited from diverse ethnicities, races, religions, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, geographic regions.

Core staffing to carry out public functions: Sufficient number of staff (ten FTEs) with RJ expertise to develop RJ policies; launch and evaluate RJ programs; carry out grant-making; deliver training; lead public education; conduct research and fundraising; manage public and private funding streams; compile comprehensive reports; coordinate advisory committee; and collaborate with practitioners.

Core funding for programs and operations: Annual state budget appropriation at a sufficient funding level (\$3 million) to cover operational, staffing, and programmatic expenses; funding sources from RJ cost savings, justice reinvestment initiatives and the Cannabis Social Equity Trust Fund.

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¹ See *RJAC Research Report, dated November 2023* for the recommended enabling statute and program design of the MA Office of RJ, and the data about MA RJ initiatives and other state RJ systems that informed the RJAC's recommendations and this budget request. The RJAC's recommendations in this report incorporate public input collected during a public comment period. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/restorative-justice-advisory-committee-state-office-of-restorative-justice-research-report-2023/download>

Proposed State RJ Office Operating Budget

Name	MA State Office of Restorative Justice				
Subject	Annual Operating Budget - Year 1 Start-up Budget				
Budget line	Programming Expenses	UOM	No. of Units	Rate	Budgeted Amt:
1	Agency and court-based RJ program grants	per program	15	\$50,000	\$750,000
2	Community-based RJ program grants	per program	15	\$50,000	\$750,000
3	Outreach, trainings & educational conferences	lump sum	3	\$40,000	\$120,000
4	Database-tracking system	lump sum	1	\$100,000	\$100,000
5	Centralized information repository	lump sum	1	\$15,000	\$15,000
	Subtotal				\$1,735,000
Budget line	Staffing Expenses	UOM	No. of Units	Rate	Budgeted Amt:
6	Directors (Executive and Deputy) (2)	lump sum	1	\$270,000	\$270,000
7	Training and Outreach Staff (2)	lump sum	1	\$175,000	\$175,000
8	Research Staff (2)	lump sum	1	\$175,000	\$175,000
9	Grant Management Staff (2)	lump sum	1	\$150,000	\$150,000
10	Office Administrative Staff (2)	lump sum	1	\$125,000	\$125,000
11	Fringe benefits (est. 39%) - (pension, healthcare, workers comp)	lump sum	1	\$349,050	\$349,050
12	Telecommunications, equipment, supplies, travel, logistical expenses	lump sum	1	\$30,000	\$30,000
	Subtotal				\$1,274,050
	Total State Office Budget - Year 1 Start-up				<u>\$3,009,050</u>

Potential Cost-Savings from Restorative Justice

The Commonwealth's annual investment of this \$3 million in the Massachusetts Office of Restorative Justice could potentially produce an annual **return on investment of \$42 million.**²

Why Prioritizing Restorative Justice is Important:

- Rehabilitation over retribution
- Community empowerment
- Reduction in recidivism
- More cost effective than incarceration
- Social equality – addresses systemic bias
- Humanization of justice

For more information about this budget request, contact RJAC State RJ Office Subcommittee members Sam Williams and Susan Jeghelian at sam@concordprisonoutreach.org and susan.jeghelian@umb.edu.

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² This calculation is based on a recent economic evaluation in England and Wales that analyzed the impacts of RJ interventions for adults and young people using 2021 costs which found that the cost-social benefit ratio of RJ was £14 per £1 invested, which is approximately \$17.61 per \$1.26 invested. See *RJAC Research Report, dated November 2023*.

ATTACHMENT C

EOPSS Restorative Justice Grant Program

Summary on impact of Funding 2024

How has Restorative Justice programming made a difference with your participants or organizational culture?

Respondents stated that the Restorative Justice program resources have made a difference in their communities by helping them to improve staff training and performance, foster more self-directed/ self-help behaviors and accountability in their clients. Clients are now demonstrating healthier decision-making practices that will, in the long term, help to strengthen community-based relationships and overall program service deliverables for the agencies. All the state-funded Restorative justice agencies are committed to helping to transfer restorative justice practices more broadly in their community beyond their own agencies' work. Lastly, restorative justice has also helped them strengthen communication and build more internal cohesion to foster individual and programmatic expansion.

Would you recommend Restorative Justice Programming to others? If so, what specific benefits or impact would you highlight?

Respondents stated that the Restorative Justice program resources have helped increase individual and community awareness building. Community agencies sees a mindset shift occurring in understanding how harm negatively impacts the youth and families and why more healthy decision-making is related to a better quality of living. Restorative programming has allowed agencies to offer alternative program models and structures, assisting participants to make firmer commitments and pay closer attention to how they choose to live. Community agencies have recommended restorative justice programs and practices to their local jails, schools, courts, police departments, local partners, universities, chambers of commerce, and local neighborhood groups. Overall, there is consensus by all agencies that funding restorative justice programs has helped their local areas develop more program infrastructure, capacity for community harm reduction strategies and long-term social well-being.

Could you share a success story or achievement that you attribute to the support, or resources provided by the restorative justice program?

Respondents stated that the Restorative Justice program resources have had a major impact on the community at large, and these resources have allowed them to strengthen and deepen local partnerships through the expansion of their service deliverables. Agencies were able to provide more community circles and restorative justice dialogues that helped fostered new connections and pathways to understanding community needs. Hiring new staff has also allowed them to build more service capacities to engage young people in different learning settings beyond traditional school environments. These services have also been used effectively to support men/ women returning home from prison to help them re-enter society. Combining restorative justice practices with traditional workforce development skill building and character education has been exciting because by expanding program models this will create more learning and program pathways for greater possibilities. Overall, hiring new staff, developing programming services, and deepening relationships have created more potential for collaboration, which helps to increase social education and understanding for harm reduction strategies.

Can you highlight any aspect of Restorative Justice Programming that has fostered a sense of empowerment, confidence, or self-efficacy among participants?

Respondents stated that the Restorative Justice program resources have helped them to foster more community empowerment by creating new spaces for learning that don't exist presently. These new spaces have a community ripple effect that increases partnership and collaboration, brings new

community stakeholders together, and strengthens a collective voice in expressing the deeper needs in the community. For the youth and adults returning home from prison, the restorative justice programming is impacting them in the areas of emotional growth, social awareness, and responsible decision-making. More local partners are now interested in using restorative justice programming to engage the merging adult populations at an important transition stage in their lives. Overall, the individual and community impact of restorative Justice programming has been very positive, and local agencies are very excited about future resources that can help them better serve children, youth, and families in their communities.

In what ways has the restorative Justice Program supported your goals and aspirations, and how do you see it continuing to impact you in the future?

Respondents stated that the Restorative Justice program resources have helped them to support their agency and programming in many ways:

1. There was a collective agreement that restorative justice helped to create more self-awareness and accountability in the community. Participants clearly understand how any level of harm committed impacts the community and ripples on many levels.
2. Restorative Justice programming activities provide a broader menu of tools to help mediate community conflicts, improve communication skills, and deepen understanding of the root causes of violence and criminal activities.
3. All the respondents believe that by expanding restorative justice services, these activities are impacting not only individuals and agencies but can have a generational impact on the quality of the community in the future.
4. Training staff and youth as future circle keepers and restorative justice practices are helping to strengthen and build a new cadre of community leaders who share the same vision for community improvement.
5. All respondents stated that the annual impact of restorative justice programming is still being assessed on the cognitive and emotional levels. However, the changes being observe currently are promising signs that have everyone excited about future opportunities ahead

However, agencies are witnessing deeper relations developed with youth and adults in their communities that weren't so visible. All respondents want to make restorative justice education more accessible to more people in their community, which will ripple across Massachusetts.

ATTACHMENT D



Roxbury Community College (RCC) & Restorative Justice Advisory Committee (RJAC):

2024 End-of-Year Report

Jeff Van Dreason

Introduction

As the year ends, Roxbury Community College (RCC) is proud to share the outcomes of our work in 2024. One of the significant milestones we achieved was the completion of a comprehensive survey, which included outreach to over 50 institutions across Massachusetts. The purpose of this survey was to create an inventory of restorative justice practices, identify the types of clients these institutions serve, and understand the range of services they provide. This survey will play a vital role in furthering our understanding of the current landscape of restorative justice within the state and help guide future initiatives and recommendations for improving these practices.

Survey Methodology

To ensure that our survey was inclusive and representative of the diverse sectors engaged with restorative justice, we reached out to various types of institutions, including schools, community organizations, government agencies, healthcare providers, and criminal justice entities. We employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in our survey design, with questions focused on the following areas:

1. **Restorative Justice Practices:** Identifying the types of restorative justice practices being implemented (e.g., restorative circles, conferencing, victim-offender dialogues).
2. **Target Clients:** Understanding the demographics of the populations being served (e.g., youth, adult offenders, victims, community members).
3. **Services Provided:** Exploring the range of services offered (e.g., mediation, conflict resolution, emotional support, education, prevention).
4. **Challenges and Barriers:** Collecting insights on challenges faced in implementing restorative justice practices, including funding, training, and institutional resistance.

The survey was distributed electronically, with follow-up communication to encourage maximum participation. By the close of the data collection period, we had successfully gathered responses from 53 institutions across Massachusetts.

Key Findings

1. Prevalence of Restorative Justice Practices

Our survey revealed that restorative justice practices are being increasingly embraced by a variety of institutions, especially in educational and community settings. Among the 53 institutions surveyed:

- **72%** reported utilizing restorative circles as their primary restorative practice.
- **55%** offered victim-offender dialogues or conferences as part of their services.
- **42%** incorporated restorative practices as a part of their conflict resolution and discipline systems, particularly in schools and juvenile justice programs.
- **30%** engaged in community-building practices designed to enhance social cohesion and address collective harm.

These findings indicate that restorative justice practices are not confined to the criminal justice system but are being increasingly integrated into other sectors such as education, healthcare, and community organizations. This broad adoption suggests a growing recognition of restorative justice's potential to build stronger, more connected communities.

2. Demographics of Clients Served

A key insight from the survey was the diversity of populations being served by restorative justice initiatives. The institutions reported serving the following client groups:

- **Youth** (under 18): 61% of respondents serve young people, particularly in educational settings and juvenile justice programs.
- **Adult Offenders**: 56% of respondents provide restorative justice services for adults involved in criminal justice, with a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration.
- **Victims of Crime**: 48% of the institutions work with victims, providing a space for healing and resolution through restorative dialogues.
- **Community Members**: 44% reported offering restorative services to the broader community to resolve conflicts, build social capital, and address community harm.

A significant portion of respondents (35%) indicated serving a combination of these groups, particularly in community organizations and specialized programs that facilitate intergenerational or cross-sector collaboration. This reinforces the versatility and applicability of restorative justice across different demographics and contexts.

3. Services Provided

The range of services offered by surveyed institutions was diverse, reflecting the many ways restorative justice can be applied. Key services identified include:

- **Mediation and Conflict Resolution**: 68% of respondents offer mediation services as part of their restorative justice programs. This is particularly common in schools, universities, and community centers.
- **Emotional Support and Counseling**: 53% of institutions provide support for emotional healing, either as part of restorative dialogues or as standalone services.
- **Restorative Circles**: 51% facilitate restorative circles, often used in schools to address conflict and harm, and in communities for group healing.
- **Education and Training**: 42% of institutions provide educational programs or workshops aimed at teaching restorative practices to staff, students, and community members.
- **Victim-Offender Dialogue**: 38% offer facilitated dialogues between victims and offenders, primarily in criminal justice and corrections settings.

Many institutions noted that their services were holistic in nature, combining restorative practices with other forms of support, such as trauma-informed care, mentorship, and substance abuse recovery programs.

4. Challenges and Barriers

While the survey findings were largely positive, respondents also identified several challenges in the implementation and expansion of restorative justice practices:

- **Funding and Resource Limitations:** 61% of institutions cited limited funding as a significant barrier to expanding restorative justice programs. This is particularly true in public schools and community organizations.
- **Lack of Training and Expertise:** 54% of respondents mentioned a shortage of qualified facilitators and practitioners, which limits the effectiveness and sustainability of restorative justice efforts.
- **Institutional Resistance:** 47% of respondents noted resistance from traditional systems (e.g., law enforcement, education administrators) who may be skeptical about the effectiveness of restorative justice or see it as an alternative to punitive approaches.
- **Stigma and Misunderstanding:** 39% of institutions mentioned a lack of understanding about restorative justice within their communities, making it difficult to gain buy-in from stakeholders.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The survey results offer a valuable snapshot of the current landscape of restorative justice in Massachusetts. The findings confirm that restorative practices are gaining traction across multiple sectors, providing healing, reconciliation, and conflict resolution in diverse contexts. However, there are clear challenges that need to be addressed to fully realize the potential of restorative justice in the state.

Based on the survey results, RCC offers the following recommendations:

1. **Increase Funding and Resources:** Advocate for increased state and federal funding to support restorative justice programs, with a focus on schools, community organizations, and criminal justice systems.
2. **Expand Training and Professional Development:** Invest in training programs for facilitators, educators, and practitioners to ensure high-quality restorative justice services across Massachusetts.
3. **Strengthen Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public campaigns to educate communities about the benefits of restorative justice and build support among stakeholders, particularly law enforcement and educational administrators.
4. **Support Research and Evaluation:** Encourage ongoing research into the effectiveness of restorative justice practices in Massachusetts, with a particular focus on long-term outcomes for both victims and offenders.

As we move into the new year, the RCC is committed to supporting and advancing restorative justice practices across Massachusetts and continuing to partner with the RJAC. By building on the insights gained from this survey, we look forward to working collaboratively with stakeholders to create a more restorative and equitable society.

Acknowledgments

RCC would like to thank all the institutions and individuals who participated in this survey. Your input is invaluable in helping us shape the future of restorative justice in Massachusetts.