



Restorative Justice: The Facts

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What is Restorative Justice?

Despite its emergence over a century ago, the term 'restorative justice' has no established meaning and is used in a range of different ways.[1] Generally, restorative justice is understood as a theoretical-practical approach to the criminal legal system that assumes a more inclusive and participatory nature, in which reparation of damage to the victim is a central point.[2,3] Instead of seeing the criminal act as a violation of law that leads to the punishment of an offender, restorative justice considers the crime as an irregular action or interpersonal transgression that caused harm to an individual or community. Therefore, a criminal act is seen as a violation of a person and the relationships between people.[2]

Have You Heard?

- Some organizations have reported that 90% of survivors chose restorative justice instead of a traditional approach when given the choice.[4]
- An examination of 27 victim-offender mediation programs in North America found that 72% lowered recidivism and the average decline was by 7%.[5]

What Are the Consequences?

This conception of crime not only promotes accountability, but also a moral obligation for the offender to repair the harm(s) caused by their actions and seek the restoration of the affected relationship(s). To accomplish this, restorative justice entails victims/survivors, offenders, and the community (or their representatives) coming together to discuss the incident and engage in a "restorative dialogue." [2] The most common form of this practice is the *victim-offender mediation* or *victim-offender conference*, which were the first types of restorative justice meetings to be established. They continue to be among the most used models in restorative justice programs, reporting higher satisfaction levels on its participants.[1,2] Overall, existing research demonstrates that restorative justice practices have a positive psychological impact on victims, who are frequently overlooked in conventional justice, and that some of these positive impacts persist over time.[2]

How to Support Survivors

Advocates of restorative justice argue that traditional ways of responding to wrongdoing tend to leave the needs of victims, perpetrators, and communities unmet and leave the harm caused by wrongdoing unrepaired.[1] Nascimento and colleagues' (2023) systematic review as well as Latimer et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis supports that notion and indicates that restorative justice can be effective in reducing the harmful effects of violent victimization. Although there is limited research on how restorative justice can support victim recovery, there are certain well-known enabling factors (e.g., support networks and emotional/substantive assistance from significant others) that can facilitate the victim recovery process as well as inhibiting factors (e.g., denial or minimization of responsibility for offending or an insincere apology) that can impede the victim recovery process if they are present in restorative justice.[6]

Resources

Texas

- TDCJ Victim Services Division Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue (VOMD) --
<https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/vomd.html>

National

- Common Justice -- <https://www.commonjustice.org/>
- Healing Justice -- <https://healingjusticeproject.org/>
- National Center on Restorative Justice --
<https://ncorj.org/>
- Restorative Justice Exchange --
<https://restorativejustice.org/resources/>

References

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- [3]Braithwaite, J. (2002). Setting standards for restorative justice. *British Journal of Criminology*, 42(3), 563-577.
- [4]Vera Institute of Justice. (2020). How Can District Attorneys' Offices Use Restorative Justice? <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/restorative-justice-fact-sheet.pdf>
- [5]Latimer, J., Dowden, C., & Muise, D. (2005). The effectiveness of restorative justice practices: A meta-analysis. *The prison journal*, 85(2), 127-144.
- [6]Suzuki, M. (2023). Victim recovery in restorative justice: A theoretical framework. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 50(12), 1893-1908.

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Resources

- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative 844-878-2274
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving 877-623-3435
- National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
- Texas Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846