WOODBURY POLICE DEPARTMENT'S

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COMMUNITY CONFERENCING PROGRAM

"An Initial Assessment of Client Satisfaction"

CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION
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Report on Woodbury Minnesota Restorative Justice Program, 2/26/97
by Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
In May of 1995, the Woodbury Minnesota Police Department initiated their Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program for juvenile offenders and those affected by the crime. This represented one of only a handful of police-based initiatives anywhere in the country to apply restorative justice principles and the family group conferencing process that was beginning to receive an increasing amount of attention throughout Minnesota and the country. From the beginning, the Woodbury Police Department collected client satisfaction data. The Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation at the University of Minnesota was asked to assist with an initial assessment of the Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program by compiling and analyzing participant satisfaction data which the Woodbury Police Department had gathered. The purpose of this report is to describe the Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program and to report the initial findings of client satisfaction with the process. The report is broken down into six sections: overview of restorative justice and family group conferencing, background on the Woodbury Police initiative, program description, methodology, findings and conclusions.

Restorative Justice & Family Group Conferencing

Restorative justice provides a very different way of thinking about and responding to crime and victimization. Rather than the state being viewed as the primary victim in criminal acts and placing victims and offenders in passive roles, as is the case in the prevailing juvenile justice system, restorative justice recognizes crime as first and foremost being directed against individual people within the context of a community. It assumes that those most affected by
crime should have the opportunity to become actively involved in resolving the conflict. Restoration of victim losses, holding offenders directly accountable for their behavior by making amends to individual victims and victimized communities, and assisting victims in their journey of moving beyond their frequent sense of vulnerability by means of achieving some closure, stand in sharp contrast to the entirely offender driven nature of the current juvenile justice system.

Restorative justice attempts to draw upon the strengths and competencies of both offenders and victims, rather than focusing upon their deficits. While denouncing criminal behavior and stressing the importance of public safety, restorative justice emphasizes the need to treat offenders with respect and to reintegrate them into the larger community in ways that can lead to lawful behavior. It is based upon the following values.

1. Restorative justice is far more concerned about restoration of the victim and victimized community than simply ever more costly punishment of the offender.

2. Restorative justice elevates the importance of the victim in the criminal justice process, through increased involvement, input and services.

3. Restorative justice requires that offenders be held directly accountable to the person and/or community that they victimized.

4. Restorative justice encourages the entire community to be involved in holding the offender accountable and promoting a healing response to the needs of victims and offenders.

5. Restorative justice places greater emphasis on the offender accepting responsibility for their behavior and making amends, whenever possible, than simply on the severity of punishment.
6. Restorative justice recognizes a community responsibility for providing support and assistance to crime victims, as well as opportunities for offenders to gain skills and employment which can lead to lawful behavior.

In a very real sense, the theory of restorative justice provides a blueprint for moving into the next century by drawing upon much of the wisdom of the past. Dating all the way back to 12th century England, following the Norman invasion of Britain, a major paradigm shift occurred in which there was a turning away from the well established understanding of crime as a victim-offender conflict within the context of community. William the Conqueror’s son, Henry I, issued a decree securing royal jurisdiction over certain offenses (robbery, arson, murder, theft, and other violent crimes) against the King’s peace. Prior to this decree crime had always been viewed as conflict between individuals and an emphasis upon repairing the damage by making amends to the victim was well established. Restorative justice also draws upon the rich heritage of many recent justice reform movements, including: community corrections, victim advocacy, and community policing. The principles of restorative justice are particularly consistent with those of many indigenous traditions, including Native American, Hawaiian, Canadian First Nation people, and Maori people in Australia and New Zealand. These principles are also consistent with values emphasized by nearly all of the world religions and are deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian culture.

Family group conferencing (FGC) is one of the newest restorative justice interventions that is receiving widespread attention throughout the United States. Rarely has a new criminal
justice idea received such quick exposure and interest from audiences as widespread as activists, professionals and the general public. No other restorative justice approach has so quickly brought such numbers of law enforcement officials "to the table" as active stakeholders in the restorative justice movement.

The FGC is intuitively appealing to restorative justice advocates here in North America and may contain some important suggestions for victim offender mediation. Family group conferencing originated in New Zealand as a way to address the failures of traditional juvenile justice and to incorporate indigenous Maori values which emphasized the role of family and community in addressing wrongdoing. Institutionalized in law in 1989, FGC’s are now the norm for processing juvenile cases in New Zealand. Australia then picked up the idea and has implemented a number of models in various communities. Like victim-offender mediation (VOM) in North America, Australian implementation has been piecemeal and the model varies with the community.

All juvenile cases in New Zealand, with a few exceptions such as homicide, are diverted by courts to FGC’s. Consequently, judges report drops in caseloads of up to 80%. These conferences are then put together and facilitated by a youth justice worker employed not by criminal justice but by the welfare/social service sector. The conferences aim to be inclusive. In addition to the offender, major effort is put into including as many of his or her family as possible, including extended family. Victims and their supporters are invited as are any professional caregivers who have been involved with the parties. A lawyer/advocate for the
offender is invited and a representative of police (who serve as prosecutors) is present. This group, which includes participants usually assumed to be adversaries, is expected to come to a consensus on the entire outcome for the case, not just on a restitution agreement. Goals include accountability, healing and prevention. Facilitator roles are broadly and loosely-defined including but not limited to mediation.

Family group conferences were adopted and adapted in Australia in a variety of forms but the model most often promoted in North America, including in Woodbury Minnesota, was developed in the Wagga Wagga police department. It differs from the New Zealand model in that it uses police officers, usually in uniform, or school officials to set up and facilitate meetings and does not normally utilize separate caucuses during the mediation sessions. The Australian model, particularly as it is developing in the U.S., focuses upon how to respond to the impact of the crime on all those affected, whereas the New Zealand model has a much broader impact on the entire legal disposition of the offense. Development of family group conferencing has been greatly influenced by the work of the Australian criminologist John Braithwaite and his work on reintegrative shaming and its impact on changing offender behavior.

**Background**

The Woodbury Police Department's Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program developed out of a growing concern that juvenile crime is rising to crisis proportions in America and that traditional methods of handling juvenile crime have not been highly effective. The current juvenile justice structure provides no opportunity for victim involvement.
Victims are often left with no closure to the incident; they may feel more fearful than before the crime was committed and they may feel isolated from their own community.

Offender needs are also neglected. The current system is slow in confronting the offenders and it fails to address the critical need for reintegration of the offender back into the community, leaving the offender feeling isolated and permanently labeled a bad person. As a result offenders may be at a greater risk of re-offending.

The purpose of the Woodbury Police Department’s Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program is to attempt to address juvenile crime problems at the community level through direct interaction of the victim, offender and the community. Victims and offenders, along with their families, friends and neighbors, are invited to meet in a safe and controlled setting to discuss the incident and how each person was affected by the incident. A trained Woodbury officer facilitates the conference allowing the victim and the offender an opportunity to reach a mutual agreement that helps restore the victim and allows the offender to be reintegrated into the community. After the conference, the Woodbury Police Department monitors the agreement to insure that agreements are completed and done so in a timely manner. Participation in the conference is voluntary for both the victim and the offender. To date, approximately 81 conferences have been held.

Program Description

Program participants are selected from the Woodbury Police Department’s cases. After the police receive a report of a crime, the incident is investigated according to the department’s
normal procedures, as if the case would be handled through the traditional court system. This procedure typically includes talking with the parents of the offenders. After a thorough investigation has been conducted, the case is sent to the Restorative Justice Diversion Program Coordinator for review. The Program Coordinator evaluates the case according to three criteria:

- the seriousness of the crime
- the offender’s past involvement in the Juvenile Justice System
- the attitude of the offender

Other considerations include whether or not the offender admitted to committing the act, the fit between the individual case circumstances and the program goals and objectives and whether the case will be diverted if it is sent to the courts. The Program Coordinator uses his experience in working with similar cases and his experience as a police officer to decide whether the case should be diverted to the conferencing program. Once the decision is made to refer the case to the program, it is assigned to one of six police officers who have been trained as program facilitators.

The facilitator starts by contacting the participants. Participants are generally contacted by phone unless there is no phone or the participants request a face-to-face meeting. Program staff have found phone conversations are as effective as face-to-face interaction for informing and preparing participants for the conference.

Because the program is voluntary, the offender is contacted first to avoid re-victimization of the victim. The facilitator explains the program to the offender and to the offender’s family invites them to participate in the program as an alternative to going through the court system.
If the offender agrees to participate, the victim is contacted.

The facilitator spends more time describing the program to the victim. This description usually involves a discussion about the many ways victims are violated and how the conference can help restore victims. Victims are told that the conference addresses direct losses to the victim such as property, and also indirect violations often experienced by victims after a crime, such as the fear. The facilitator explains that the conference provides an opportunity for the victim to face the offender and tell the offender how the crime affected him or her. It is a forum for the victim to express his or her feelings about the incident and to bring closure to the incident.

Victims are told that they may bring support people with them. They are informed that they may also invite other parties who have been affected by the crime such as children, neighbors and friends. The facilitator explains the process to the victim and the victim is told that the offender is asked to first explain how the incident occurred and that the victim would then have a chance to respond. After the victim is finished speaking, the victim’s support people, family and friends are invited to share some of their feelings.

Lastly the facilitator spends some time explaining the criminal justice system to the victim. The facilitator explains that the system allows victims to be creative in how restitution is defined. For example, victims may ask offenders to do community service which could involve the offender doing work directly for the victim (shoveling snow, cutting grass) or for a church or community project that is of interest to the victim. The facilitator informs the victim
that it is not uncommon for offender issues to surface during the conference and that the restitution could be directly related to the issues. For example, if during the conference it is revealed that the offender is chemically dependent, the victim might consider restitution which would require the offender to participate in a chemical dependency program or counseling. The victim is invited to be as creative as possible when thinking about restitution possibilities.

If the victims agree to participate in the conference, the facilitator again contacts the offender. This time the facilitator spends more time discussing the details of the conference to the offender explaining that he/she must admit to the crime in front of the people at the conference and asks the offender if he or she believes that he or she is able to do that. The facilitator explains that the offender may invite people to participate who would act as supports for him or her. The offender’s parents are also invited and are told that they may bring concerned individuals to the conference in support of the parents and/or the victim.

The facilitator informs the offender that the victim and his/her support people will speak about the way that the crime impacted them and how they felt about it. After the victim and his/her supports have finished the facilitator tells the offender that he or she can respond to what was said. The offender’s parents and support people will also be allowed to describe their feelings about the incident.

The offender and his/her parents are told that they will have input into the restitution. The offender is told that the restitution is decided by all of the conference participants but that it will be reasonable. All parties are informed that the facilitator will step in if the restitution
is unreasonable, but that there is substantial leeway for all parties in deciding the appropriate restitution.

Conferences are typically 1-2 hours in length. They are usually held at the Woodbury police department or one of the local schools. The facilitators use a script (see appendix 1) when beginning the conference to describe what will happen in the conference and set the rules for participation. Rules include no swearing or abusive language or behavior, and that no jackets or hats are to be worn. The latter rule is to avoid participants hiding behind clothing during the conference.

The facilitator explains that the conference is a process; that all of the conditions of the conference and the agreement must be fulfilled or the case will be referred to the courts. It is explained that if the conference process begins to break down at any point, the facilitator reserve the right to end the conference and send the case on to the courts. There issue of confidentially is not discussed with participants.

After the facilitator describes the conference process and rules, he/she, using the offender’s name, asks the offender to describe the incident. The facilitator never uses the labels of victim and offender but addresses each participant by his/her name. Next the victim is asked to describe what he/she remembers about the incident and how he/she felt about it. The victim is also asked to respond to what he/she has heard from the offender and how the incident affected others around him or her. The victim is also asked to describe their fears, if he/she has any, and how that fear has affected his or her life. When the victim is finished, the victim’s
support people describe the ways that the event affected them and their feelings about the incident.

After the victim and his/her support people have finished, the offender is asked to respond to what was said. The offender's support people are also invited to provide input. At this point, the facilitator is usually able to sit back and allow a natural dialogue to take place among the participants. The facilitator jots down the information being discussed which may be useful for the restitution agreement. When the facilitator sees the discussion beginning to wane he or she will lead the dialogue into a discussion about restitution. The facilitator will highlight the points of the discussion which involved issues of restitution and ask the participants to come to consensus about what should be included in the restitution agreement. Once consensus is reached, the facilitator reads back the agreement and writes it down.

The facilitator announces that he/she must step out of the room to formally document the agreement and the participants are invited to share some refreshments with each other. The facilitator waits for 15-20 minutes so that some social interaction can occur among the participants. Then he/she returns to the room with the completed documents. The facilitator explains that the agreement will be monitored and asks the victim and offender to sign the agreement. If referrals to programs such as counseling or chemical dependency programs are part of the agreement, information and necessary paperwork are provided so that all participants are informed as to how to proceed after the conference.

If there are no extenuating circumstances, restitution agreements are expected to be
completed within 90 days. Involvement in classes and programs is to be completed within 30 days. To date, program staff report that there has been only one restitution agreement where there has not been compliance. In this case, the offender moved out of state.

Methodology

After completion of the conference, a seven item self-administered questionnaire was distributed to program participants by the Woodbury Police Department. Participants were asked to return the questionnaires to the Woodbury Police Department. According to program staff, approximately 90% of the questionnaires were returned.

Program staff randomly selected a sample of 76 questionnaires from the 140 questionnaires which were received since the program originated. Sample participants broke down as follows: 27 offenders, 20 parents of offenders, 11 victims.

Results are reported, comparing the frequency and mean of all three groups across the first four items. A frequency of “yes” responses is reported for all three groups for the last three questions. Finally, the most frequent response to the comment section for all three groups will be presented. The number of victims, offenders, and parents of offenders are the same as reported above unless otherwise stated.

Because the number of respondents in each group is small, especially in the victim group, generalizing these data to the larger populations is not possible. Therefore, caution should be taken when comparing response between groups.
Findings

The first four items of the questionnaire ask victims, offenders and parents of offenders to rate the Restorative Justice Conference on various aspects of the program using a 10 point scale where 1 was the lowest rating and 10 was the highest rating. A table comparing the responses for each group follows the narrative summary of the responses.

Overall ratings of the program were extremely high for all program components measured. The lowest mean rating of any item was not lower than 7.96.

**Question 1.** Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the results of the conference. Satisfaction with the results of the conference was high, with all groups reporting approximately 8 or higher on a scale from 1 to 10. Victims report a mean score of 8.18; offenders, 7.96 and parents of offenders 8.80.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Offenders</th>
<th>Parents of Offenders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Response Between 1-10</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>8.80</td>
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**Table 1:**
Satisfaction with Results of the Conference

**Question 2.** Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the conference process. Ratings of process were high with a mean rating of 9.00 for victims, 8.00 for offenders and 8.95 for parents of offenders.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Response Between 1-10</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>8.95</td>
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**Table 2:**
Satisfaction with the Conference Process
Question 3. When asked how fairly participants felt they were treated by the conference process, participants felt they were treated extremely fair with ratings rising to nearly 9's or more from all groups. The mean rating for victims was 9.45; offenders, 8.96 and 9.55 for parents of offenders.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Response Between 1-10</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>9.55</td>
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Table 3: How Fairly Treated by the Conference Process

Question 4. Participants were asked how fairly they felt everyone else participating in the conference was treated. Participants felt everyone was treated fairly at the conference. The mean victim response was 9.45, the mean offender response was 9.41 and the mean parent of offenders' response was 9.55.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Response Between 1-10</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>9.55</td>
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</table>

Table 4: How Fairly Everyone Else Was Treated

Question 5. When asked whether participants felt that the Restorative Justice Program was preferable to the case being handled by the courts, all groups overwhelmingly preferred the Restorative Justice Program. However, the victim response differed from that of the offender and parents of offenders response by 10% or more. Eighty-two percent of victims as compared to 92.6 percent of offenders and 100 percent of parents of offenders responded that the
Restorative Justice program was preferable to the courts.

Table 5:
Respondents Who Felt That The Restorative Justice Program Was Preferable To The Courts

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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Offenders</th>
<th>Parents of Offenders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Question 6. Not surprisingly, victims were more likely to state that the courts could have accomplished things that the Restorative Justice Program didn’t. Forty-five percent of victims, as compared to 7.4% of offenders and 15% of parents of offenders felt that there were some things that a court process could have accomplished that the Restorative Justice Program couldn’t. When asked what the courts could have done, the most common victim response was that the “courts could have created a more serious atmosphere” for offenders. Responses of offenders and parents of offenders did not cluster into any one suggestion.

Table 6:
Respondents Feeling That The Courts Could Accomplish Things That The Restorative Justice Could Not

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Question 7. Participants were asked if faced with a similar situation in the future, they would choose the Restorative Justice Program over the courts. Eighty-two percent of victims, 96.3% of offenders and 95% of parents of offenders said that they would choose to have their situation handled through the Restorative Justice Program rather than going through the court system.
Table 7:
Respondents Who Would Choose the Restorative Justice Program Again

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Offenders</th>
<th>Parents of Offenders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>95.0</td>
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Comments

Participants in all three groups were asked to provide input on the Restorative Justice Program.

The open-ended responses are summarized and reported by group according to the frequency of the response.

Victims:

1) Respondents were pleased with the conference/program, and with the police effort.

2) Some respondents felt that the conference/program should be used for first time offenders only; that more serious offenses would not be a good fit for this program.

3) A few participants reported dissatisfaction because the offender’s attitude did not change. Some participants believed that offenders were not remorseful.

Offenders:

1) Nearly all opened-ended responses from offenders described satisfaction with the program. Respondents were pleased with the process, with the police and the manner in which the conferences was conducted.

Parents of Offenders:

1) Parents of offenders were also pleased with the conference/program, and with the manner in which the police handled the case.

2) Parents often said that the program should be for first time offenders only.
Conclusions

The development of the Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program by the police department in Woodbury, Minnesota represents a very impressive effort to apply restorative justice principles and the family group conferencing model developed by police in Australia to diversion of juvenile offenders involved in minor crimes from the justice system. After receiving training from both the Australians who were traveling throughout the U.S. and the Real Justice organization in Pennsylvania that is promoting the Australian model, and from local persons involved in victim offender mediation, a somewhat similar intervention, the Woodbury Police Department began their program in May of 1995. While initially skeptical about the concept of dialogue between young offenders, crime victims, family members, and other support people, those involved in the Woodbury program have now become vocal advocates of the process.

The data that emerged from this initial assessment of client satisfaction with the Woodbury Police Department's Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program indicates a very high level of support by those crime victims, support people and offenders who participated in a family group conferencing session and in this study. This finding of very high satisfaction with the process of family group conferencing is consistent with a number of studies in North America and Europe related to the similar process of victim offender mediation (Coates & Gehm, 1989; Dignan, 1990; Marshall & Merry, 1990; Umbreit, 1995, 1994, 1991; Umbreit & Roberts, 1996). As a new intervention that is beginning to receive a good deal of attention
in many locations throughout Minnesota and the U.S., this data bodes well for further experimentation with family group conferencing in Washington County as an early intervention and diversion program for juvenile offenders committing relatively minor crimes. On the other hand, extreme caution must be used in interpreting these findings or generalizing them. Because of the nature of this initial assessment, the relatively small number of respondents and the self-selection into the conferencing process, the very positive finding of high client satisfaction cannot be generalized to other similar programs, or even to all participants in the Woodbury program. At best, these preliminary findings are suggestive of the subjective experience of those participants who were interviewed. Far more rigorous research, involving comparison groups of similar victims and offenders who did not participate in the program, is needed before the full impact of this intervention can be truly understood.

The Woodbury Police Department’s Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program represents an exceptionally well developed police initiative to implement the principles of restorative justice with juvenile offenders, their victims, and the victimized community. It also represents a strong initiative to hold offenders accountable within their immediate community. In fact, the presence of the Restorative Justice Community Conferencing Program has stimulated another community initiative by citizens concerned with developing a community wide effort to select some common standards for the whole community so that consistent messages can be sent to youth and others in the community. This citizen initiative is called FOCUS (Focus on Community United by Shared Values). The aims of FOCUS are: to
establish a committed relationship between the youth and adults of Woodbury; to focus on developing the character and capabilities of all people, young and old alike; and to be responsible members of the community. Specific goals of this important citizen initiative that grew out of the Woodbury Police Department’s Community Conferencing Program are: to develop active communication within the family, the neighborhood, and the community of Woodbury; and to create a community in which everyone has a sense of belonging and a commitment to one another.

An even stronger way to actively engage the community in the process of holding offenders accountable would be to train and utilize citizen volunteers (including those involved in FOCUS) as facilitators of the family group conferencing sessions, either by themselves or as a co-facilitator with a police officer. Using trained citizen volunteers as mediators/facilitators has been widely practiced by most of the more than 290 victim offender mediation programs throughout the country. Training a select group of citizen volunteers to serve as conference facilitators would also represent a cost effective strategy for expanding the program in Woodbury and other parts of Washington County (by other police departments) within the context of the limited resources available for such initiatives.
APPENDICES

1. Woodbury Police Department’s Restorative Justice Program Flyer

2. Focus on Community United by Shared Values Flyer

3. Script used by conference facilitators
Conferencing restores people and builds community

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

For more information call Woodbury Police Department 739-4141

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Juvenile crime is growing faster than population. Even in a city growing as rapidly as Woodbury this statement holds true. FBI Director Louis Freeh has warned that juvenile crime may well be the greatest crisis facing America as we enter the next century.

Traditional methods of handling juvenile crime do not appear to be working very effectively. Often the system takes way too long to confront an offender. It offers no mechanism for victim involvement and most often fails to address an offender's need to reintegrate into the community. It can leave an offender feeling isolated and permanently labeled as a bad person. This can actually increase the likelihood of re-offending. Victims are left with no closure to the incident, feeling an increase of fear and often isolation from the community.

Restorative Justice programs attempt to solve these problems at the community level through direct interaction of the victim, the offender and the community.

Woodbury Police Department's Community Conferencing Program sends qualified juvenile offenders to a community conference instead of court. While not all offenders or circumstances fit this model, many work well within this concept. In some cases, traditional court may still be deemed more appropriate and more effective.

Our program invites victims and offenders, along with their families, friends and neighbors to meet in a safe, controlled setting to discuss the incident and how it affected each person participating in the conference. A specially trained Woodbury officer facilitates the conference allowing the victim and offender to reach a mutual agreement that restores the victim and re-integrates the offender to the community. Our officers do not counsel or dictate agreements. We act only as moderators, providing a safe environment for everyone to express their feelings and achieve closure to the incident. We monitor all agreements to make sure they are completely fulfilled in a timely manner. Conferences are always voluntary for both the victim and offender. Traditional court options are still possible in lieu of conferencing.

The Woodbury Police began conferencing in May of 1995. Our post conference evaluations indicate most participants are very satisfied with the conference and its outcome. Cases are conferenced based on a set of criteria that include:

1) Seriousness of the offense
2) Attitude of the offender
3) Attitude of the offender's parents
4) Past record of the offender

Along with these four criteria, the overall circumstances of each incident are also considered. Once a conference is completed and the agreement satisfied, the case is closed with no further action taken.

Juvenile crimes and problems occur in the community, in our own neighborhoods. Conferencing allows us to solve these problems and deal with our children in our community; our neighborhoods, where these children will continue to live and grow. It allows this community to directly impact its children and their behaviors. It helps build community by bringing people together to solve problems and reach mutual conclusions.
WHAT'S NEXT?

The survey being distributed at Woodbury Days is a first effort to formulate a picture of the values widely held in our community.

FOCUS will use these community-chosen values to build a better community for all of us!

PLEASE JOIN US IN THIS EFFORT!

You can make a difference!

FOCUS needs YOU:
- Individuals of all ages,
- schools,
- neighborhoods,
- businesses,
- churches,
- and civic and youth organizations.

Please contact Dave Hines, 739-4141.

Focus on Community United by Shared Values

WE HAVE A PROBLEM . . .

Today's young people are facing challenges that past generations never had to face.

More than ever before, the youth of the '90s are more often involved in violence, are more likely to use drugs, have less respect for society, for the community, for other people, and even for themselves.

Juvenile crime is increasing and seems to be one of the greatest social problems our nation will face in the next decade.

Since 1990, Woodbury's population has increased by 60%, while juvenile crime has increased by 75%.
AND WE WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

A group of people here in Woodbury, including parents, schools, police, churches, businesses, and city government, believe that the problems faced by our youth are not just their problems. All of us must work together to find ways to deal with these challenges.

We must join in a community effort to select some common standards for our whole community, so we can send consistent messages to our youth and to everyone in the community. This will give our young people a more clear foundation for their own lives, especially if we find ways to support them in their own efforts to grow into good citizens and responsible members of the community.

SO WE STARTED TO ACT...

In the Fall of 1995, a parent of a Woodbury High School student talked with David Hines of the Police Department, expressing her concerns about illegal drug use in Woodbury.

This led to the formation of a Woodbury Task Force for Youth and Community, which sponsored community-wide meetings in February of 1996. The meetings dealt with drug use and violent behavior, as well as ways to prevent and detect dangerous behavior, with helpful information on strategies and resources.

As an outgrowth of these meetings, a Woodbury Parent Communication Network (PCN) was organized. PCN published their first directory and sponsored a public meeting on “How to Actively Chaperone.”

To express more clearly what we’re about, we began to call ourselves FOCUS — for Focus on Community United by Shared Values.

FOCUS helped to promote community performances of “Hip Deep,” a play produced in all four South Washington County Junior High schools on the issue of diversity.

... AND TO DEFINE OUR Mission.

We begin from an understanding that a healthy community is based on shared values.

Therefore, our aims are:

- to establish a committed relationship between the youth and adults of Woodbury;
- to focus on developing the character and capabilities of all people, young and old alike;
- to be responsible members of our community.

To move toward achieving those aims, our goals are:

- to develop active communication within the family, the neighborhood, and the community of Woodbury;
- to create a community in which everyone has a sense of belonging and a commitment to one another.
CONFERENCE COORDINATOR'S SCRIPT

I. Introduce Participants:

"Welcome. As you know, my name is (coordinator) and I will be coordinating this conference. Before the conference begins, I will work my way around the group, introduce participants and indicate their reasons for being here today. (Introduce each participant and indicate relationship to victim or offender.)

"At this stage, I would like to thank you all for making the effort to attend. This is difficult for all of us, but your presence here will help us deal with the matter that has brought us together.

"Today, this conference will focus on an incident which happened (date, place and nature of offense - no elaboration). It is important to understand that we will focus on what (offender) did and how his/her unacceptable behavior has affected others. We are not here to decide whether (offender) is a good or bad person. We want to explore in what way people have been affected and work toward repairing the harm that has resulted. Does everyone understand this?

* Avoid referring to anyone as an "offender" or "victim". Use names whenever possible.
"(Offender) has admitted his/her part in the incident. Prior to commending the formal part of this conference, I am obliged to tell you that you do not have to participate in this conference and are free to leave at any stage.

"This matter will be finalized by this conference, subject to your positive participation and satisfactory compliance with the conference agreement. Failure to participate by (the offender) or (victim); failure of (the offender) to admit to the incident; or failure to abide by the final agreement will result in the issue being sent to the court system.

"This is an opportunity for all of you here to be involved in repairing the harm that has been done.

"There are some specific rules that must be adhered to in this conference.

- Everyone will get a chance to speak. Do not interrupt the person who is speaking.

- Swearing, threats or abusive language toward anyone in this conference is not permitted.

- The conference will end with an agreement or contract signed by the offender and victim. This contract must be fulfilled to successfully complete this conferencing alternative.
* Remember - no hats - no coats. These items allow people to hide from the "conference."

II. Offender:

Offender is asked to give his/her version of the incident. If more than one offender, they are asked to speak in turn.

"To help us understand who has been affected, we will start by asking (offender) to tell us what happened. Could you tell us how you became involved?"

Key Questions:

- Tell us what happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have you thought about since the incident?
- Who do you think has been affected by your actions?
- In what way have they been affected?

III. Victim:

Victim is then asked for his/her version of the event. "Now let's find out from (victim) in what way he/she has been affected? (victim), would you tell us about that?"
Key Questions:

- What was your reaction at the time of the incident? Immediately afterward?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What has happened for you since the incident?
- How did your family and friends react when they heard about the incident?

IV. Victim Supporters:

Victim's supporters, in turn, are then asked:

- What did you think when you heard about the incident?
- How did you feel about what happened?
- What has happened for you since the incident?
- What are the main issues for you?

V. Offender Supporters:

Offender's supporters are then asked for their reactions. Start with the parents (mother first, if possible), caregivers and then the other supporters, in turn.

To the parents/caregivers:
“It has been difficult for you, hasn’t it? Would you like to tell us about it?
Key Questions:
- What did you think when you heard?
- How do you feel about the incident?
- What has happened since?
- What are the main issues for you?

VI. Agreement:

Restitution and reparation are now negotiated.

(a) *Start with the offender.*

“What do you think should be done to repair the harm caused by this accident?”

(b) *Ask the victim:*

“What would you like to get from today’s conference?”

(c) Ask victim supporters what they think should happen. Begin to develop a plan leading to an agreement.

(d) *Ask Offender:*

“Is there anything you want to say to (the victim)?”
(e) If plans are made, ask offender:
   "Are you happy with that? Do you think it is fair?"

(f) Ask offender supporters what they think.

(g) Open discussion to all - develop final agreement.

VII. Closing the Conference:
   (a) Coordinator summarizes the outcomes of the conference
       regarding restitution and reparation:

   "What I’m hearing is (nature of agreement). I want to
    prepare an agreement to record what’s been decided. This will
    make it formal and put an end to this incident.

   "At this point, I would like to move toward a formal close
    of this conference. Before doing so, I would like to provide
    everyone with a final opportunity to say something. Is there
    anything else anyone wants to say" (Work your way around the
    group)

   "In closing this conference, I would like to thank all of you
    for your contributions in dealing with this difficult matter. You
    are to be congratulated for the way you worked through the
    issues and were able to reach an agreement. (Recommended -
    Please help yourself to some refreshments while I make copies
    of the agreement and bring them back for signing).