



# Restorative Arlington

**Strategic Plan**  
November 2020



# The Restorative Arlington Initiative

The Restorative Arlington initiative is a countywide, cross-sector effort to bring the benefits of restorative justice practices to Arlington. Starting in late April 2020, a dedicated group of 45 people who live, work, worship, teach, study and volunteer in Arlington County, Virginia, began to explore how to adopt restorative justice practices in Arlington’s schools, legal system, and community contexts. These Restorative Arlington working group members met for more than 1,300 person-hours over six months, learning from experts in both nearby communities and other parts of the country.

This strategic plan emerged from that work. In it, we outline the vision and principles that will guide the Restorative Arlington initiative going forward. It is the general framework for the more detailed implementation efforts that we are starting to develop. We hope it informs and inspires you to support and engage with the Restorative Arlington initiative.

## Vision for a Restorative Arlington

An equitable, empathetic community that honors the dignity and humanity of all people and creates pathways for belonging, healing, accountability, and growth.

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# Connection, Equity, Belonging

## Restorative Justice & Restorative Practices

The terms Restorative Justice (RJ) and Restorative Practices (RP) refer to an approach and processes that:

- Have their origins in indigenous knowledge;
- Deepen connections among people through intentionally inclusive practices that cultivate empathy, trust, and mutual respect;
- Respond to harm by engaging all affected parties — and others as needed — in creative, collaborative processes that enable meaningful accountability through acknowledging and repairing the harm;
- Support community members in handling conflict in potentially transformative ways; and
- Advance equity through a framework that is deeply rooted in the understanding that we are all interconnected and we all have value.

**91%**

of harmed people would recommend a restorative conference to a friend.<sup>5</sup>

It is up to  
**8 TIMES**

more expensive to use the court system than restorative justice conferencing<sup>6</sup>

Using restorative practices Minnesota schools reduced suspensions<sup>7</sup> by

**63%**

## Benefits for Arlington



### Paths to Equity

A healthy, thriving community ensures that no one is marginalized, forgotten, “othered,” or considered disposable. As a county, Arlington is committed to becoming an equitable community “where all are valued, educated, healthy & safe regardless of race.”<sup>1</sup>

When applied with an intentional focus on systemic contexts and power structures, restorative justice practices offer practical tools to bring about greater equity through:

- Reducing disproportionate impact of punishment and criminalization in school and legal systems
- Providing space to discuss, learn about, and take action on challenging issues of bias, power, and privilege
- Fostering institutional accountability for eliminating systemic inequities

Adopting effective restorative practices will enable us to build a strong culture of belonging, inclusion, and empowerment throughout our community.



### Safety, Healing, and Accountability

Research confirms that RJ practices reduce re-offending and meet the needs of people harmed more effectively than typical court procedures.<sup>2</sup>

Harmed people who take part in face-to-face RJ conferences are more satisfied with the handling of their cases and suffer less from post traumatic stress symptoms. People who go through RJ processes to take accountability for causing harm are significantly less likely to commit additional harm. This is true for both youth and adults, and the effect is greater for violent crimes than for property crimes. Restorative practices also help improve safety by strengthening healthy relationships among community members, reducing the chances that people will cause harm.



### Community and Collaboration

Restorative practices such as circle processes bring people together, help them connect more deeply, and enhance their ability to prevent and respond to conflicts and harms.

Schools, legal systems, workplaces, and community- and faith-based organizations use these practices because they meet people’s needs for connection, healing, and repair.



### An Opportunity to Lead

We have the opportunity to be in the vanguard of this paradigm-shifting social movement.

People all over the world — and the greater Washington DC region — are embracing the transformative power of restorative justice practices. However, in most places they are only used in one or two systems. By taking an integrated and comprehensive restorative approach, Arlington will be a leader and a model for other jurisdictions to follow.



### Smart and Effective Tools

Restorative justice practices have demonstrated their impact and cost-effectiveness in school, legal, and community settings. Legal system applications reduce recidivism, avoiding the cost and trauma of future harms.<sup>3</sup> School-based restorative approaches increase school connection, help decrease the use of suspension and expulsion, and create a climate of strong relationships that support student achievement, leadership, health, and development.<sup>4</sup>

# Becoming Restorative

Restorative practices fall on a continuum from proactive to responsive. Practices such as community-building circles require only a modest amount of facilitator training and participant preparation. Targeted interventions that address harm and conflict require extensive training and experience to facilitate, as well as additional preparation for participants.

Restorative Arlington is working to build Arlington's capacity to use a range of proven restorative practices to create a stronger, more deeply connected community that can effectively prevent, reduce, and respond to conflict and harms.

## Progress Toward the Vision

### We are already on the path.

Since launching Restorative Arlington in January 2020 — and in the midst of the pandemic — here's what we have been doing:



**Informing and educating** hundreds of community members about restorative justice and restorative practices. Arlingtonians have enthusiastically embraced the restorative approach.



**Building community and connection** among people from all parts of the county by adapting restorative circle practices during physical distancing.

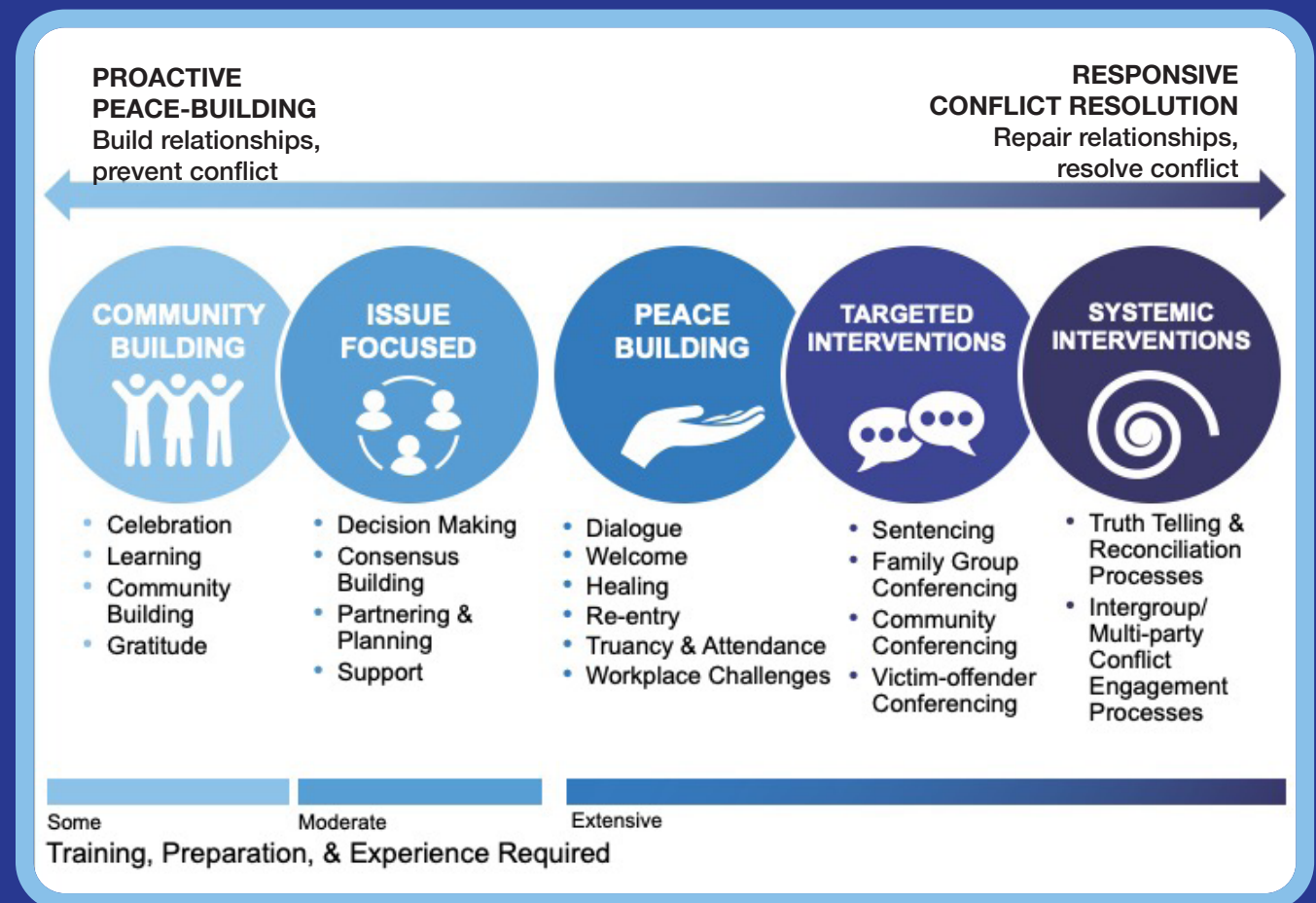


**Engaging** dozens of people in working groups and committees, including stakeholders inside and outside of county government. These dedicated Arlingtonians have spent more than 1,300 hours determining how to best adopt restorative practices in our legal system, schools, and community settings.



**Developing partnerships**, including with Restorative Response Baltimore and George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

## Restorative Circle and Conferencing Processes



## Partnership with Carter School

Through a generative, responsive, and flexible partnership, George Mason University's Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution and Restorative Arlington are already collaborating to advance Restorative Arlington's objectives through mutually-beneficial engagement of students, staff, faculty, organizations, and community members in:

- Leadership support and organizational capacity-building
- Outreach and access to technology and communications
- Co-construction of knowledge, research, project evaluation, and widely-shared publication
- Collaborative development and delivery of training, CEUs, and related materials
- Physical and virtual support for events and activities

# The Restorative Arlington Approach

## Our Mission

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We create connection, belonging, and safety for all community members. We:

- Build capacity to implement and use restorative practices by providing knowledge, space, and tools
  - Strengthen our community through practices that build mutual understanding among people
  - Empower people who have been harmed to exercise their voice and choice
  - Promote healing, accountability, repair and restoration
  - Create space for all people to meet their needs with dignity, compassion, and courage
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## Our Core Values

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**Ensure Equity** by offering processes that embody dignity, respect, and inclusion, and that support belonging, especially for people who have experienced marginalization.

**Empower Community** by developing collaborative practices that deepen the sense of mutual care for all community members.

**Build Trust** and promote healing and safety through deep listening, exercising empathy, being authentic, and using a trauma-informed lens.

**Be Responsive** to the needs of all community members by committing both to ongoing evaluation of our restorative practices and to improvement, with courage and flexibility.

**Exercise Accountability** through fidelity to the principles of restorative justice, honesty and transparency about our work, and a commitment to just and fair treatment of all partners and participants in our programs and processes.

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## Our Commitment to Restorative Principles

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We honor and acknowledge the field of restorative justice/ restorative practices and the indigenous cultures from which it came. We strive to apply the wisdom, principles, and best practices of those with experience and expertise in this work. As part of a dynamic, growing movement, we try to be responsive and reflective, learning from our experiences and new insights and research.

As we implement restorative practices, we endeavor to:

- Honor the worth, goodness, and wisdom of every person
  - Promote shared voice and power, especially through engaging those who are affected in the response to conflict and harm
  - Ensure that participation in restorative practices is genuinely voluntary, validating the agency of participants at every point
  - Provide pathways for accountability, to include acknowledgement of the impact of harm and taking actions to repair the harm
  - Acknowledge the role of relationships, trauma, power, and systemic forces that impact our community and our interactions
  - Make restorative practices and training accessible, with provisions to welcome, support, and accommodate all members of our community
  - Train, mentor, and compensate a diverse cadre of restorative practitioners that reflects the community we serve
-

# Learning, Collaboration, Empowerment

## Restorative Justice Practices in Our Schools

Guided by restorative values of dignity, respect, accountability and fairness, Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) practices nurture healthy relationships, repair harm, transform conflict, and promote justice and equity.

The transformative power of “whole school” RJE supports the Arlington Public Schools (APS) mission of ensuring that “all students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments.”

In addition to addressing matters of discipline restoratively, RJE shifts school culture and prioritizes a relational teaching approach that fosters the resilience and well-being that support students’ academic achievement.<sup>8</sup>

The RJE approach clearly aligns with — and will strengthen — the APS vision of “an inclusive community that empowers all students” and the APS core values of equity, inclusivity, integrity, collaboration, and innovation.

In contrast with top-down mandates imposed on students or staff, RJE embodies the restorative principles of collaboration and voluntary participation, working with all members of the school community, honoring their agency, and empowering and celebrating student leadership.

Implementing RJE in our schools will:

- Enable all students, staff, and families to feel a sense of belonging in the school community
- Ensure students feel valued and affirmed for who they are and the diverse perspectives, ideas and thoughts they possess
- Develop students’ social, emotional, problem-solving and leadership skills
- Provide students and educators with effective ways to take responsibility and repair harm

I believe restorative justice is a must in the school system. I have observed restorative justice at my school and believe it to be more effective than a punitive method.

Yasmina Mansour  
Arlington Teen Network Board

I have been frustrated by our efforts to bring equity to our discipline practices and firmly believe that restorative practices are the way to go to not only move toward equity, but to really support student growth.

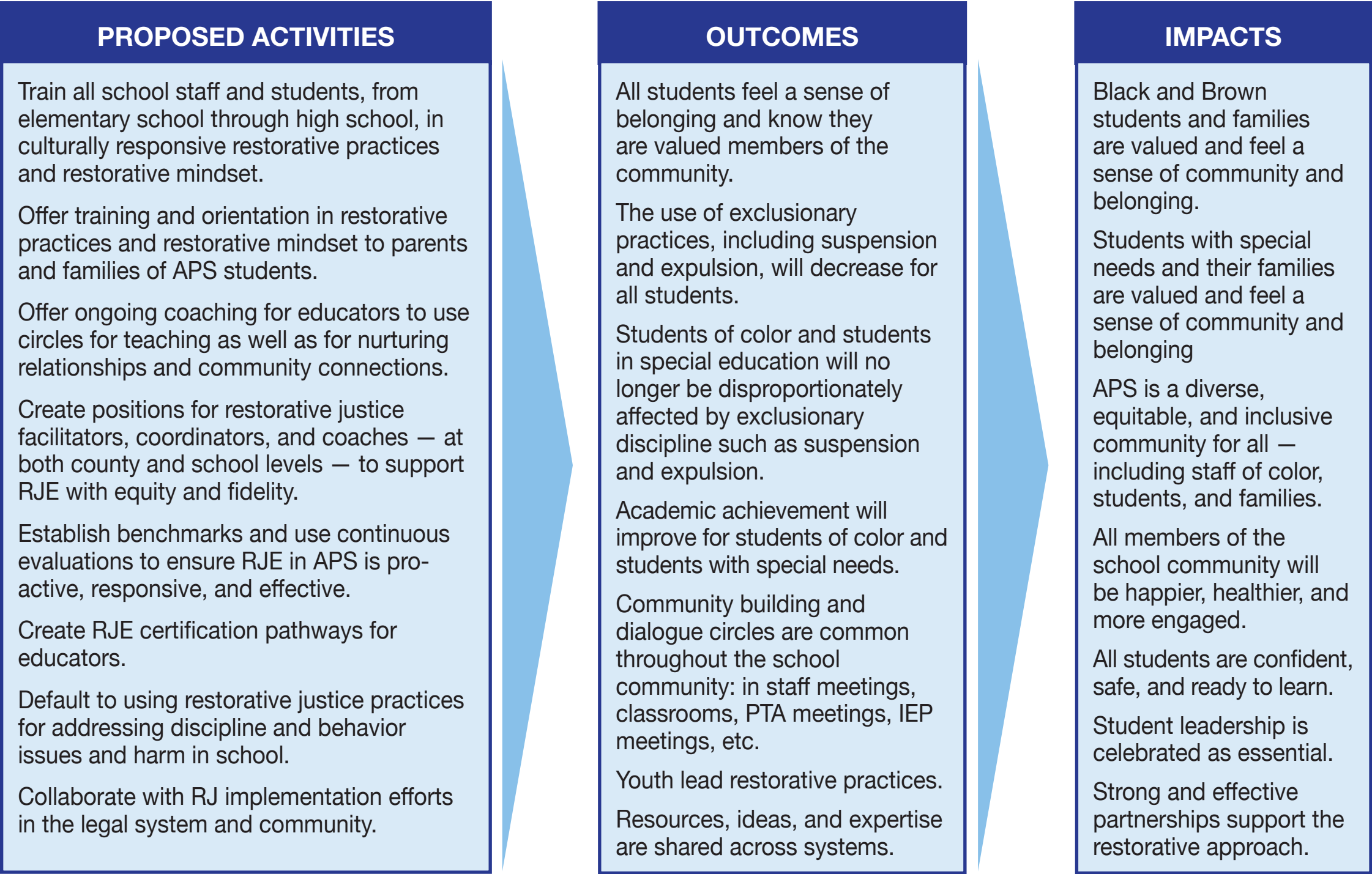
Shari Benites  
Coordinator of Restorative Practices, Yorktown HS

## Successfully Implementing Restorative Justice in Education

These recommendations from researchers and practitioners<sup>9</sup> outline a path to successful implementation of whole school RJE in Arlington Public Schools:

1. Use principle-based RJE
2. Take a comprehensive approach to RJE
3. Emphasize the equity focus of RJE
4. Develop contextually sensitive implementation plans
5. Employ strategic rollout
6. Create long-term implementation plans focused on sustainability and professional support
7. Invest in long term, mixed-methods research examining RJE implementation

# Schools Logic Model



Our schools are collaborative environments of belonging and safety that value and empower every person in the school community.



# Safety, Accountability, Healing

## Restorative Justice in Our Legal System

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When harm occurs, those who are affected — especially the harmed parties and those responsible for the harm — are usually in the best position to create a solution that addresses the situation and repairs the harm.

To foster healing and safety, restorative justice breaks cycles of harm and trauma by addressing the needs of all involved, centering the needs of people who have been harmed. This means providing harmed people with the option to use a restorative justice process that treats them with dignity, empowers them to decide how their needs are met, and gives them a safe space to understand and address what happened to them.

For young people and adults who commit harm, restorative justice processes provide a dignified path to accountability and growth. When community-based restorative options are used instead of legal processes, people responsible for harm can be accountable for their actions without the stigma, trauma, and marginalization of legal system involvement.

In implementing restorative practices, we strive to address harms, limit their ripple effects, prevent them from recurring, and reduce the systemic racial and ethnic disparities reflected in both who is harmed and who ends up in the legal system.

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## Accountability

Restorative processes create a path to true accountability for those who have committed harm. Accountability is not the same as punishment, which does not require the person being punished to reflect on their behavior or to change.

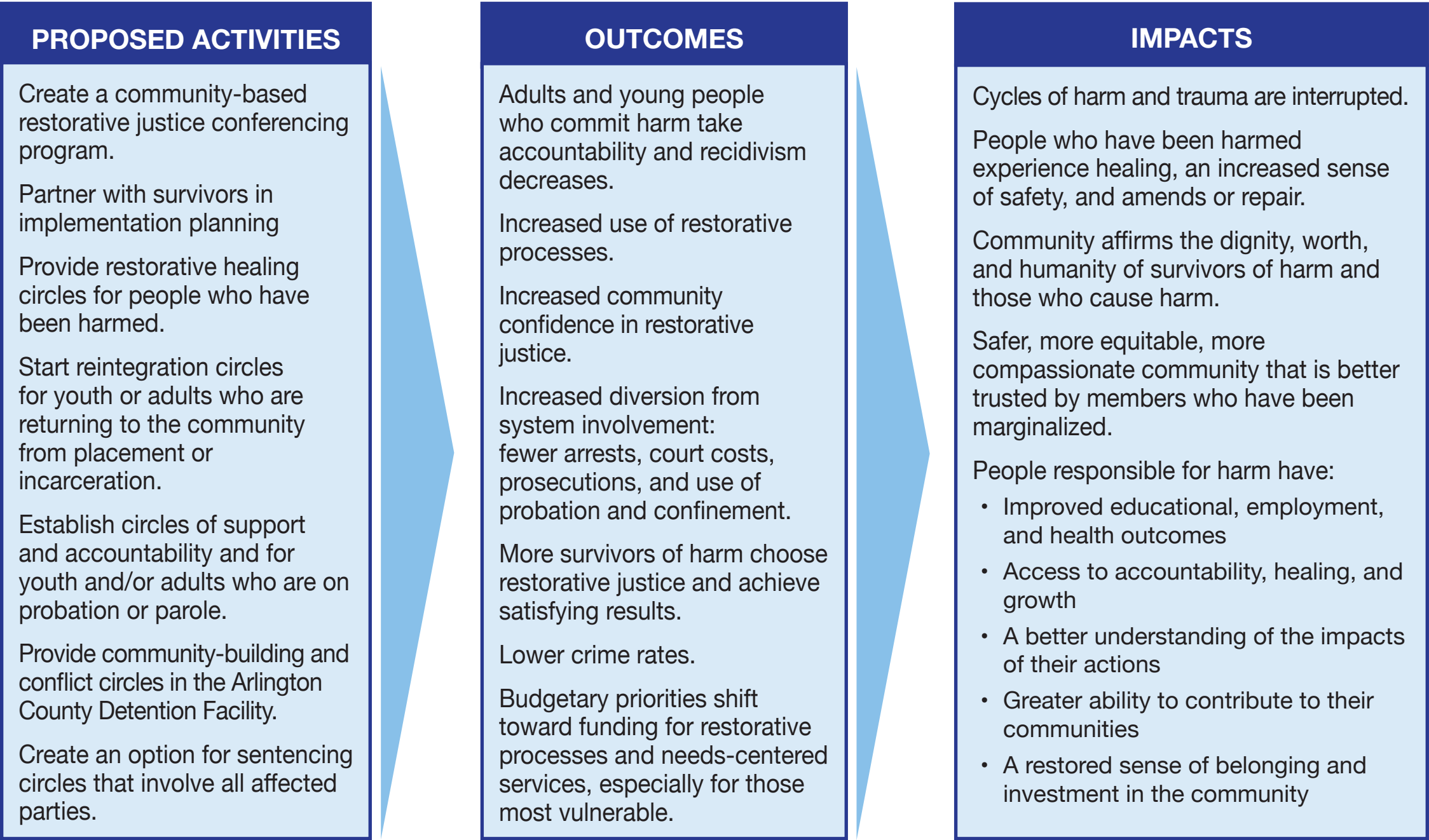
We affirm Danielle Sered's five-step description of accountability:<sup>10</sup>

1. Acknowledge responsibility for one's actions
2. Acknowledge the impact of one's actions on others
3. Express genuine remorse
4. "Do sorry:" take actions to repair the harm as much as possible, guided by the people harmed
5. No longer commit similar harm

**It was heartwarming because it was very obvious to see their regret. Watching them process the impact of what they had done was very powerful.**

Harmed party  
who participated in a  
restorative conference  
Arlington, Virginia

# Legal System Logic Model



An equitable legal system for youth and adults that enhances safety by valuing and addressing the needs of people who have been harmed and those who are responsible for harm, and focusing on accountability, healing, and repair.



# Belonging, Thriving, Caring

## Restorative Practices in Our Community

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Restorative practices offer community members powerful tools to create and strengthen the connections and sense of belonging that weave our relationships, families, neighborhoods, and organizations together.

Neighborhood groups, workplaces, faith-based organizations, recreation centers, service providers, advocacy groups, and people in many other settings can learn and use restorative circle and conferencing processes. The dignity, mutual caring, and inclusion that people experience through these practices deepens understanding across differences, leading to greater harmony and reduced conflict.

By ensuring community members understand, have ready access to, and get training in the range of restorative practices, we build their capacity to meet their needs and to address conflicts with a trauma-informed lens, without creating or exacerbating harm.

When confidence in these practices grows, more people will opt for them instead of unnecessarily relying on adversarial responses.

Whole family or two-generation approaches to restorative practices enable parents and caregivers to respond to children's decisions and actions in compassionate ways that allow for repair and learning.

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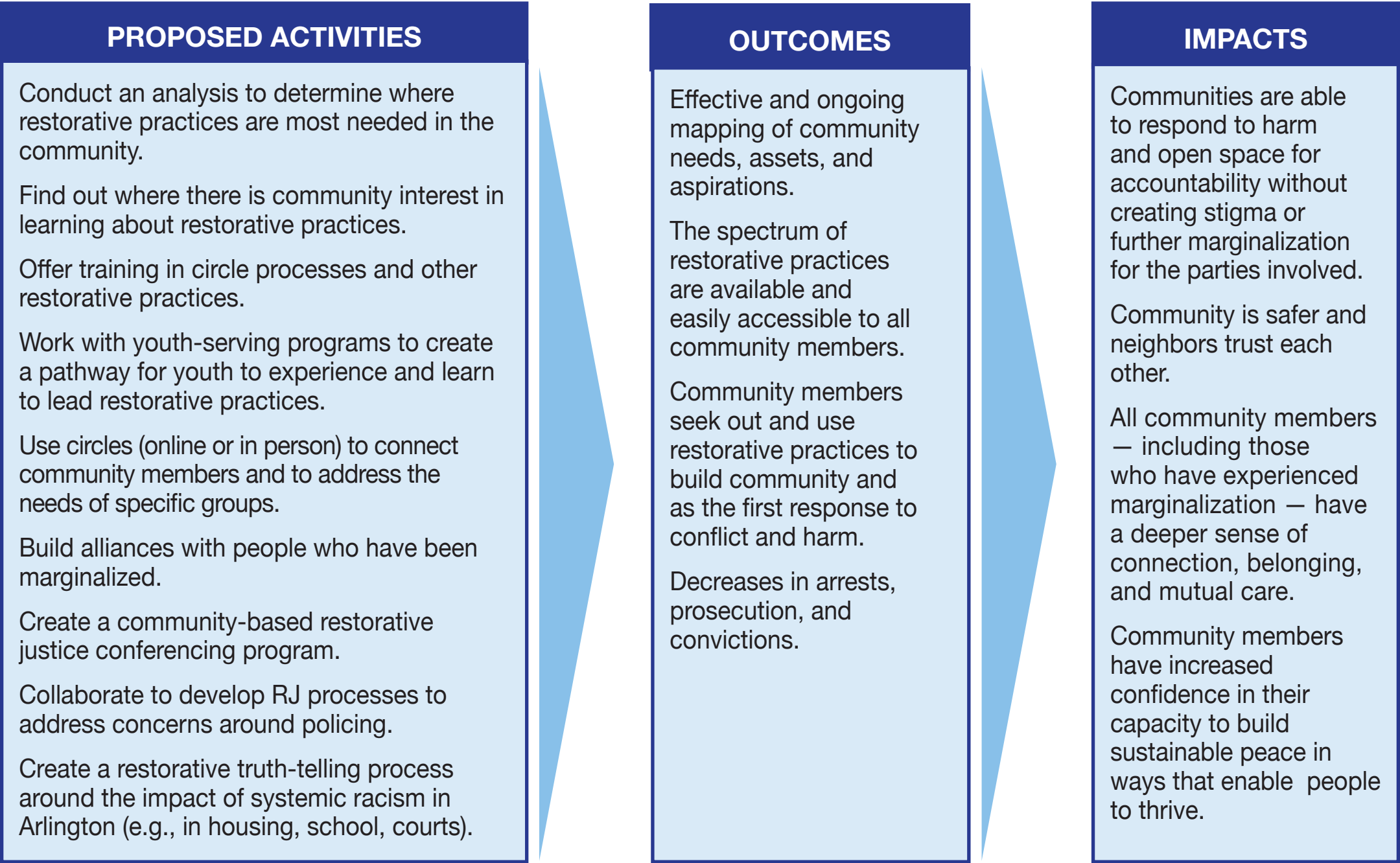
## Community-Based Restorative Processes

Community Building  
Dialogue  
Celebration  
Healing  
Decision Making  
Grief and Mourning  
Welcome  
Support  
Addressing Conflict  
Response to Harm

Just so nice to meet some new people and be able to establish community pretty quickly. It was empowering to hear from others about their lives and fears and nourishment in this strange time. This week has been hard and this circle was a perfect way to end the week on a positive.

Participant in a  
Restorative Arlington  
virtual community-  
building circle (VCircle)

# Community Logic Model



People who live, work, study, visit, and worship in Arlington cultivate communities of trust, connection, and mutual care and work together to resolve conflict and harm in fair and compassionate ways.



# What's Next

These are some of the steps we will take as we move into implementation:

- Create a solid organizational structure that includes:
  - Governance (via a steering committee)
  - Implementation teams focused on each area, comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders
- Maintain and leverage partnerships with key stakeholders and organizations
- Plan for iterative and mixed-method evaluation to track success and fidelity
- Reach out to and engage community members, especially people impacted by harm and trauma
- Adapt to Arlington’s context, especially our tradition of neighborhood-level engagement
- Seek sustainable funding

## WHAT WE HAVE

Multiple partners and people who are deeply engaged; fairly wide base of supporters.

Proven process for community building circles (VCircles).

Cadre of developing facilitators.

Vision and values.

Some experience with cases.

Connections with the field:

- Rooted in the wisdom and experience of the RJ tradition
- Trusted relationships, ongoing consultation with experts and practitioners in RJ

Guides and processes for communication and engagement.

## WHAT WE NEED

**Dedicated staff**, fully funded and resourced, with expertise in RJ and in the needs of this project, to perform these functions:

- Coordination
- RJ facilitation
- Communications
- Operations and finance (contract or PT)

**Dedicated funding:**

- For staff
- For partners/facilitators who provide services
- For training and development of staff and partners
- To support accessibility for all participants

**Communications:**

- Technology
- Support to develop comprehensive engagement, connection, and communications strategies
- Tools (language/lexicon) to share information about the program, honoring the culture shift and giving people entry points

**Evaluation plans**, which we will develop in partnership with the Carter School and implementation teams.

**Framework for ongoing collaboration** with institutional partners.

**Increased representation** from people representing communities that have experienced marginalization.



## Get involved!



**Learn more about restorative justice**  
<https://is.gd/learnrp>



**Visit the Restorative Arlington web site**  
<https://topics.arlingtonva.us/restorative-arlington/>



**Fill out our interest form**  
<https://is.gd/RAform>



**Sign up for Restorative Arlington news**  
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/subscribe/>



**Questions?**  
Contact RJ Coordinator Liane Rozzell at [lrozzell@arlingtonva.us](mailto:lrozzell@arlingtonva.us)

# Notes

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1. RACE: Realizing Arlington's Commitment to Equity at <https://topics.arlingtonva.us/equity/>

2. Many studies confirm the effectiveness of restorative justice processes.

This rigorous meta-study examined results from ten studies: *Face-to-face Restorative Justice Conferences are cost-effective in reducing reoffending and increasing victim satisfaction*, Campbell Collaborative Summary, [https://campbellcollaboration.org/media/k2/attachments/0145\\_CJCG\\_Strang\\_Restorative\\_justice\\_PLS\\_EN.pdf](https://campbellcollaboration.org/media/k2/attachments/0145_CJCG_Strang_Restorative_justice_PLS_EN.pdf)

The full paper is: Campbell Systematic Review 2013:12 Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC) *Using Face-to-Face Meetings of Offenders and Victims: Effects on Offender Recidivism and Victim Satisfaction. A Systematic Review* by Heather Strang, Lawrence W. Sherman, Evan Mayo-Wilson, Daniel Woods, and Barak Ariel <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.4073/csr.2013.12>

3. For a useful table of literature reviews and meta-analyses, see *A Review of Restorative Justice in Florida and Other States*, Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, January 2020, <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/2002rpt.pdf>

4. This paper cites results from many others on the use of restorative practices in schools: *Increasing School Connectedness for Girls: Restorative Justice as a Health Equity Resource*, by Thalia González and Rebecca Epstein, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity, <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/03/Restorative-Justice-as-a-Health-Equity-Resource.pdf>

5. *Restorative Community Conferencing: A study of Community Works West's restorative justice youth diversion program in Alameda County*, 2017 <https://impactjustice.org/resources/restorative-community-conferencing-a-study-of-community-works-wests-restorative-justice-youth-diversion-program-in-alameda-county/>

6. Strang et al, note 2.

7. González and Epstein, note 4

8, 9. *The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go from Here?*, by Anne Gregory and Katherine R. Evans <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/restorative-justice>

10. *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair*, by Danielle Sered, The New Press, 2019

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**Lauren Brice**, Senior Assistant Public Defender, Office of the Public Defender for Arlington County & the City of Falls Church  
**Michael Brown**  
**Marcia Carter**, Arlington Public Schools  
**Bill Casey**, Our Lady Queen of Peace Church  
**Laurel Osmer Cerrud**, Assistant Principal  
**Nutan Chada**, Restorative Justice Facilitator and Circle Keeper  
**Lacretia Davis**, Arlington County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court  
**Tiffany Day**, Systems Change and Policy Analyst, Ascend at the Aspen Institute  
**Parisa Dehghani-Tafti**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Arlington County and the City of Falls Church  
**Najla Elmangoush**, restorative justice scholar and practitioner  
**Amelia Frenkel**, NVMS Conflict Resolution Center  
**Siobhan Grayson**, DHS/CFSD/ APCYF Youth Outreach Coordinator  
**Marin Greene**, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney  
**Michael Hemminger**, Community Organizer  
**Jennifer Heredia**, Youth Pastor, Legacy Ministry  
**Susan F. Hirsch**, Professor, Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution, George Mason University  
**Lisalyn R. Jacobs**, Just Solutions  
**Alex James**  
**Kimiko Lighty**, Restorative Justice Facilitator and Circle Keeper  
**Candice Lopez**, Project PEACE  
**Daniel Lopez**, Judge, Arlington County General District Court  
**JP McMichael**, Captain, Arlington County Sheriff's Office  
**Tarek Maassarani**  
**Yasmina Mansour**, Teen Network Board  
**Dr. Aleta Myers**, Arlington Public Schools  
**Sabrina Oh**, Arlington Youth Activist  
**Kathie Panfil**, Community Progress Network

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**Devanshi Patel**, Chief Executive Officer, Center for Youth and Family Advocacy  
**Lauren Redd**, Arlington County Victim Witness Program, Commonwealth Attorney's Office  
**Liane Rozzell**, Restorative Justice Coordinator, Arlington County Manager's Office  
**Mustafa Saboor**, Director of Pre-Release Services and Race Equity Ambassador, OAR  
**Caitlin Booth Smith**, Arlington Resident  
**Katy Steinbruck**, Deputy Director and Racial Justice Ambassador, OAR  
**Robert Stump**, Arlington Resident  
**Michael Swisher**, Arlington County Department of Human Services, Child & Family Services Division  
**Chief Jennifer Toussaint**, Arlington County Animal Control, Animal Welfare League of Arlington  
**Sergeant Steve Troyano**, Arlington County Police Department  
**Lieutenant Damon L. Washington**, Arlington County Police Department  
**McGennis Williams**, Community Member  
**Zakiya Worthey**, Director of Advocacy of Black Parents of Arlington  
**Elicia Yoffee**, Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation & Masters Student at the Carter School

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## REVIEWERS

**Lauren Abramson**, Founder, Community Transformation  
**Gregory Baldwin**, School Climate and Culture Specialist, Alexandria City Public Schools  
**Jody Dodd**, Restorative Justice Facilitator, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office  
**Katherine R. Evans, PhD**, Associate Professor of Education, Restorative Justice in Education, Eastern Mennonite University  
**Ashlee George**, Co-Director of the Restorative Justice Project at Impact Justice  
**Thalia González**, Professor of Politics, Occidental College & Senior Scholar, Georgetown University Law Center  
**Sia Henry**, Senior Program Specialist, Restorative Justice Project, Impact Justice  
**Yazid Jackson**, Restorative Justice Program Manager, SchoolTalk DC  
**Denise Lord**, Estes Park Police Department/Estes Valley Restorative Justice Partnership  
**Robin L. McNair**, Restorative Approaches Coordinator, The Restorative Classroom, LLC  
**Larell Smith-Bacon**, Executive Director, Restorative Response Baltimore  
**Seth Weiner**, Interim Director, Life Comes From It

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