

Have question about RJ or our program?

Contact us!



Grace Woodward

Director of Restorative Justice and Diversion Services in the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney



Phone Number

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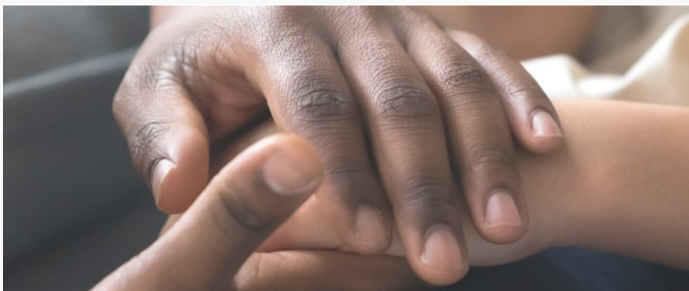
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Our Office

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You are also welcome to contact your victim advocate or the prosecutor assigned to the case. We all work together!



What Do People Say About This Program?

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Commonwealth's Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti stated, "Heart of Safety is about survivors' rights, youth rehabilitation, and crime prevention; for survivors, it's the peace of mind of taking charge of their recovery; for young people, it's a second chance to make right what they did wrong; and for the community, it's an investment in crime prevention."

"Punishment often makes the problem worse, particularly when it arises from unmet basic needs, a lack of skills, or a history of trauma in young people," said Arlington resident and co-founder of the Coalition for Trauma Informed Schools, Juliet Hiznay. "Heart of Safety facilitates communication and enables community members to identify root causes of harm while developing meaningful solutions in response to these harmful acts."

By the numbers:

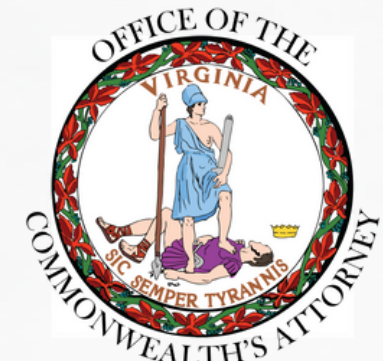
- 13% recidivism rate for juveniles in San Francisco County who participated in a restorative justice process, compared to a 53% recidivism rate overall.
- 94.9% of participants report that they would participate in a restorative process again.
- 92.7% of participants report that they would recommend the program to a friend.

Data from Impact Justice, 2023

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Restorative Arlington



Arlington County and
City of Falls Church

Heart of Safety

Restorative Justice "RJ"
Conferencing Program

Supported by the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church in partnership with Restorative Arlington

What is Restorative Justice "RJ"?

A Restorative Justice Conference is a face-to-face encounter between the person harmed and the person responsible for harm. Each person involved may bring a supporter to the meeting, and members of the community with a stake in the outcome may also be invited. Led by trained facilitators, this encounter seeks to create a safe environment for the parties to identify, repair, and prevent future harm through a facilitated conversation. The person who caused the harm will take responsibility and then work with the person harmed to decide what meaningful accountability looks like for them in their unique case.

Benefits of Restorative Justice:

If you are a person who has been harmed, restorative justice may help you:

- Tell the offender how you and others have been affected.
- Decide how the harm should be repaired.
- Receive support from the community.
- Have your questions answered about why this happened to you.

If you are a person who has done harm to another, restorative justice may allow you to:

- Take accountability for your actions.
- Hear how your actions affected others.
- Express remorse.
- Help decide how the harm should be repaired.
- Begin the process of restoring trust.



What is The Heart of Safety Program "HOS"?

HOS is a grassroots program and a national leader in diverting criminal cases into an RJ conferencing diversion process. The program is offered in the following situations:

- Defendant age 26 or under who is willing to take accountability for the harm that occurred
- Felony and serious misdemeanor charges
- Identified person harmed (victim) who consents to participation
- The harm must have occurred in Arlington or Falls Church, but the parties need not reside here

What types of cases make good candidates for HOS?

- Conflict between people who are likely to see each other again and/or be in an ongoing relationship
- A victim who is seeking answers and peace of mind after harm
- A victim who is concerned about the wellbeing of the defendant and wants to take the driver's seat on deciding what accountability looks like.

Participating in HOS supports victims through these situations in ways that traditional prosecution cannot.

- ✓ Anything shared in the RJ process cannot be used in prosecution.
- ✓ Upon successful completion of the program and accountability plan, criminal charges will be dropped and can later be expunged.
- ✓ Healing and support circles are available to victims outside of HOS. Ask Grace for more information.

What's Next?

If you would like to participate in HOS please contact Grace Woodward, Director of Restorative Justice directly. She will then put you in contact with Kimiko Lighty, the Executive Director of Restorative Arlington who will welcome you into the program. An RJ facilitator will schedule a time to meet one-on-one with the harmed person and whoever they would like to support and accompany them. In this meeting, the facilitator helps the person harmed to identify their goals for the process, and asks three main questions:

- What happened?
- Who was harmed and how?
- What can/should be done to repair the harm?

The facilitator and the person harmed then set a time for an RJ conference. The facilitator then meets with the person responsible for the harm and asks them the same three questions (What happened? Who was harmed and how? What can/should be done?). The facilitator then arranges a meeting with both the person harmed and the person responsible for the harm. Each party can bring whoever they'd like to support them emotionally, and they can even appoint a surrogate to stand in their place.

At the RJ conference everyone answers the same 3 questions (What happened? Who was harmed and how? What can/should be done?). The parties write a Restorative plan together to address the harm. This plan must be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely. The plan can include many different measures of accountability including, but not limited to, community service, classes, financial compensation, and/or a written apology.

The plan must be accomplished in timely manner and the facilitator will write reports for all parties. Restorative Arlington will not share the content gathered in the conference but will update the prosecutor on the process.



Kimiko Lighty

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