

NSRJ-CURA PROFESSIONALIZATION PROJECT

Restorative Practices Conference

Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Justice



Workshop Format

Background:

- Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program (NSRJ)
- Nova Scotia Community Justice Agencies
- Community University Research Alliance (NSRJ/CURA)

Professionalization Project:

- Description, process, findings

Your voice:

- Question for consideration
- Discussion

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COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ALLIANCE


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BACKGROUND

Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program:

- Provides extrajudicial sanction – Restorative Justice – under section 10 YCJA
- Four entry points – Police, Crown, Court, Corrections
- Brings youth, victims, supporters, other indicated parties together to explore criminal incident and to identify ways to make amends
- Initiated 1999 – currently available for youth aged 12-17 who meet minimum requirements
- Integrated Adult Restorative Justice Pilot Project - 3 sites- Feb 2011

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NOVA SCOTIA RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM


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BACKGROUND

NS Community Justice Agencies (CJAs)

- 8 non-profit, individual agencies including 1 Mi'kmaq program
- Contracted by NS Government to offer mandated programs like Restorative Justice
- Volunteers put the “community” in our work
- Distinct Boards with additional/individual focuses
- Recently formed - Coalition of Community Justice Agencies (CoRJA)

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BACKGROUND

NSRJ/CURA

- Partnership between NSRJ, CJA's, formal justice partners, and universities – led by Dalhousie University
- Completing 5th year
- Sixteen research projects with five distinct themes:
 - 1) translation of principles into practice;
 - 2) community;
 - 3) diversity & equity;
 - 4) gender; and
 - 5) conceptualizing and measuring success
- CJA's took lead in the Professionalization Project

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- **What is Professionalization?**
- **Why Consider Professionalization in RJ?**
- **Professionalization: Structural Elements**
- **Benefits to Professionalization in RJ**
- **Disadvantage to Professionalization in RJ**
- **Challenges to Professionalization**

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS CONT'D

The “Big One” ...

How would the professionalization of restorative justice agency workers in Nova Scotia impact the workers, volunteers, and clients, as well as restorative justice values, principles, and practices?

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FINDINGS

Definitions are not concrete or widely agreed upon but have common structural elements, as follows:

- Minimum required qualifications/education
- Degree of regulation and licensing
- Standards and codes of professional conduct
- Service to the community

FINDINGS (cont'd)

Agreement exists that professionalization involves:

- Distinct, specialized knowledge or techniques
- Recognition
- Service to community

CHALLENGES TO PROFESSIONALIZATION

- Surveyed RJ Workers who generally felt RJ skills “un-teachable”/ are rather “inherent”
- Differing opinions of what constitutes the hallmarks of Professionalization

SKILLS - RJ WORKER

- People person; excellent communicator; adaptable; open- minded; non-judgmental
- Patient; understanding; caring; compassionate; fair; honest; kind; respectful; empathetic
- resourceful; tenacious; thorough; confident about RJ; knowledgeable; insightful
- ability to: guide, remain calm in difficult situations, keep cool under pressure, build rapport

SKILLS (cont'd) MENTALIZATION

-Mentalization can be defined as keeping one's own state, desires, and goals in mind as one addresses one's own experience; and keeping another's state, desires, and goals in mind as one interprets his or her behaviour.

Foreword, Susan W. Coates

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SKILLS (cont'd) MENTALIZATION

The capacity to mentalize is seen as an important and necessary skill one must master in order to successfully cope with intense emotions.

Fonagy and Bateman

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FEEDBACK – SERVICE PROVIDERS

Same debate taking place in other professions like policing:

- view police as tradespersons
- policing “trade” was honed over the years – skills developed – still ongoing
- felt that “professionalization” brings police further away from the “heart of their work”

FEEDBACK (cont'd)

- Professionalization provides the structure to highlight difference in functions
- Presents the hallmarks of professions as compared to best practice standards
- This comparison leads to the development of each (hallmarks and best practise standards)
- Raised the question – how professions fit or contrast with union definitions

BENEFITS

- Increased respect and credibility
- Higher wages
- Job security
- Increased retention of staff
- Gender effect
- Increased accountability/quality of service

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DISADVANTAGES

- risk of compromising RJ values and principles
- affect facilitator/participant relationship
- policy implications
- potential impacts on volunteers
- gender effect

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NEXT STEPS?

- No clear winner
- CoRJA to define the Nova Scotia Experience and the emergent Best Practices

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QUESTION FOR CONSIDERATION

How would the professionalization of restorative justice agency workers impact staff, volunteers, and clients, as well as the delivery of restorative justice values, principles, and practices?

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