

Youth Violence Intervention Restorative Conferencing

Contact: John Cutro 518 256-8422 jcutro1@nycap.rr.com

How it Starts:

- We hear about an incident causing concern in school or community
- Find out who was involved, who was affected and who cares about them
- Connect face-to-face or by phone with everyone to briefly explain the process
- Stop jabbering about the process and start doing it

Conference Preparation:

- Meet in small groups in people's homes, at school, or in the community
- Ask what happened, who was affected and how, and what was most difficult for you
- Try to imagine something good that could come out of what happened
- "Give till it hurts" regarding any part you played in what has happened
- All have an opportunity to be heard, and hopefully understood
-including things they feel others need to take responsibility for
-including what led up to the incident, at some point in the process

The Conference:

- A location in a church, school or other public place is selected
- People come and wait until everyone has arrived
- They are seated in a circle of chairs by the facilitator(s)
- The facilitator reads a preamble starting the formal part of the conference
- The facilitator asks simple questions like those in the preparation meetings
- Everyone has an opportunity to speak and be heard, usually several times
- Strong emotion is a necessary part of most conferences
- Sometimes an agreement on repairing the harm is signed by everyone
- Everyone shares snacks together

The Principles:

- People need to be heard and understood about the impact an incident has on them
- The community of those involved in, and affected by an incident is unique and powerful
- It can fix things and prevent future incidents that the school and legal system can't
- Restorative justice is about making things right, repairing and preventing harm

Why Bother?

- It allows you and the community to reclaim your power
- You can't always control what others do in response to incidents
- Diversion from criminal prosecution to community problem-solving
- It can influence school, parental and other sanctions, stops hassles and getting hurt again
- There will be food for everyone to share during and after the conference