



## How does a School Take a Restorative Action?

Keeping in mind that standing in a restorative philosophy can guide your actions you can keep these points in mind when determining what action to take:

■ **Misbehavior is defined as an act against victims and the school community.** Misconduct is an injury which violates people and community trust not just the rule that was broken. Often the authority hands out the punishment which in effect creates an adversarial relationship.

■ **The offender is accountable to the victim and the community.** Authorities help insure that the offender is held accountable to the victim and community, and the process is fair and equitable. By delivering a punishment to show that you are being “tough” and **as an example** to others DOESN’T work. By determining the course of action **WITH** all of the parties creates a context of ownership for all involved.

■ **Accountability is defined as taking responsibility for behaviors and repairing the harm resulting from those behaviors.** Sometimes we think if there has been enough punishment (passive response) this hold the offender accountable. In a restorative environment the outcomes of the process are measured by how much repair was accomplished and responsibility was taken. Responsibility is an action.

■ **Victims and community are directly involved and play a key role in response to misbehavior.** Giving those who are affected by this act an opportunity to create a response is the key. It gives the WHOLE community responsibility for that which happens in their community. It helps the offender see that the “authority” isn’t the “punisher” and directs the attention to the act rather than turning the offender into a victim of school policy or the principal.

■ **Offenders are defined by their capacity to take responsibility for their actions and change behavior.** Rather than simply dealing with the behavior of the offender, developing internal controls where an offender sees how deeply others are affected can be a catalyst for change. Victims are defined by losses and the capacity to participate in the process of recovering losses and healing. They become empowered to create a reply that takes them out of the victim role.

\*When an entire classroom or school runs on restorative practices the growth and enhancement of individual relationships cumulatively fosters a sense of community. This is a healthy community. This is a community in which teachers, administrators, parents and students pay attention to each other’s feelings and demonstrate empathy for one another. Communities can be a place where young people are held accountable while being supported, where they learn appropriate behavior without stigmatization.

**OPTIONS FOR A RESTORATIVE RESPONSE (this section edited to reflect SCVRJP programs):**

- **Informal Conversation** that creates a context of personal responsibility and gives the offender an opportunity to see how their behavior has affected those around them. Instead of saying “How many times have I told you not to do that, and doling out the punishment” Sharing on a personal level by saying “You really hurt my feelings when you act like that. And it surprises me, because I don’t think you want to hurt anyone on purpose.” And that’s all. If a similar behavior happens again, we might repeat the response or try a variation, perhaps asking, “How do you think Mark felt when you did that?” and then waiting patiently for an answer. By simply expressing our feelings to misbehaving students we come to realize they typically don’t have a clue as to how their behavior has affected others. Most young people are very self-absorbed. They are genuinely surprised to find out how they have affected a teacher and as a result, they begin to see their teachers as fellow human beings, not just as those adults who give them a hard time. The change in their relationship with their teacher is sometimes dramatic and almost always meaningful.
- **Victim Offender Conference**-When there are two sides to a conflict a conferencing process with a trained facilitator can help to find out “what happened, how everyone is feeling about it and what needs to happen to make things right” This gives all of the parties a chance to communicate and develop a plan that satisfies those most involved and effected. Parents can be included in this process as well. These can take place with multiple victims and offenders.
- **Victim Empathy Seminars**- When a Conference is not an appropriate options, youth and parents attend a seminar together. Empathy development, recognizing the impact of behavior on the community and making things right guide seminars. Letters of apology are written and read to the Circle.
- **Circles**- This is best used when there is an act that affects the larger community as a whole. By holding a community circle where various parties are “represented” can give victims a voice to address the wrongdoing and have the offender face those who have been harmed. The community circle has the voice in saying what they need to make this act right. This process has been utilized to address fighting, bullying and discrimination. SCVRJP also holds young adult Circles and trains students to become Circle keepers. Training is available on a quarterly basis, call for details.
- **Underage Consumption Panels**-Refer to Underage Consumption for an under-age drinker as an alternative to suspension or sitting out a game. This course is designed to reduce risk for problems and provide knowledge for improved decisionmaking. Have you ever thought about utilizing this in your activities code policy? Contact us to discuss how this option would help school code violators.
- **Victim Impact Panel**- Drivers Education Classes are sending their students to this evening as an extra-credit and allows for the students to count this in the total hours of instruction. This is also a powerful alternative to suspension or detention when there is suspicion of risky behaviors such as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The impact of drinking and driving is shared with the audience by local speakers.

You can contact us to discuss any situations or issues you may have. We would welcome a team approach to helping with issues as they come and may be able to guide school districts in a restorative approach which will help enhance conflict resolutions skills in our youth.

**St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Program, Inc.**

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