



**TIHC Network meeting via Zoom
December 8, 2022 1-2:30 pm ET
MINUTES**

*Present: Ruth Ever, she/her, coordinator Trauma Informed Hampshire County
Chase Giroux, Clinical and Support Options
Jen Jarrell, Hampshire County Healthy Families
Sheila Murphy, The Literacy Project
Steve Brown, Director, Traumatic Stress Institute of Klingberg Family Centers
Amanda Ruiz, she/they, Communities for Restorative Justice
Yael Yaaloz, C4RJ
Ariane Krumholz, former CSO
Heather Warner, she/her Hampshire Franklin Tobacco Free Community Partnership/CES
Katherin Hudkins, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant with the Collaborative for Educational Services
Laurie Loisel, Northwestern DA's office
Taylor McAndrew (she/her), Hampshire HOPE Coord., Northampton DHHS
Kara McLaughlin- she/her, DHHS/NPC
Becky Michaels, ADA and Director of Community Prosecution Projects at Northwestern DA's Office
Leigh-Ellen Figueroa, (she/her) Communities That Care Coalition, Health and Equity Programs*

Welcome by Laurie L and discussion prompt offered: what words come to mind when you hear "restorative justice"? Examples: healing, Deep change, community, repair, making amends towards healing the wrongs of past actions, I'm sorry, Compassion, community, reparations, rebuilding the "justice" system, transformative and appropriations, I think of an approach that takes contexts into account, New ways of working in schools, understanding of complexity of relationships, Collective power

Mindful moment led by Chase.

Presentation by Communities for Restorative Justice staff, Amanda Ruiz—Deputy Director of Programs and Operations and Yael Yaalov—Program Director, and ADA Becky Michaels from Northwestern DA's office. They described their restorative justice program, which works by diverting people to their program either directly from the police involved before anyone is charged, or through the DA's office before arraignment.

Since it started in early 2021, they have seen 50-60 cases, working with 29 police depts and 3 district attorneys, using 150 volunteers. There are 10-15 volunteers in Hampshire County, and they work with the Amherst, Northampton, Easthampton, Hadley and South Hadley police depts. As it continues to ramp up and they increase their confidence in the work, they are seeing more cases diverted and more complicated and serious cases too. For example, in the

beginning saw mostly things like breaking and entering but now will see assault and battery or significant money stolen, etc.

The main goals are to put key decision making into the hands of those affected; promote more healing; and decrease the likelihood of future offenses. The RJ approach asks:

Who has been hurt/affected? What are their needs? Who is obliged to meet those needs?

The process involves the parties impacted, along with police or other community partners as relevant. The responsible parties must agree to fact that they took actions that harmed others (not a confession of guilt) and the victims agree to be part of repair. The victim will get some form of admission or restitution (often an apology of some kind), but there will be no conviction or record

They use a circle model and it takes about 8-12 weeks. There agreements drawn are determined by the participants but always include weekly meetings and training with the C4RJ team, and often include some kind of apology with extensive prepping, community service if that is relevant or useful. It may include drug assessment and support as needed.

They are always looking for more volunteers, but are also interested in building specific and personal relationships with local community organizations, etc.

More info can be found at: www.c4rj.org

Here are the Q&As that came up with summary of responses (thanks to Heather for transcribing this!):

1. Can you give examples of kinds of things that are typically in a restorative agreement?
What does making amends look like?
2. Is C4RJ working with youth?
Response: In Western Mass, is C4RJ currently handling only adult cases, not juvenile?
3. Yael, does the RJ track % of cases that involve substance use, mental illness or both, homelessness, racism, gender discrimination, etc. ?
Response: In Western Mass, C4RJ primarily does adult cases but will also take juvenile cases.
4. Do you have enough community volunteers to be part of the circles
Response: More volunteers are always welcome. There is a sign up at www.c4rj.org. Trainings are held a few times a year.
5. Are police part of the circles?
Response: Yes, anyone who sits in circles have received extensive training...often a trained police or police who was involved with the case. Most of the police are community police at heart. They would rather see restorative practice, they know the people involved. Police will send cases to C4RJ to review, police are getting creative (police are involved in the beginning and end but not in the confidential meetings in the middle. If police would have to report something...then get a different police, etc. Sometimes police could say, if this case goes back I'm sending you to jail...need to have people with legal expertise to say what would happen)
6. Are there still drug courts?
Response: Now called Treatment courts: Greenfield, Athol, Northampton (for any Hamp County case)-diversion from jail, needs high level of supervision to succeed. Seen people who have been prosecuted for years now are transformed.

7. Are you looking to change your model to paying people rather than using volunteers?
Response: We need more funding to be able to pay people. Looking into stipends for some people who need it. Fellows are paid. Limits who can participate. Want to be able to expand that.
8. Steve: Circles of support and accountability out of Canada. Where a community of volunteers wrap themselves around a person (e.g., sex offender) to provide support.
Response: this is not out of question. At first we would say “never”, but now see that it could work. Accusers are often not believed—when we do restorative practice then there is the admission of guilt. This can be a debate in the RJ world - power dynamics and power imbalance issues. Most cases C4RJ don’t do this and C4RJ is still working on . Stop It Now in the Valley—helpline for people who are concerned about their behavior.
Response: Didn’t get healing from sexual violence until family work for healing.
9. Is there anything that we, as TIHC and partners, can do to further support this work?
Response: C4RJ would like to be able to refer people to Hampshire County resources
10. Kara interested in creating a system outside of the police department. People are such victims of the system. Also interested in working with legislators, because lawyers and others in the traditional system make a lot of money, we need to find money to pay those who are doing the restorative justice.
Response: There is a RJ advisory committee in the legislator, but it was unfunded so stepped off.

TIHC Updates and Announcements

Activities: Film series is being set up for the spring. Most likely films we will be hosting: Resilience; Crazywise, Wisdom of Trauma, Broken Places and collaborating with CSO, Amherst Cinema, NWDA, CES, Bombyx Center as potential sites.

Funding: We were chosen to be part of the Coaching Academy on Resilience and Trauma (CART) through the Child Trauma Institute and Center on Child Well Being and Trauma in which teams of local people will work together and participate in learning communities together. Our team consists of Healthy Families, Amherst CRESS and Families with Power in this project. Our stated goal is to expand our diversity and outreach to better reflect the wider community we serve and reach parents with a more customized Resilience Roadshow, but it could change a little once we actually begin our work together.

Finding the Words: A documentary film. Upcoming on Jan. 28 at the Academy of Music and it’s free! About the Voices from Inside project, with local women who will be on a panel discussion afterwards. Should be an amazing event! More info and free tickets [HERE](#) and <https://www.finding-the-words.com/> and Facebook Event: <https://fb.me/e/2yG33AEMa>

The next training of Youth Mental Health First Aid is on Feb. 1 and they are looking for a few more people to participate. Sign up for this useful training [HERE](#). The trainings are for people who regularly work or come into contact with young people ages 12-18 to help them learn how to support teens who are experiencing mental health crises. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders. The trainings provide a

good overview of what young people may be experiencing and the skills to support them to get the assistance that they need.

We are beginning to work on another regional conference, looking for folks to join a planning group. Please reach out to Ruth if you are interested at hampshiretihc@gmail.com

Next meeting: **Feb 9, at 1 pm** on zoom. More details to come!