



## ***NEWS RELEASE –***

August 10, 2017

Contact: Ken Lane, 720-913-9025

### **DA BETH MCCANN EXPANDS JUVENILE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM**

At a community kick-off meeting Tuesday night at District 2 Police Station, Denver District Attorney Beth McCann and Denver DA Juvenile Diversion, along with participating partners Denver Juvenile Probation and the City of Denver Public Safety Youth Programs, formally launched the expanded Denver DA Juvenile Diversion Restorative Justice program.

Restorative justice (RJ) is a decades-old alternative to the traditional justice system utilized throughout the U.S., and is a sentencing or even pre-charge alternative replacing or in addition to other legal consequences to the commission of a crime. It is intended to reduce re-offense rates, give victims a chance to explain the impact of the crime on the victim and the victim's family, give offenders opportunities to acknowledge their crimes and truly understand their negative impact, to make amends, and to get a second chance to become better citizens.

Restorative justice is characterized by its voluntary nature. Both victim and offender must agree to participate in whatever restorative justice program or process is used. Involved community members are volunteers. The offenders must be willing to take responsibility for their actions.

Colorado is considered a national leader in restorative justice because of its legislative authorization, framework, and programs throughout the state dating back to 2007. It is defined in Colorado law as “practices that emphasize repairing the harm caused to victims and the community by offenses.” Such practices include “victim-offender conferences, family group conferences, circles, community conferences, and other similar **victim-centered** practices.” Restorative justice programs exist throughout Colorado.

DA McCann is enhancing the District Attorney's Juvenile Diversion Restorative Justice program to incorporate the use of “circles,” in which the offender and victims join with trained facilitators and community members in discussions to talk about the incident and its impact on the victim and community and an appropriate resolution or outcome. The process ends with a contract agreed to by all circle participants—offender, victim, community participants—designed to address the harm and require consequences for the offenders.

Last night's kick-off meeting involved the first group of trained facilitators and community members who have volunteered to facilitate and participate in the circles. The new Denver community circles involving offenders from Denver Juvenile Diversion, Denver Probation, and Safety Youth Programs are expected to begin convening twice a month, beginning in August.