



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Agencies sign agreement to expand restorative justice practices in Colorado

The state of Colorado, already considered at the forefront of implementing restorative justice practices, will soon see those efforts expand even farther through an innovative partnership between prosecutors and public defenders.

The Office of the Colorado State Public Defender, the Office of the Denver District Attorney, and the Colorado Restorative Justice Council through the State Court Administrator's Office have launched a new program designed to help expand the use of restorative justice (RJ) practices throughout the criminal justice system in Colorado.

The agencies have signed an agreement which dedicates an attorney from the Denver District Attorney's Office and the State Public Defender's Office to work collaboratively to analyze current best practices and policies, understand the barriers to implementing RJ practices, and educate prosecutors and defense attorneys statewide about RJ and the benefits of RJ practices.

The State Court Administrator's Office will provide \$50,000 each to the Denver DA's Office and the State Public Defender's Office to implement this educational effort for the first year of the program and for any renewal thereafter, annually.

Restorative justice takes many forms, but often it is a facilitated process that provides victims, offenders, and community members with an opportunity to collectively address the impact of crime and repair harm to the extent possible. Depending on the readiness of a victim and offender, RJ can take place at any point in a criminal justice system. RJ is a voluntary process that is grounded in the principles and values of building healthy relationships, respect for

all people, taking responsibility for one's own actions, repairing harm, and reintegrating offenders back into the community.

Studies have shown RJ practices help reduce recidivism and enhance an offender's sense of accountability and remorse for their offense. Victims overwhelmingly report high satisfaction with their RJ experience.

“This extraordinary partnership between the Denver DA and the Public Defender's Office will increase awareness of restorative practices with important stakeholders,” said Melissa Westover, Chair of the Colorado RJ Council. “This initiative will allow the council to move toward realizing a long-term goal of broadening restorative justice offerings to include all citizens of the State of Colorado.”

Denver District Attorney Beth McCann said: “I expanded the Denver DA's juvenile diversion RJ program last year, and am pleased my office will assist through this partnership in promoting restorative justice as an effective fair and just alternative to the traditional justice system statewide.”

Colorado State Public Defender Megan Ring said: “We are excited to launch this program with the Denver DA's Office to demonstrate that restorative justice can be a more effective and community-strengthening response to criminal behavior than what the current system provides.”

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