

CMS-D wishes to thank our funders:

Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General

Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Restorative Justice Training

CMS-D provides customized training to organizations and groups in:

- restorative justice
- victim offender dialogue
- community conferencing

For more information contact Michele Sauvé at (416) 740-2522 ext. 21 or msauve@cmsd.org



CONFLICT MEDIATION SERVICES OF DOWNSVIEW

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Volunteer Testimonials

"Volunteering at CMS-D has been an enriching experience. Not only is the initial training extensive, but there are opportunities for ongoing learning and practice. In addition, it's incredible how much you can personally benefit and grow when working with a co-mediator. Each partner brings his/her individual skills, personality, experience, cultural background, and support to the case. Each time you are part of a mediation you come away with a greater awareness of the possibilities of restorative justice. The parties, who come through the doors bearing the weight of the issue, are supported throughout the process, even while being asked to look closely at themselves and others and the responsibility they bear. So often I have seen the best in people in these difficult situations. The staff at CMS-D is friendly, supportive, encouraging and helpful. Meeting other volunteers at trainings is always rewarding. Although we represent a diverse community, we share a common interest. I benefit from volunteering at CMS-D."

- Judy Cohen

"On a personal level, as a volunteer, my awareness of the importance of applying conflict resolution strategies in my own life, community and at work has greatly increased. My skill level has also increased which has allowed me to improve my relationships and deal with conflict more effectively... I now will do my best to deal with problems and issues by applying conflict resolution strategies. The community benefits because volunteers, victims and offenders have increased awareness and skills related to conflict resolution and to the importance of learning to deal with problems in a way that does not bring harm to others."

- Diane Hall

"I have been a volunteer mediator with CMS-D for over a year, and I feel it is important to convey the impact the Restorative Justice Program has had on the surrounding community and Toronto as a whole. One may find it hard to see the affects of restorative justice on paper but case-by-case, individual-by-individual participants in this program and their families benefit immensely, and as a result, our city is better because of it."

Even at the most basic level, this program demonstrates the value of every human while acknowledging the imperfection of humanity. For both offenders and victims this process is invaluable—it offers them an opportunity to address their crime/victimization in a meaningful way and/or resolve a mutual conflict where victim/offender lines are blurred.

How to Become a Volunteer

- Fill out an Application Form and be interviewed
- Submit a current Police Criminal Records Search (Vulnerable Sector)
- Be recommended by the Steering Committee
- Be approved by the Ministry of the Attorney General
- Sign a Volunteer Agreement Form and Memorandum of Understanding
- Take an Oath of Confidentiality
- Complete CMS-D's Restorative Justice - Victim/Offender Dialogue Training and Orientation

Volunteers are asked to be available a minimum of 4-6 hours per month and attend at least two professional development opportunities per year.

For more information please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Brenda Kotras, at bkotras@cmsd.org.



Help make a difference in our community!

In my personal experience, I have witnessed how this program touches participants, be it through a five hour-long mediation or a brief initial meeting with the offender or victim. Even if the case does not proceed to mediation or an agreement is not reached during mediation, the seed of tolerance, understanding, respect and accountability are firmly planted with the parties involved. I have had individuals who just want to have someone listen to their pain, to be acknowledged as worthy of the chance to be meaningfully accountable or to receive something as simple as a heartfelt apology. And, in the cases that mediations produce a memorandum of understanding, the feeling is, time and again, one of immense gratitude and a new beginning for all involved.

The Restorative Justice Program at CMS-D is an invaluable complementary facet of a 21st century criminal justice system."

- Sara Dalla Rosa

PROGRAM UPDATES

► Read about the various initiatives within the Restorative Justice Program and stay up to date.

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VOLUNTEER TRAINING CALENDAR

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BECOME A VOLUNTEER

► Help make a difference in our community. Find out how to get involved!

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VOLUME THREE SPRING-SUMMER 2008

The Restorative Justice Program (RJP) provides the opportunity for victims, offenders and affected community members to meet face-to-face, in the presence of trained volunteers, in order to talk about the offence, how they have been impacted and what needs to happen to address the harm that has resulted.

Cases are accepted at any stage in the criminal justice process (pre-charge, post-charge, post-plea and post-sentence). Referrals may be made by police officers, crown attorneys, judges, probation officers, defence lawyers, social service agencies and participants (self-referrals). The program is open to both youth and adults.

Winnipeg RJ Gathering

In the last issue of the RJournal, you read that our Director was joyfully anticipating the Gathering hosted by MCCC (Mennonite Central Committee Canada) in Winnipeg with other restorative justice (RJ) practitioners from across Canada. While the set dates preceded many of the Festival du Voyageur activities, all our other ambitions were fulfilled. It was two days of sharing stories of restorative justice activities, feeling supported, having fun, and expanding our concepts of how restorative justice works in Canada and the world. Presentations were heard on working with media, experiencing the power of story in our own lives, and consulting in our specific affinity groups, leaving ample time for socializing and catching up.

As Michele Sauvé experienced health issues that sadly prevented her from attending, Adil and Brenda joined others who work with restorative justice values including fellow practitioners from Universities, mediation centres and ministries. Familiar and new faces were there, and stories were shared about individuals moving to

government jobs where RJ concepts are being embraced. Overall, it was a restoring experience.

Theresa O'Leary, who had been a CBC specialist on social justice issues for 20 years, joined the circle as a new restorative justice practitioner in Newfoundland. She presented the context that she used to work within and, while recognizing the challenges that practitioners face when trying to promote this work through the media, encouraged everyone to find a public voice using stories of real experiences (protecting confidentiality) to interest reporters. She advised that our messages should include a "sound bite" (e.g. move in the direction of 'smart on crime not tough on crime'), be specific, and repeat 3-4 key points in a variety of ways rather than add more information to an interview, from which the most sensational inferences might be drawn.

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Program Updates

Private Information Court

Private Information Court continues to rely on the commitment of a few loyal volunteers to attend court and accept referrals from the Crown Attorney's office at the North York Courthouse. The value of this program is evident in recent resolved cases which included landlord/tenant issues, personal relationships, and business partners for example.



In 2007, the program received 40 referrals, consisting of 21 short service and 19 mediation cases. 85% of the cases which went to mediation were resolved and resulted in the charges being withdrawn.

Youth Justice Committee

This is an exciting time for the Youth Justice Committee (YJC) as there are many signs of growth and change. A warm welcome is extended to the new Chair of the Steering Committee, Shane Hobson. In 2007, a total of 87 youth were referred to the program. So far in 2008, the majority of cases involve some aspect of Assault and Threatening. Special Project Funding has enabled the design and completion of a qualitative evaluation of the YJC in which we will soon discover how well we 'walk the talk' of our restorative values. The YJC is currently in consultation with the YJC Steering Committee to develop a referral protocol to enable acceptance of pre-charge referrals. A heart felt thanks goes out to the YJC Steering Committee for their continued support.

Restorative Justice Youth Program

This is the fourth year of Restorative Justice Youth Program. Increased attendance by the coordinator at Probation Offices, program posters and brochures and other outreach efforts have resulted in Probation Officers seeing possibilities for their clients in the

services that restorative justice can provide. As a result, the probation officers are including our services in their Pre-Sentence Reports, which are used by judges to determine the type and length of sentences. The coordinator continues to look for ways to expand the services being provided to young people aged 12-17 on probation, and

expects to see increased referrals in the coming year. There is much appreciation for the continued support of staff at the North and West Toronto Probation Offices.

Adult Justice Committees

The Adult Justice Committees (AJC) serving the Courthouses at 1000 and 2201 Finch Avenue continue to run strongly, increasing the need for the services of our Case Managers and volunteers. In 2007, CMS-D received 192 referrals to the Adult Justice Committees and of those that went to mediation, the success rate was 98%. The most common charges were Assault, Threatening, and Mischief Under \$5000, and parties ranged in age from 18 to 70. As knowledge of the program and its success expands, Crown Attorneys, Duty Counsel and Defense Counsel are requesting that more cases be diverted. As a result, the number of referrals in increasing and the diversity of charges is broadening. Warm appreciation is felt for the support of the AJC Steering Committees.



Thank you to our volunteers



Winnipeg ...continued from page 1

Meredith Egan, from the Quaker Peace Foundation, led us through a discovery of how the presence or lack of story in our lives enables/disables us to make sense of life experiences. We reflected on the idea that story-ing one's life creates meaning which can be empowering or debilitating, and that, in mediation, we often have the opportunity to positively transform it. This change is assisted through the skills and mindset of the mediators in posing open questions, active listening and reframing for the parties; a large part of which is accomplished in the case developments. It was rewarding to probe deeper into how CMS-D works with parties over time and to explore the process's potential.



A regular session at each Gathering is an opportunity for those who are engaged in similar types of restorative work to have time to talk about their particular challenges and opportunities. The groups include Circles of Support and Accountability, prison visitation and mediation. We heard about an evaluation of the Calgary Community Conferencing program which looked

at the collaborative work between their site, the Calgary Board of Education, Youth Probation, Family Service, University, MCC and John Howard Society – a wonderful story of working together. The website at www.calgarycommunityconferencing.com shares the complete results: In general, they provided statistics that RJ has better outcomes, than alternative approaches, for parties on 3 variables: the offender taking responsibility, healing the relationship and closure. Two of our colleagues train mediators for serious and violent crime mediations which take place through Canada's federal prison system.

It's always inspiring to see what is possible with restorative justice in its various incarnations; to glimpse the big picture and also to remember its impact in our everyday experiences. We heard

the story of one colleague, who at 5 picked his neighbour's flowers for his mom. His mother made him go to his neighbour to apologize, forgave him with a big hug, and he's been doing RJ work ever since!

by Brenda Kotras

2008 - 2009 VOLUNTEER TRAINING CALENDAR

○ | VICTIM OFFENDER DIALOGUE TRAINING

Applications now being accepted for the following two trainings (required training for new volunteers):

Spring Training:
May 20, 22, 27, 29 (6:00 - 9:00 pm) &
May 25 & June 1 (9:00 am - 5:00 pm)
Orientation: June 3 (6:00 - 9:00 pm)

Fall Training:
Oct. 20, 22, 27, 29 (6:00 - 9:00 pm) &
Oct. 25 & Nov. 1 (9:00 am - 5:00 pm)
Orientation: Nov. 3 (6:00 - 9:00 pm)

○ | ROLE PLAY/ INFORMATION NIGHTS

As part of service each year, volunteers are asked to participate in at least two opportunities to broaden and strengthen skills. 6:00 - 8:30 pm. We're interested in volunteers' suggestions for presentations. Please pre-register.

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2008
Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2008
Thursday, Feb. 19, 2009
Wednesday, March 11, 2009

○ | FILM NIGHTS

We have purchased some new films about restorative justice, and have organized movie/discussion nights, complete with popcorn!

Monday, May 5, Sept. 22, & Nov. 10.
Time to be announced.

○ | ADVANCED TRAININGS

Keep your eyes open for additional opportunities for advanced training next year.