Restorative Justice in Youth Correctional Facilities

A Guide to Success in Implementation

Just Outcomes

Introduction

Youth Corrections is at a pivotal moment in its history. New understandings of crime-prevention and brain science have given rise to vital frameworks like Positive Youth Development (or Oregon Youth Authority's model, Positive Human Development), which challenges both punitive and permissive approaches to youth behaviors. The emergent discourse on trauma-informed practice has reshaped how we think about justice through the lens of healing and wellbeing, not only for young people but also for survivors of crime, families, communities, and justice personnel. Meanwhile a growing movement to end the disproportionate representation of Indigenous and racialized youth within the justice system has sharpened efforts to enhance equity and inclusion within youth justice. Within this context, restorative justice offers a compelling and unifying framework of theory and practice.

Written with youth correctional leaders and administrators, internal change agents, and fellow restorative justice specialists in mind, this guide recommends a phased approach to implementing restorative justice within youth corrections. The considerations offered here are based on Just Outcomes' years of broad experience in restorative justice practice and implementation, and particularly on the successes and learnings of a 2021-2024 implementation project in partnership with the Oregon Youth Authority. While for both practical and ethical reasons we don't believe that restorative justice can be understood or implemented as a replicable "cookie-cutter" approach, we hope the phased approach offered here provides a useful reference for those undertaking the work of adapting restorative justice principles and practices to their specific context.

Just Outcomes is an international consulting organization whose mission is to support communities and organizations in developing just responses to harm and its causes. We help leaders and service providers across sectors find principled, realistic, and lasting solutions to justice-related challenges and opportunities. A wide array of experience informs our work, from criminal justice agencies to community organizations, schools and post-secondary institutions, faith communities, businesses, and philanthropic organizations. Our team brings professional backgrounds in restorative justice, crisis intervention, facilitation, training, project management, research & evaluation, program development, and more. We frequently facilitate large-scale projects involving multiple interested and impacted parties. As a learning organization, we continue to experiment and deepen our understanding throughout all our work. This report is an invitation into our learning journey, grounded in the belief that restorative justice values and principles—when operationalized with integrity, equity, and intentionality—can transform even the most challenging environments toward healing and repair.

Structure of this Report

In order to provide context and direction for the implementation of restorative justice within the youth correctional environment, we are providing three primary sections in this report. The first is to provide our interpretation of restorative justice, particularly in the context of implementation within an institutional environment. Secondly, we provide an implementation guide for youth correctional leaders and their community partners looking to implement restorative justice within their own context. Finally, for those interested in how this model played out in the real world, we provide a detailed case study of Oregon Youth Authority's journey, with Just Outcomes' facilitation, support, training, and technical assistance, of implementing restorative justice within four of their facilities across Oregon.

Contents

what is *Restorative Justice?*

Restorative justice is a principled approach to preventing and addressing crime and harm, which recognizes the central role of relationships in human health and safety.

A restorative approach to justice gives voice and agency to those most affected by harms, conflicts, and everyday decisions alike. It invites us to consider: Who needs to have a voice? What needs to be repaired? What needs to be learned? And, what needs to be strengthened to prevent future harms?

The emerging global restorative justice movement aims to remember and re-imagine justice as being rooted in understandings of human dignity, healing and interconnectedness. Inspired by many Indigenous peacemaking traditions, faith traditions and straightforward common sense, restorative justice is a modern term for a timeless set of ideas. Restorative justice is also grounded in data about how humans work and what we need to thrive. Consistent with much empirical research from fields such as neuroscience and beyond, restorative approach assumes people are:

➢ worthy of inherent dignity and respect;

➢ wired for belonging and connection;

➢ deeply interconnected with one another;

➢ responsible for repairing harm resulting from their choices and actions;

➢ in need of a supportive 'community' when harm has occurred;

➢ capable of healing and change; and,

➢ influenced both by individual choice and by social context.

principles of a *Restorative* Approach

While there are certain practices commonly associated with restorative justice, any specific approach or practice is "restorative" only so far as it gives expression to restorative principles.

Staying rooted in core principles makes for a great deal of practical flexibility and creativity, while also keeping a strong compass when dealing with the complexity of change at an individual, community, or institutional level. Restorative justice literature presents multiple ways of understanding restorative justice principles, which are worth researching and exploring for anyone deeply invested in this work. In our institutional partnerships, we find the following four basic principles to be useful.

Dignity

A restorative approach strives for empowering and inclusive processes, spaces, and cultures rather than adversarial and hierarchical ones. Recognizing that autonomy and agency are basic human needs, the voices of those affected by decisions are meaningfully included in decision-making. In this approach we strive toward deep respect, curiosity and positive regard for all. A restorative approach seeks to cultivate confidence within individuals about their inherent value and worth.

Belonging

Belonging is a basic human need. A restorative approach seeks to foster positive experiences of our interconnectedness. It aspires toward environments of mutual trust, support, reciprocity and accountability. Importantly, belonging does not equate directly with "fitting in;" while "fitting in" involves conforming to external expectations, belonging is about being accepted for one's self. True belonging can be built only when dignity is honored.

Transformation

As Stephen Hawking observed, "intelligence is the ability to adapt and change." A restorative approach means working toward systemic evolution and change based on collective learning, resilience and adaptation. Transformation requires communication and collaboration across the constituent parts of a system, and mechanisms for that collaboration to yield influence. It requires the pursuit of inclusion and equity in relationships, to ensure adaptation and change is informed by diverse perspectives. Transformation also invites leaders to work toward strengthening the capacity and resilience of individuals and communities to adapt to change, manage conflict effectively, and prevent breakdowns in relationship.

Repair

Repair is a process of restoring or cultivating experiences of dignity, belonging and wholeness among people and groups after there have been experiences of harm, violation, crises or ruptures in relationships. Harm and injustice can take many forms, impacting individuals, relationships, communities, organizations, systems, and entire societies. A restorative approach to justice invites us to facilitate opportunities for repair at these multiple levels. While attending to acute and interpersonal harms, this principle also invites us to attend to harmful social/organizational conditions and structures. A restorative approach invites a shift of concern from what people responsible for causing harm deserve, to what all people involved need in order to achieve or regain a sense of well-being. Who has been harmed? What do they need? Who has obligations here? And, when needs to happen to ensure this won't occur in the future?

restorative approaches in custody settings: *The Literature*

Six Categories of Restorative Approaches

A review of the relevant literature reveals six general categories of restorative approaches in the custodial context (Newell, 2002):[i]

Offending Behavior Programs

Initiatives focused on rehabilitation of offenders through education, including education about restorative justice, empathy development and promoting understanding of the impact of their crime on victims and communities.

Victim Awareness Programs

Initiatives focused on developing offenders' empathy for victims.

Victim Offender Dialogue Programs

Initiatives intended to support direct or indirect communication between victims and incarcerated individuals.

Community Service Work

Initiatives focused on offenders providing some sort of service to the community.

Offender-Community Programs

Initiatives that provide opportunities to build relationship between incarcerated people and community volunteers

"Prison" Philosophy - Sometimes Called "Restorative Detention"

This approach seeks to integrate restorative justice as an ethos and philosophy to guide policies, procedures, induction programs, staff and resident harm and conflict, race relations, resettlement/reintegration/release strategies (Gavrielides, 2016).[ii]   Examples in this category include the creation of housing units within a prison based on restorative justice (Canada, England) and hiring restorative justice consultants (Belgium).
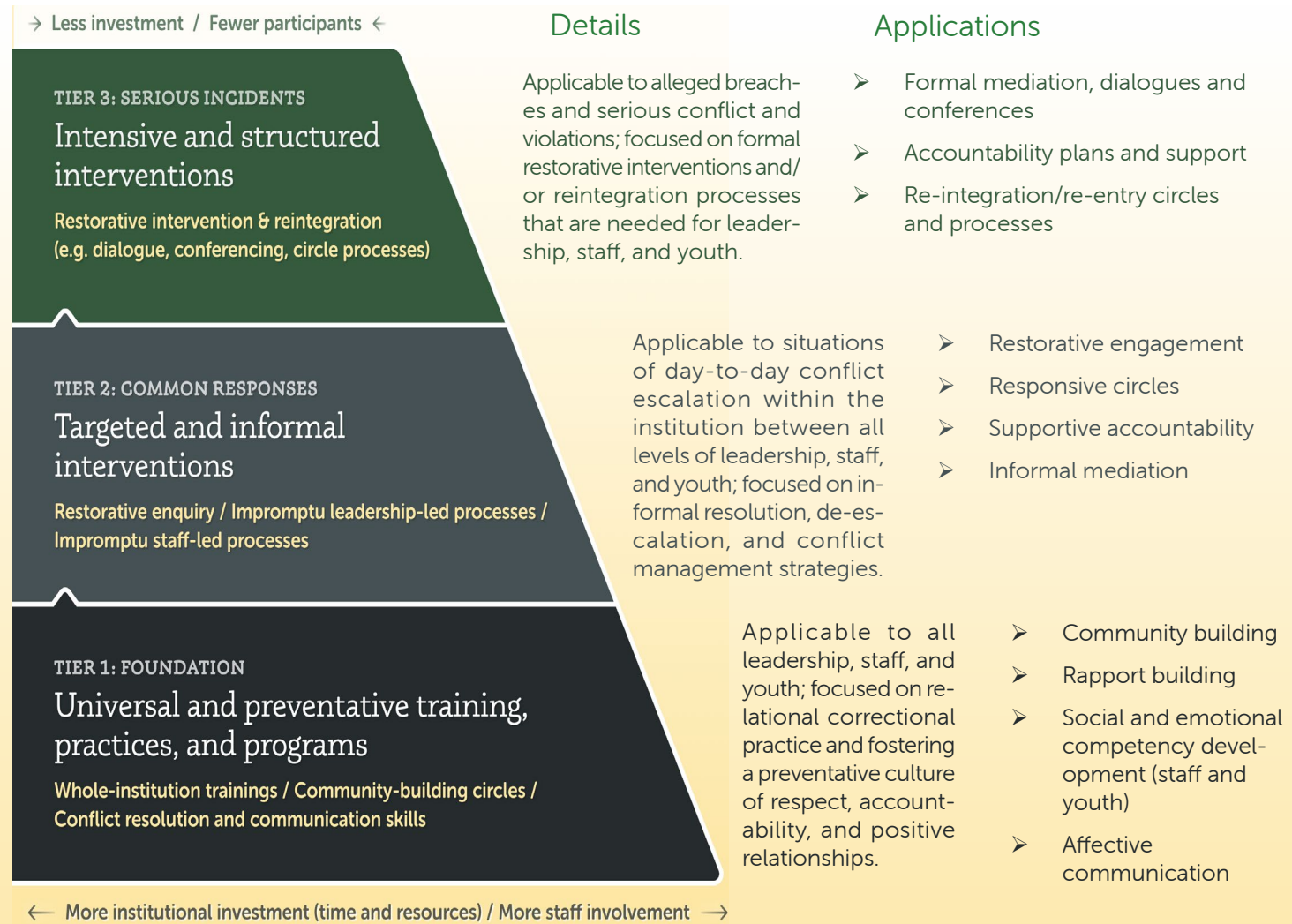
A "Whole Systems" Approach to Restorative Justice

Our understanding of restorative justice in closed facilities generally aligns with the final category: restorative justice as an "ethos and philosophy" which promises a more comprehensive approach. Support for the implementation of restorative justice as a way to shift correctional culture has a great deal of support in the literature.

"Restorative work can be seen as a culture-changing process for those prisons that wish to become more effective in meeting the long-term needs of offenders, victims and their communities. Restorative work also enables prisons seeking to create a more harmonious environment for prisoners, their families and for staff and management." (Newell, 2002, 1).[iii]

Restorative justice implementation as a culture change process can be informed by Morrison's (2007) Whole-School Model of Restorative Justice.[iv] This approach, inspired by the field of public health, demonstrates the opportunities for restorative justice to be integrated at various levels or "tiers" to promote the philosophy and practice as a way of preventing and responding to harm in service of shifting institutional culture.

→ Less investment / Fewer participants ←

	Details	Applications
TIER 3: SERIOUS INCIDENTS **Intensive and structured interventions** Restorative intervention & reintegration (e.g. dialogue, conferencing, circle processes)	Applicable to alleged breaches and serious conflict and violations; focused on formal restorative interventions and/or reintegration processes that are needed for leadership, staff, and youth.	➢ Formal mediation, dialogues and conferences ➢ Accountability plans and support ➢ Re-integration/re-entry circles and processes
TIER 2: COMMON RESPONSES **Targeted and informal interventions** Restorative enquiry / Impromptu leadership-led processes / Impromptu staff-led processes	Applicable to situations of day-to-day conflict escalation within the institution between all levels of leadership, staff, and youth; focused on informal resolution, de-escalation, and conflict management strategies.	➢ Restorative engagement ➢ Responsive circles ➢ Supportive accountability ➢ Informal mediation
TIER 1: FOUNDATION **Universal and preventative training, practices, and programs** Whole-institution trainings / Community-building circles / Conflict resolution and communication skills	Applicable to all leadership, staff, and youth; focused on relational correctional practice and fostering a preventative culture of respect, accountability, and positive relationships.	➢ Community building ➢ Rapport building ➢ Social and emotional competency development (staff and youth) ➢ Affective communication

← More institutional investment (time and resources) / More staff involvement →

Edgar & Newell (2006) note that, for restorative justice to impact organizational culture in custody settings, six elements of the cultural web must be challenged and re-imagined through the lens of restorative justice.[v]

1 Power Structures
Structures guiding the effort and drive required to carry out the essential work of the organization.

2 Organizational Structures
The formal arrangements of power and relationships within an organization that describe its working patterns.

3 Control Systems
How institutions monitor the distribution of resources.

4 Routines and Rituals
Practices that give meaning to everyday activities and define important relationships.

5 Myths and Stories
The stories shared among members of the organization about themselves as individuals and the organization as a whole.

6 Symbols
Signs and embalms that members of the organization understand and believe represent them – including physical features, language, design, and titles.as a whole.

In Summary

Contrary to narrow, mechanistic understandings of restorative justice, literature and experience suggest that a more wholistic understanding of restorative justice is useful in custody settings. A restorative approach includes the preventative and proactive work of building and strengthening relationships, while attending to the need for healing, accountability and repair when relationships break down. In this way a restorative approach inside youth correctional facilities can serve to improve wellbeing and outcomes for youth and staff, while offering a template for healthy and just relationships that can guide youth values and decision-making in the community.

Beyond its application on the front lines, these principles can also guide the implementation process itself. A wholistic understanding of restorative justice teaches us that dignity, belonging, repair and transformation are vital priorities among leaders and implementation teams with powerful implications for how they work with each other and engage others in the change process. We hope this congruence of principles will be apparent to readers throughout this guide.

Implementation Guide

The following guide recommends a phased approach to designing, implementing, and piloting restorative justice within closed youth facilities. Our intended audience is correctional leaders and administrators, internal change agents, and external restorative justice specialists or consultants.

While the process will require different types of communication, collaboration, and diplomacy depending on the role of the person or group facilitating it, the core principles and processes of implementation remain largely the same.

For those interested in reviewing how this framework for implementation played out in a real-world case scenario, we have provided a case study as an Appendix for your review. This case study outlines the actual process that Just Outcomes and Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) navigated in implementing restorative justice throughout four of their closed facilities. You will note areas that are consistent with the approach we are inviting in this guide, as well as areas were we deviated based on OYA's specific needs and context. To provide tangible examples of the elements of the implementation framework, we will reference this case study throughtout this guide.

Our aim is to provide a roadmap that can be adapted to different institutional contexts while maintaining alignment with restorative justice principles and values. Whether you are an internal champion or an external consultant, this guide offers tools, structures, and processes that we believe will be helpful to navigate the complexities of implementation to create a culture rooted in dignity, belonging, transformation, and repair.

about the *Restorative* Justice Consultant

Throughout the guide, we refer to the role of the restorative justice consultant ("RJ Consultant"). We believe that incorporating external and subject matter expertise can add significant value to restorative justice implementation within youth correctional institutions. Though not a requirement for success, external consultants can be significant in the following ways:

➢ Safeguarding the Integrity of Practice: Having an external consultant whose primary experience and role is the fidelity of restorative justice practice can be integral to mitigate the risks of a natural and nuanced cooptation of restorative values and principles toward institutional norms.

➢ Supporting Internal Champions: Implementing restorative justice values and principles within a hierarchal system can be cumbersome and draining for internal and directly impacted restorative justice champions. The institution's provision of outside consultation and support is an investment that demonstrates a commitment to the vision of restorative justice implementation as well as to the care of those championing this cause. This outside support can dramatically lower the chances of those leading the change experiencing burnout.

➢ Facilitating Difficult Conversations: External consultants bring an impartial and objective presence to the process, helping leaders and staff navigate sensitive topics, power dynamics, and conflicts that may arise during the change process.

➢ Providing Specialized Training and Skill Building: External consultants can bring subject matter expertise and facilitation skills that internal teams may lack to build staff competence, capacity, and confidence for the purpose of ensuring restorative justice is implemented with integrity and consistency.

➢ Maintaining Momentum and Accountability: Implementation efforts often stall when competing priorities arise. External consultants can help sustain focus by monitoring progress, normalizing the change process, offering strategic input in response to challenges, and providing accountability to their long-term vision.

phase 1
Leadership Engagement

Implementation requires, as a first step, consent and a level of ownership by key leaders within the correctional administration. Key leadership refers to those within the institution who have systemically ascribed power through their role or position and have significant leverage to influence policy, remove barriers, and allocate resources.

Though the proposed process is oriented to engagement with all levels of the institutional hierarchy, and prioritizes those most impacted, institutional leadership has immense leverage to either create or overcome barriers. For this reason, ensuring that expectations are clear from the outset, and that leadership is bought into a restorative approach, is critical.

Key Elements for Leadership Engagement

Identifying Leadership

During this phase, the RJ Consultant would identify and work with 1 – 4 key leaders within the institution that have significant positional power and can leverage policy and resources. Within state-wide correctional institutions this group would ideally include headquarter and facility leadership. In addition, this team should include someone that would be a primarily liaison between the institution and the RJ consultant.

Setting Expectations

The exploration with leadership is intended to clarify expectations for the project. Topics covered might at a minimum include:

➢ **Commitment:** What level of commitment do leaders have toward the project? Where does the project rank amid other priorities? Is leadership prepared to model restorative justice values and principles in response to issues that emerge as a result of the implementation process? What will leaders' participation level be and at which levels of the process? What perceptions, fears or concerns among leadership might limit commitment?

➢ **Organizational Capacity:** What level of current capacity does the facility have to take on a new project? How much availability do the staff have to learn new skills and participate in implementation? What budget is available for the project, and what types of activities will that allow for? Is the staff suffering from initiative fatigue, and what might be done to overcome this?

➢ **Project Scope:** Which aspects of institutional operations will the project aim to impact? Where is there room for continued discussion about scope as the project unfolds? What are the non-negotiables related to scope?

➢ **Decision-Making:** How will decisions be made throughout the course of the project? What types of decisions do which leaders need to be involved with? Is there an appetite for the establishment of diverse project teams, and if so, what level of empowerment will these teams have to make project decisions?

➢ **Communication:** What types of initial and ongoing communication about the project will be disseminated by high-level leadership (Director, Deputy Director) to facility staff, youth, community partners and/or other affected parties – and what is the role of leadership in that communication? Who will the assessment report be distributed to, and what parameters might exist around the report and its distribution?

Key Considerations for Leadership Engagement

Positional Power and Influence

Identify key leaders who hold positional power and can influence policy, remove barriers, allocate resources, and influence institutional culture.

Commitment and Buy-In

Establish leadership commitment and buy-in to prioritize the project, steward the vision, and model restorative justice principles and values. Implementation of restorative approaches may not be successful or sustainable without a foundation of commitment from key leadership.

Leadership Capacity

Ensure that leaders who will be championing and guiding the project have the time, resources, and support needed to sustain their involvement and drive the process.

Leadership Turn-Over

Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of turn-over. Thinking over these implications, as well as proactively engaging in succession planning, can be critical to sustaining the long-term change process.
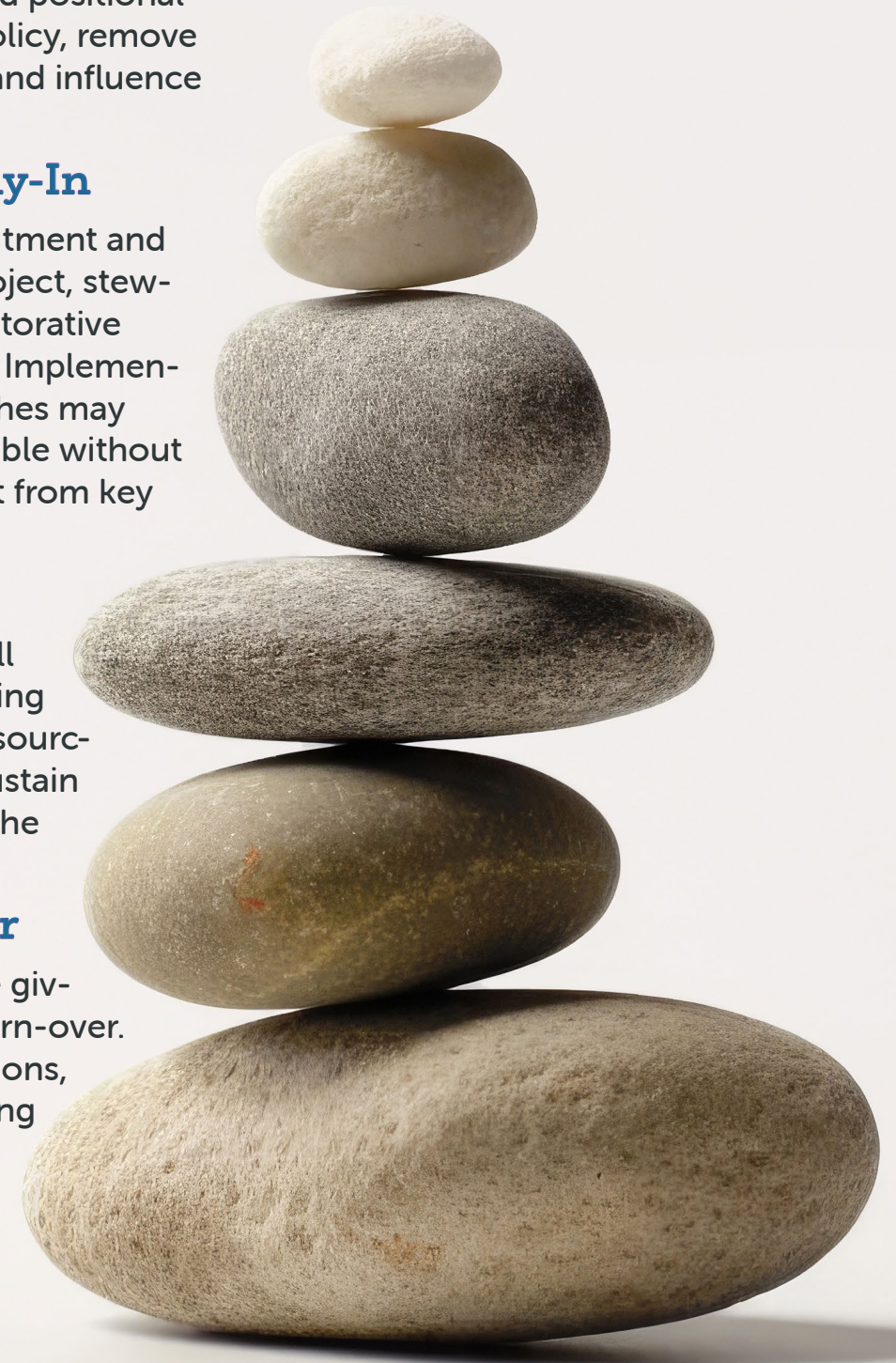
phase 2
Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to gather any information that may support the implementation of restorative approaches within the correctional context.

This includes researching emergent best practices, identifying current institutional initiatives, programs, and policies that support restorative approaches, assessing for hopes, assets, needs, and readiness of the institution, and developing a baseline of cultural/climate data for evaluation of impact during and after implementation. The assessment phase is driven by what information is needed, and who has access to provide it.

The needs assessment is a foundational activity within this guide for the implementation of restorative approaches. The following describes elements and domains of assessment that Just Outcomes' has found to be meaningful in eliciting valuable information for the implementation of restorative approaches within the youth correctional environment.

Key Elements for a Needs Assessment

Culture and Climate

Organizational culture refers to norms, routines, values, and expectations; climate refers to the attitudes and perceptions of staff and clients about where they live and work. Within this domain, the assessment includes learning about:

➢ Perceptions of Safety: Examine factors that influence staff and youth feelings of safety to learn if the infrastructure and support systems foster an environment that is conducive to engagement, learning, and growth. Safety within correctional institutions carries historical implications that need to be explored through a reparative and restorative lens.

➢ Relationships and Belonging: Inquire into perceptions of relationships at multiple levels within facilities. The purpose of this is two-fold: 1) implementation will encounter fewer barriers in higher-trust environments, and 2) a comprehensive understanding of restorative justice implies working toward increased trust, respect, and support at all levels.

➢ Inclusivity, Cultural Safety and Equity: Elicit marginalized voices in an examination of their past and current experience of inclusion, cultural safety and equity within the institution. Restorative approaches promote just relationships between individuals and groups and are therefore closely linked with aspirations toward equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness as key ingredients in the formation of a community that supports restorative ways of being.

➢ Job Satisfaction: Provide measures on job

satisfaction amongst staff, as staff engagement and fulfillment can impact how staff build relationships with youth and peers, be open to new change efforts, and participate in restorative justice implementation at their facility.

➢ Attitudes and Beliefs about Youth in Custody: Assess beliefs about youth in custody, including their potential for growth, fair treatment, and capacity for reintegration into society. Restorative approaches encompass both a mindset and 'toolkit;' therefore, attitudes and beliefs are important considerations in its implementation.

➢ Physical Spaces: Explore how the physical space impacts all above elements of analysis, as well as how it might become an asset or strength for restorative justice implementation.

Knowledge and Skills

The assessment inquires about staff training, proficiency, and confidence in restorative justice-related knowledge and skills. This includes the following areas:

➢ Understandings of Restorative Justice: The frameworks of restorative justice are commonly misunderstood within the correctional field. Identify the level of understanding and/or misunderstanding that exists for leadership and staff.

➢ Restorative Justice-Related Skillsets: There are many skills provided to leadership and staff within the youth correctional system that also are valuable for restorative approaches. Assess which skills have been strengthened

through the existing training and ethos of the institution, and what skills need to be provided through the implementation process.

➢ Training Design and Ongoing Support: Related to both restorative justice understandings and skillsets, articulate the level of existing training, coaching, and mentorship structures that currently exists and may be in support of the implementation of restorative approaches.

Systems and Processes

The assessment inquires about the current systems, practices and processes (formal or informal) which impact staff and youth in custody. This includes an examination of existing perceptions of harm, staff and youth experiences of agency within their context, and the level of community involvement and partnerships. Specifically, to better understand the systems and processes, the assessment might inquire into the following:

➢ Centering Harmed Parties: Examine the level of prioritization given to the needs of those harmed through ensuring they have a voice, access to support, and options for repairing harm in meaningful ways.

➢ Accountability and Discipline: Inquire into how leadership, staff, and youth understand and practice accountability. The goal is to identify the current framing of accountability and discipline – including its orientation as reparative or punitive.

➢ Reintegration: Reintegration in this context refers to processes that integrate youth back into their unit environment after periods of isolation. Examine existing policies, programs, and practices of reintegration, as well as the experiences of both youth and staff in these processes.

➢ Voice and Influence (Communication and Feedback Systems): Participation and collaboration are core principles of restorative justice. Explore the degree to which facility staff and youth in custody believe they have opportunities to provide input, influence decisions, and engage in feedback systems. Aim to evaluate the extent to which these systems foster engagement, communication, and trust within the facility.

➢ Community Involvement and Partnerships: Assess the role of community members and organizations within the youth correctional environment and identify the kinds of supports available to youth during their transition back

into the community after custody.

Leadership and Change Management

Restorative justice implementation requires a strategic approach to change management, along with leadership styles and uses of power that are congruent with a restorative approach. This often includes:

➢ Uses of Power and Authority: Examine how power and authority are perceived, experienced, used, and distributed within the facility. These are important as they influence how relationships are formed, how decisions are made, and how individuals may engage with the restorative justice process.

➢ Facility Leadership: Explore how leadership view their roles, as well as how staff perceive and experience leadership within the institution. This understanding will provide valuable information on where to target capacity development, ensuring that leaders are equipped to effectively support and model restorative approaches.

➢ Change Processes: Reflect on past change efforts to provide valuable context and insight for the implementation process ahead. Understand what methods have been used and their impacts to recognize potential roots of resistance from staff and inform strategies to address these challenges, ultimately facilitating a smoother transition process.
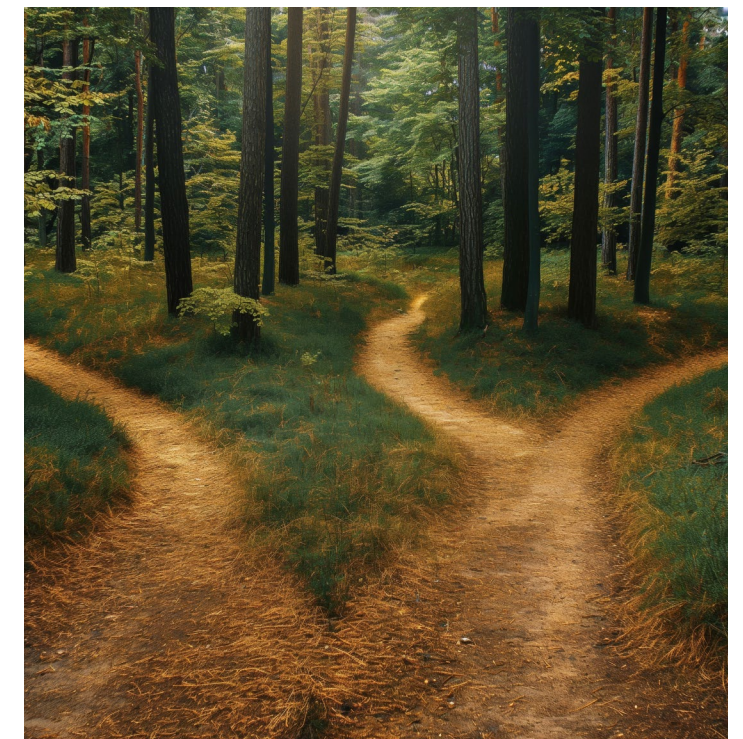
Key Considerations for Assessment

Leadership Buy-In

Assess and work to secure buy-in from key stakeholders, particularly leadership and individuals with positional power, to establish a strong foundation for restorative justice implementation that aligns with organizational goals and fosters a culture of collaboration.

Leadership Capacity and Resources

Evaluate the leadership capacity, resources, and technical assistance required to support effective and sustainable restorative justice implementation, including ongoing training and development opportunities for leaders.

Alignment Assessment

Evaluate alignment with current agency priorities and initiatives to identify gaps, reinforce existing efforts, and uncover opportunities for implementation that enhances overall organizational effectiveness.

Detailed System Review

Conduct thorough reviews of existing systems, initiatives, policies, and practices, including leadership structures, youth and staff needs, and current discipline and accountability frameworks, to identify areas for restorative justice integration.

phase 3
Development

The purpose of the Infrastructure Development phase is to determine the project infrastructure (who will be involved and how decisions will be made), provide baseline training and education, establish communication and feedback mechanisms for the process, and design programs and processes.

Key Elements for Development

Restorative Infrastructure and Leadership Capacity Development

The process of restorative justice implementation requires structures and leadership that embody restorative justice values and principles. Development of this requires an equity lens – ensuring that the voices of those most impacted by this work have meaningful leadership and voice in the process.

Design Project Leadership Structures

Project leadership structures, different than institutional leadership roles, are designed to be representative of impacted and interested parties within the institution, to be diverse in lived experience and identity, to be agile and responsive to needs, and to have channels of overlap to allow for consistent and accurate information sharing and communication within the institution. Within a state-wide youth correctional system, a leadership structure may need to be complex to ensure its ability to be responsive to needs at every level of the institution. Note Oregon Youth Authority's leadership structure as an example.

Project Leadership Recruitment and Selection

Institutional leaders are encouraged to participate in project leadership for their ability to directly change policy, remove barriers, and allocate resources. However, as mentioned above, given the importance for an equitable process that centers the voices of those most impacted, the manner in which teams are convened and members are selected is crucial. These teams will provide leadership for implementation, channels of communication for every level of the institution, and ensure the voices of impacted and interested parties are informing every decision in the process. Following is one suggested approach for the recruitment and selection of key project leadership:

➢ Institution-Wide Orientation: Provide accessible presentations that orient any interested leadership and staff to restorative justice values and principles, along with sharing the cause, intent, and trajectory of the implementation project. Ensure that any interested members of the institution that have interest in being a part of the process have access to these presentations.

➢ Establish Levels of Engagement: Given that there may be more interest in involvement than space allows, it can be helpful to proactively establish diverse roles for multiple levels of involvement. For example, creating a group as a part of the structure that has a feedback, communication, and championing role, but not a decision-making role can be helpful to ensure that everyone that has an interest can play a meaningful part.

➢ Invitation and Selection of Leaders: Ideally, membership of the different teams is established by an open invitation to anyone within the institution that wishes to be involved. There are a few things to consider in this process:

- Establish selection criteria for identification of project leaders based on a set of restorative justice and equity principles that balance the need for representation, lived experience, positional leverage, and individual rapport with members of the institution.

- If there is a principled structure and selection criteria that is executed effectively, this will result in diverse representation that brings new voices into leadership roles, and everyone that has an interest having a meaningful part to play.

- Recruitment and invitations to join leadership structure may happen in phases, starting with the central level of project leadership (i.e. the Steering Committee in the OYA structure), and then rippling out to other levels of the structure.

Project Leadership Training

Once the leadership structure is in place and membership of the roles and teams have been established, the RJ Consultant can support the development of a shared ethos and language, knowledge and skills.

One mechanism for accomplishing this would be to ensure that all members of the leadership structure participate in a restorative leadership training.[1] Following are some suggested topic areas:

➢ Theoretical Foundations of Restorative Justice: exploration of justice frameworks and values; critical analysis of punishment and shame; understanding of trauma and recovery.

➢ Equity: a critical analysis of the impact of power for leaders, staff, and youth within youth corrections; developing an understanding of the social context of inequity and creating shared understandings of equity within the institution; and an examination of the causal relationship between colonization and traditional justice frameworks.

➢ Restorative Justice as a Framework: understanding of restorative justice frameworks; comparative analysis of restorative, rehabilitative, and restorative justice theories; critical analysis of myths about restorative justice; examination of restorative justice values and principles; and the application of restorative justice principles.

➢ Correctional Facility as a Restorative Environment: examination of what it takes to establish a culture of development; learning and practicing the skills of restorative engagement with responsible and impacted parties; and an overview of restorative and relational practices.

---

1   In the case of Oregon Youth Authority, this training, called "Foundations in Restorative Justice: Principles, Practices, and Leadership for Change" was a six-day training split over the course of two, three-day sessions.

- Leading for Restorative Justice Implementation: exploration of the characteristics of restorative leadership; an understanding and practice of collaborative and consensus decision-making; developing a map for systems and culture-change; and, creating an individual strategic plan for incorporating restorative principles into the work of project leadership.

In addition to the topics listed, some initial work to develop institutional frameworks and priorities for the project can be helpful while you have all participants of the project present. This initial brainstorming can act as a foundation for the Project Planning Retreat that follows.

Team Development

Once a foundation of shared language, understanding and skill has been established through the restorative leadership training, it is important to provide support to the different teams within the structure for developing their own group identities. Following are a few suggested priorities for team development:

- Relationship Building: Ensure that initial time is committed to building the interpersonal relationships between members of the team. In addition, aligning with restorative principles, it is important to prioritize relationship building in a sustained way by incorporating some level of relational activities within each meeting or engagement.
- Develop Team's Terms of Reference (ToR): For the team to navigate the complex and difficult terrain of systems change, they will need a solid foundation of shared agreements and protocols. Developing a written ToR is a necessary tool for this foundation, and includes sections like group agreements, membership roles (i.e. who facilitates, takes notes, etc.), agreements on how the team members will navigate conflict and harm, decision-making protocols, membership expectations, and protocols for navigating changes in membership/leadership.
- Develop Mechanisms for Communication and Engagement: Develop mechanisms for engagement and communication to ensure that the interested and impacted parties being represented have a meaningful voice in the process. These agreements should include both mechanisms for eliciting ongoing and meaningful input and feedback on the issues and decisions being explored, as well as protocols to strengthen transparency in the process.

Initiative Alignment

The consistency of new research, best practices, and other practices and frameworks (i.e. trauma-informed practices, evidence-based case management, etc.), has naturally created a cascade of new initiatives within youth correctional facilities. It is also common that these initiatives are implemented in a reactive manner – reacting to funding availability, state mandates, and/or policy requirements. Unfortunately, for many institutions, this has had two important impacts:

1. Initiative fatigue has become a widely recognized form of burnout among leadership and staff within the youth justice environment. Many express concern about the "flavor of the month" approach to new initiatives, which fosters a sense of disempowerment and undermines the significance of these efforts. As a result, this disconnection can lead to decreased motivation, diminish the overall impact of the initiatives, and diminish an appetite for engaging in new initiatives.

2. It also can mean that, at any given time, institutions can have multiple initiatives being implemented without a guiding framework that connects all layers of the work.

Consequently, it is important to build in a process to reflect on and design how current initiatives align and how restorative approaches can either support, enhance, or provide a holistic framework that connects it all.

Project Action Planning

At this stage, action planning for implementation is prioritized. Elements of the action plan include goals, objectives, activities, responsibilities and timelines. The following activities can assist an institution in creating a roadmap for implementation.

Project Planning Retreat – Institution Wide

Once the leadership infrastructure is in place, an institution-wide project plan can be designed by a group that is representative of all the key leadership teams, as well as any non-team leadership that would add value and/or context to the design work (i.e. institutional research staff, institutional executives, etc.).

In our experience, this process can be kickstarted through a planning retreat, and then fine-tuned and finalized via the engagement and communication plans put in place during team development. This initial design work is focused on any implementation elements that need to be consistent across the institution. Following are four key areas that fit that parameter.

1. Definition and Guiding Principles for Restorative Justice: group will author what will turn into the institution-wide restorative justice definition and its guiding principles.

2. Definition of Accountability: group will author a definition of accountability, including benchmarks for how accountability can be measured or understood to have happened.

3. Priority Actions for Implementation: group will prioritize different elements of implementation activities that the facilities and/or institution and its facilities might focus on. These can be prioritized into short-term (1 to 2-year priorities), mid-term (3 to 4-year), and long-term (5+ year) priorities.

4. Shared Outcomes: group will identify shared outcome goals from restorative justice implementation that will be shared across all implementation activities – including those that are facility-specific.

Facility Project Planning

Using the work of the project planning retreat team, each facility now develops their own implementation plans that are specific to their needs and context. Facilities have the autonomy to customize their plan, assuming the goals, objectives, and activities are in alignment with the elements determined within the project planning retreat. This work is ideally achieved through an initial one-day planning session, and then fine-tuned and finalized through ongoing meetings and consistent engagement and communication. Meetings are most effective when they are scheduled with time to accomplish tasks between the meetings – in our experience, every other week works well.

Institutional Mapping

Once all facilities have established their action plans, the central leadership team (institution-wide) assesses the plans and identifies overlapping priorities, objectives and activities. In our Case Study above, each facility within Oregon Youth Authority had prioritized the implementation of Community Building Circles. As described within the case study, the naturally occurring design alignment resulted in an ad-hoc committee that designed key aspects of the use of Circle to maximize the likelihood of fidelity across all facilities.

Policy, Program and Staffing Design

Once the action plans are created, a process of policy modification or creation, restorative program/initiative[2] design, and staffing reallocation or role creation is initiated. These key elements do not happen in sequence but are iterative given their interdependent nature.

Policy Modification/Design

As the project plan, program design, and initiatives for restorative justice implementation take shape, policy analysis, modification and creation will be necessary. Whether to provide the necessary flexibility to staff for responding to disruptive or harmful behavior, to carve out confidentiality agreements or Memorandums of Agreements for facilitated dialogue, or to develop criteria for restorative programming, it is necessary that policy supports success and mitigates existing barriers.

Program and Initiative Design

Considering which leadership or ad-hoc teams need to be involved, the RJ Consultant supports these groups in designing program and/or initiative guides that provide the frameworks, policies, protocols and procedures to effectively initiate and administer the program or initiative.

A key component that often can be lost in design is evaluation. It is important that consideration and planning is put into place during the design stage regarding:

- what and how data will be collected (both qualitative and quantitative);
- what outcomes will be measured; and
- how the program will be reflective and responsive to data analysis.

Staffing Allocation

During program and policy design, consider staffing models for how the program will be administered. It may be the case that FTE for particular roles may need to be reallocated toward program/initiative administration, or in some cases new positions created.

---

2   We differentiate programs from initiatives based on the ongoing nature of what is being developed. Programs are structures and practices put in place that are to be sustained (eg. Community Building Circles within Units), while initiatives might be temporary processes to address particular issues (eg. institution-wide inquiry into the impacts of historic inequities on staff within the institution).

Key Considerations for Development

Leadership Capacity

Ensure sufficient resources and organizational support for project leaders to facilitate restorative justice implementation - address staff shortages, workload, and competing priorities that may hinder their ability to lead effectively.

Leadership Development

Provide comprehensive development opportunities for leaders to build restorative skills such as circle facilitation, consensus decision-making, personal accountability, and sharing power. Ensure leadership has the tools and knowledge needed to model restorative principles and values in their interactions and decision-making.

Centering Equity

Embed equity into every phase of the project, ensuring that decision-making, project design, training, and evaluation consistently prioritize marginalized voices. Develop trainings, systems, and reflective practices to ensure equity remains a core focus rather than a checkbox.

Integration and Alignment

Align restorative justice with existing agency efforts to build on and reinforce work already in progress, avoiding the perception of restorative justice as just another initiative. Highlight synergies between restorative justice and existing practices to maximize resource use and create buy-in from all levels of the organization.

Stakeholder Engagement

Foster strong engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders, including leadership, staff, youth, and community members, to co-develop the restorative justice model. Ensure that ongoing feedback loops are in place to refine strategies and maintain investment throughout the development and implementation phases.

Slow Down to Move Fast

Acknowledge that, while this process may require more time than institutions are typically accustomed to, it is crucial for achieving sustainable change. Rushing can result in shortcuts that exacerbate inequities and cause harm, ultimately leading to significant delays and cost. Investing time in principled decision-making and engagement can begin to address past inequities and establish a foundation of strong relationships and effective leadership. Moving at an intentional speed will support leadership and staff in navigating the complexities of change efficiently and effectively.

phase 4
Implementation

Implementation can commence once program manuals and initiative guides are completed, policies are aligned to promote success, and staffing is allocated.

Prior to launching any programs or initiatives, capacity building will often be necessary to set the stage for staff competency and service delivery. This will be followed by the launch of any programs or initiatives, ongoing coaching and mentoring, and the establishment of a continuing education and succession plan.

Key Elements for Implementation

Education and Capacity Development

It will be important that anyone impacted by the new programs or initiatives understands what is coming, why it is being initiated, and what the sought-after outcomes are. Short educational presentations to all key interested and impacted parties can go a long way in building buy-in and understanding for those that will be either initiating, delivering, or receiving the new services.

In addition, trainings may be necessary to build skills, knowledge and establish the ethos of new programs or initiatives. Workshops or trainings that can often be included can be:

➢ Foundations of Restorative Justice;

➢ Restorative Leadership;

➢ Restorative Inquiry/Engagement;

➢ Circle Training (Community Building and Support[1] Circles); and

➢ Restorative Justice Responsive Process Facilitator Training (Dialogue, Conferences, and Circles).

---

1   Support Circles can also be focused on re-entry processes.

Pilot and Initiative Launch

Once staffing is in place and staff are provided the resources and capacity to fulfill their responsibilities, the program or initiative is launched. Programs and initiatives can often benefit from the "Pilot" framing to allow for a more flexible approach and growth mindset by all involved parties.

In any launch, it is important for the institution to find the balance between commitment and curiosity. The institution must communicate a commitment to see the program or initiative through in order to achieve the necessary buy-in and investment from staff and other impacted parties. A stance of curiosity and growth must also be communicated to ensure to staff and impacted parties that their experience of the program or initiative will lead to learning and changes to improve the experience.

Ongoing Coaching and Mentoring

Staff utilizing new skills and frameworks or delivering new services need ongoing support through coaching and mentoring from practitioners with experience in restorative approaches. The necessary coaching and mentorship is provided either through creating new positions with experienced restorative justice practitioners or through bringing in community support through restorative justice agencies.

Restorative justice practitioners will tell you that harm can be caused through restorative approaches that do not have fidelity with the values and principles of restorative justice. Coaching and mentoring provided by experienced practitioners can help mitigate the risk of harm being done.

Continuing Education and Succession Planning

The implementation phase can also provide space for the design teams to establish a plan for continuing education and succession. New staff will be hired and expected to align their services with any programs or initiatives, and those put in positions to deliver programs or facilitate initiatives will inevitably move in and out of these positions. In addition, the youth population within youth corrections is always in transition.

The development of training for incoming staff, presentations and rituals for incoming youth, and succession plans for programmatic staff changes all can be critical to sustain effective programs or initiatives.

Evaluation and Learning

During implementation, mechanisms are designed and implemented for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, regular reflection on the results of this data in relationship to the practice, adaptation to design and practice, and documentation of the changes and learning coming through this process. Through a transformative evaluation framework, programs and initiatives will improve over time, having more fidelity and better outcomes for all interested and impacted parties. A few key elements of evaluation might include:

1.   Stakeholder Impact and Equity: Evaluate how restorative justice practices have impacted key stakeholders, especially marginalized groups. Use both qualitative (testimonials, stories) and quantitative (participation rates, outcomes for different groups) data to assess equity and inclusivity in the implementation process.

2.   Fidelity and Effectiveness of Restorative Justice: Assess whether restorative justice principles are consistently applied and whether processes (e.g., circles, restorative interventions) are effective in achieving their outcome goals. Gather participant feedback to ensure alignment with restorative values.

3.   Sustainability and Capacity Building: Evaluate the long-term sustainability of restorative justice efforts, focusing on leadership commitment, ongoing training, and systems for onboarding new staff. Assess whether mechanisms for coaching, mentoring, and resource allocation are in place to maintain the practice and its fidelity over time.
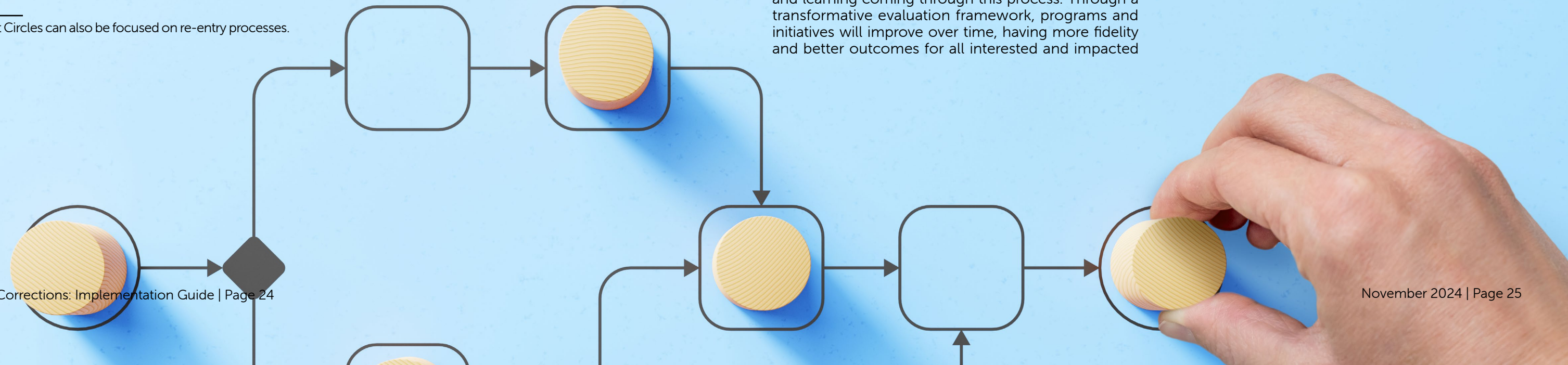
Key Considerations for Implementation

Modeling the Work

Ensure that leaders and those guiding restorative justice practices consistently demonstrate restorative principles and values in their own behavior, decision-making, and interactions, reinforcing a culture of dignity, belonging, accountability and collaboration.

Continuous Improvement and Learning

Establish mechanisms for ongoing learning, piloting new approaches, and integrating continual feedback loops. Encourage cross-learning, a growth mindset, and both personal and systemic reflection to foster adaptive, responsive practices.

Mentoring and Coaching

Implement systems for ongoing coaching, consultation, and mentoring to ensure fidelity to restorative justice principles. Provide continuous professional development opportunities to support staff in their roles.

Onboarding and Sustaining Understanding

Develop systems for onboarding new staff and leaders, ensuring they gain a deep understanding of restorative justice and the necessary skills to contribute effectively to sustained implementation.

Addressing Past Harm

Acknowledge and address historical harms experienced by staff and youth within the agency. Engage relevant stakeholders in designing and leading processes for reconciliation, healing, and trust-building.

Data Collection and Continuous Improvement

Create systems for ongoing data collection, integrating surveys, focus groups, outputs and impacts/outcomes (e.g., recidivism rates, staff retention). Use this data for reflective cycles, ensuring continual feedback, adaptation, and improvement of restorative justice implementation based on both process and outcome data.

Conclusions

In concluding this implementation guide, it is hoped that it serves as a valuable resource, offering practical steps, key considerations, and essential elements for successfully implementing restorative justice within the youth correctional context.

While implementing restorative justice at scale presents both challenges and opportunities, the principles, values, and processes outlined here reflect a tested – yet adaptable – implementation model that can foster a culture of dignity, belonging, transformation, and repair.

As leaders embark on this journey of restorative justice implementation, it is crucial to recognize the responsibility of ensuring that the process itself is infused with restorative principles and values. How this work is carried out matters just as much as what specifically is done. Listening to, and learning from, those directly impacted by injustice, inviting individuals with lived experience into the conversation, and embodying the values of accountability, collaboration, and transparency demonstrate the ethos of restorative justice and must be modeled throughout the implementation process.

Meaningful change requires time, perseverance, and collective effort. Each effort will be unique, adapting to the specific context and needs of those involved. It is hoped that this guide empowers practitioners, leaders, and advocates to navigate the complexities of restorative justice with integrity and purpose. Together, a more just society can be cultivated—one that prioritizes healing, strengthens relationships, and recognizes the transformative power of restorative justice. This is an invitation to commit to a shared vision for youth corrections that uplifts all voices and creates meaningful change for all.

Endnotes

i   Newell, T. (2002). *Restorative practice in prisons: Circles and conferencing in the custodial setting.* Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and other Restorative Practices, Minneapolis, Minnesota, MN, USA.

ii   Gavrielides T (2012) RJ and the secure estate: Alternatives for young people in custody. In: Barabás T, Fellegi B and Windt S (eds) Responsibility-Taking, Relationship-Building and Restoration in Prisons: Mediation and RJ in Prison Settings. Budapest: National Institute of Criminology, 161–203.

iii Newell, T. (2002). Restorative practice in prisons: Circles and conferencing in the custodial setting. Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and other Restorative Practices, Minneapolis, Minnesota, MN, USA.

iv   Morrison, B. (2007). Restoring Safe School Communities: A Whole School Response to Bullying, Violence and Alienation. Federation Press.

v   Edgar, K., & Newell, T. (2006). RJ in prisons: guide to making it happen. Waterside Press.

Appendix A Case Study

In February 2021, the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) embarked on a multi-year journey to integrate restorative approaches across four facilities through comprehensive assessment of existing practices and structures, strategic development, and program and initiative implementation.

In partnership with Just Outcomes as external consultants, implementation of restorative approaches was initiated within Eastern Oregon Youth Correctional Facility, MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility, and Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility. Below is a summary of the activities undertaken during OYA's restorative justice implementation project.

phase 1 Assessment

OYA Review

The project began with a review of the OYA context to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the facilities, youth characteristics, programming, and related initiatives. The aim was to establish baseline data that would inform the development of an evaluation strategy and guide the approach toward the integration and expansion of restorative justice principles across OYA facilities.

RVYCF Review

A review was conducted at Rogue Valley Youth Correctional Facility (RVYCF), a pilot site for restorative justice implementation within OYA that started in 2016. This review documented key milestones, impacts, lessons learned, and recommendations for future efforts. Insights were captured to inform facility leadership teams and ensure that the successes at RVYCF could guide the broader implementation project.
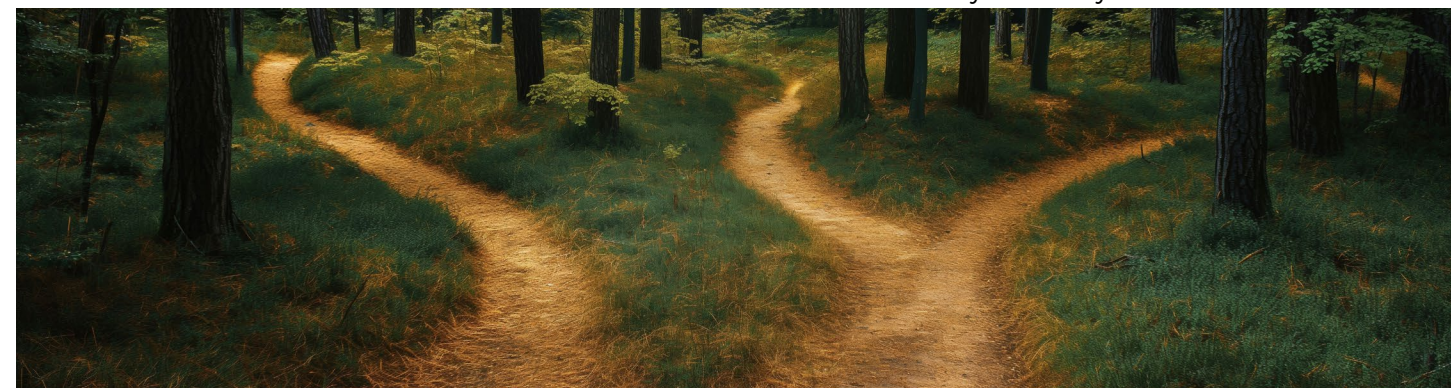
Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to establish a theoretical foundation for OYA's efforts. It focused on global research related to restorative justice in juvenile correctional institutions, while also drawing on studies and lessons from restorative justice implementation in adult corrections and schools.
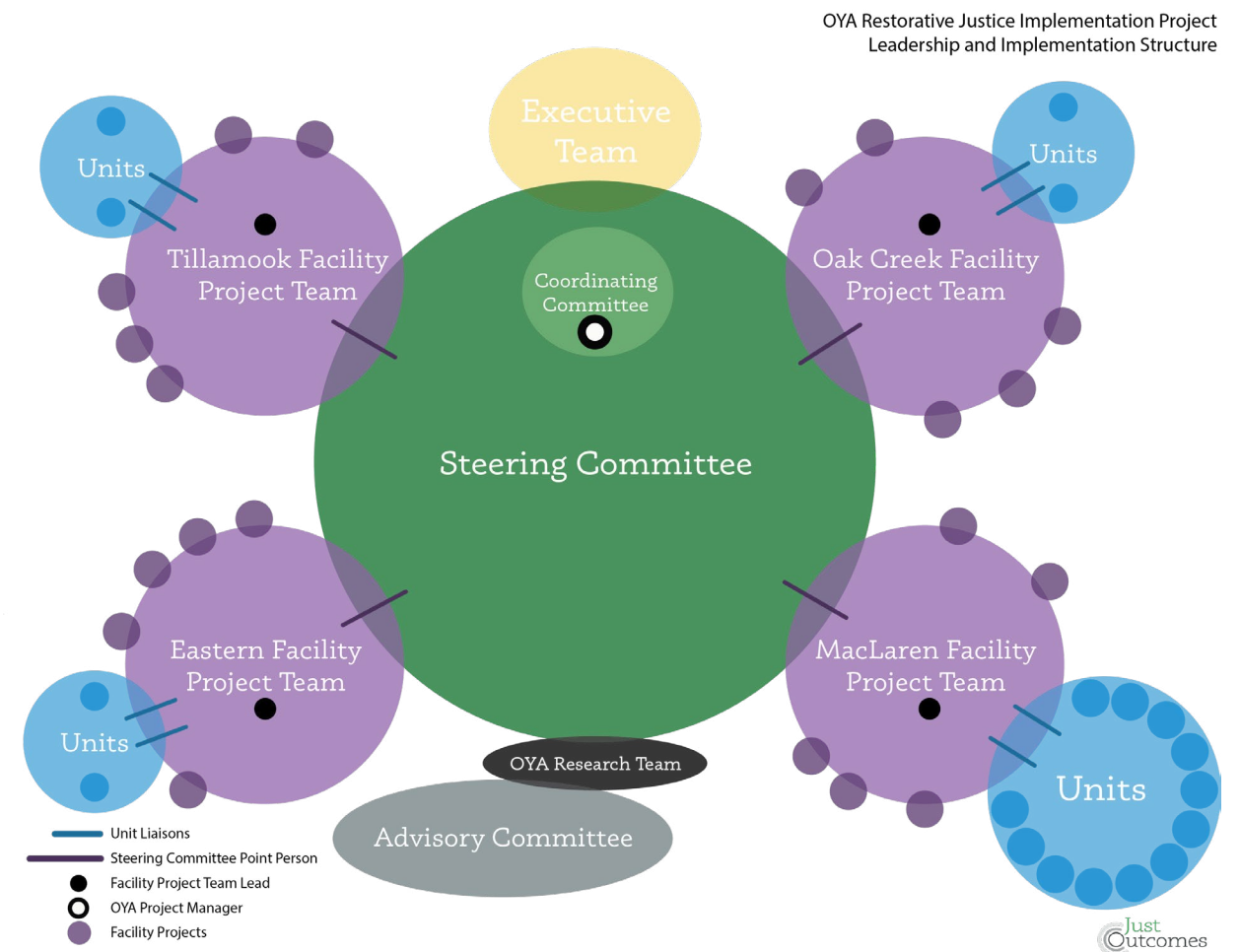
Needs Assessment

A needs assessment was conducted across four OYA facilities. It included surveys, interviews, and focus groups with staff, youth, and facility leadership. This process captured perceptions, needs, concerns, strengths, and challenges related to restorative justice implementation. The insights gathered provided a foundation for tailoring restorative justice practices to each facility's unique context, ensuring that implementation would address the real challenges faced by staff members of those facilities and the youth they served.

phase 2 Infrastructure Development

Establishment of Leadership Teams

Significant time and effort was invested in identifying, recruiting, and establishing leadership teams to ensure clear roles, diverse representation, and transparent communication throughout the project. These teams engaged in meaningful discussions to develop agreements and foundational team protocols for addressing harm, consensus decision-making, and centering equity, thereby creating a sustainable infrastructure that embodies restorative justice principles. The following core leadership teams, illustrated in the diagram below, were established:

1. Statewide Steering Committee (SC): Provided strategic oversight and guidance for the restorative justice project, ensured alignment with broader agency initiatives, removed barriers for successful implementation, and supported the Facility Project Teams.

2. Facility Project Teams (FPT): Designed and executed facility-specific restorative justice implementation plans, integrated restorative justice principles and ensured the sustained engagement of staff voice.

3. Coordinating Committee (CC): Ensured coordinated restorative justice implementation across all facilities, provided leadership, communication, and alignment with agency-wide systems and policies to support long-term sustainability. The CC also provided a bridge between the project and OYA's Executive Team.

4. National Advisory Council (AC): Comprised of subject matter experts from across the country, the AC offered guidance and recommendations on project design and implementation while serving as liaisons to the larger restorative justice community.

OYA Restorative Justice Implementation Project Leadership and Implementation Structure

Legend:
- Unit Liaisons
- Steering Committee Point Person
- Facility Project Team Lead
- OYA Project Manager
- Facility Projects

Leadership Development and Training

Facility Project Teams participated in a six-day "Foundations in Restorative Justice: Principles, Practices, and Leadership for Change" training. Participants of this training were provided an orientation to the theories, principles, applications, and skills needed for restorative leadership. Topics explored included: power and authority; shame, punishment, and trauma; restorative justice values and principles; restorative environments; and equity.

Initiative Alignment Roundtable

A key element of the development phase was the Initiative Alignment Roundtable. This day-long event brought together leaders from across OYA to ensure that restorative justice implementation aligned with other agency priorities, such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), Positive Human Development (PHD), and Fundamental Practices (FP). The session resulted in a communication framework and a collaboratively developed initiative crosswalk that identified gaps, reinforcements, and the potential role of restorative justice that supported and supplemented existing agency initiatives.

Project Planning Event

A three-day Strategic Project Planning Event convened representatives from the Steering Committee, Coordinating Committee and Facility Project Teams to collaboratively establish core documents, shared language, and frameworks for defining and orienting restorative justice within OYA facilities. The event and subsequent subcommittee work resulted in a finalized set of OYA Guiding Principles, which include a Restorative Justice Definition, Guiding Principles for Restorative Justice, Benchmarks for Accountability, and Outcomes of Restorative Justice Implementation. This provided the four Facility Project Teams with a shared foundation to build on in their future planning and implementation.

Facility Project Planning Days

Day-long Project Planning Sessions were conducted at each facility to establish Terms of Reference (ToR) for Facility Project Teams and to identify and prioritize projects tailored to their unique needs and culture. These sessions focused on team formation, group agreements, and consensus decision-making protocols, ultimately resulting in each facility having a prioritized list of projects for restorative justice implementation. This fostered buy-in, empowerment, customization, and ownership.

phase 3
Design and Implementation

Community Building Circles

To build relationships, strengthen trust, and foster a culture of dignity and belonging, all facilities concurrently working through their project designs chose to prioritize and initiate their restorative justice implementation with Community Building Circles. As a result, Community Building Circles became the cornerstone of OYA's restorative justice efforts, leading to the following activities:

1. Community Building Circle Training: Seven training sessions were conducted, equipping approximately 70 OYA staff with the skills and knowledge needed to implement Community Building Circles as a preventive practice for building relationships and ensuring equitable space for youth and staff voices.

2. Community Building Circle Guide: An ad-hoc inter-facility design team developed a Community Building Circle Guide to create consistencies in practice across facilities, maximizing fidelity. The guide connects community building circles to OYA's already existing initiatives (e.g., Fundamental Practices) and includes components such as the role of the Circle Keeper and Circle guidelines and expectations. Aspects of the program design were left to the autonomy of the facilities for customization based on their unique needs.

3. Community Building Circle Action Planning: A facilitated day at each facility helped develop and customize action plans for communicating, implementing, and monitoring community building circles, resulting in clear action plans that outlined goals, timelines, and responsible parties for executing the Circles.

Restorative Interventions to Repair Harm

Driven by a commitment to meaningful accountability, healing, empowerment, and community restoration, OYA initiated its journey to learn and implement intervention processes for addressing incidents of harm, resulting in the following activities:

1. Restorative Justice Facilitator Training: A specialized five-day Restorative Justice Facilitator Training was conducted for 20 selected staff members, equipping them with the skills needed to lead restorative interventions following incidents of harm. As a result, staff gained the ability to facilitate restorative processes, promote accountability, and foster healing within their facilities.

2. Restorative Intervention Action Planning: Participants of the Restorative Justice Facilitator Training engaged in an action planning session to develop roadmaps for implementing restorative interventions within their facilities. These sessions included creating actionable plans, establishing communication strategies, and identifying necessary supports and resources to carry this work forward.

Coaching and Capacity Building

Coaching and capacity building were vital to the implementation process, empowering OYA staff and leadership to strengthen their restorative justice skills while fostering a collaborative environment for sharing insights and addressing challenges.

1. Leadership Learning Labs: Monthly Leadership Learning Labs provided coaching for OYA facility leadership, strengthening their knowledge and ability to model inclusive, equitable, and restorative leadership. These sessions allowed for inter-facility learning, enabling leaders to share insights and collaboratively problem-solve.

2. Circle Keeper Collaboration Hubs: Semi-monthly coaching calls for trained OYA Circle Keepers created dedicated spaces to connect, address challenges, and share insights, fostering community building and consistent restorative practices across OYA facilities.

Consultation

Consultation played a vital role in the implementation of restorative justice practices in the form of subject matter expertise, facilitation, and third-party perspective. This support guided leaders in making informed decisions, enhancing their understanding of key information, and maintaining alignment with restorative justice principles. Through regular collaboration and structured meetings, consultation ensured that all voices were heard, fostering

a culture of accountability and continuous improvement within the project.

1. OYA Leadership Team Meetings: Regular meetings were held with various leadership groups, including the Steering Committee, Facility Project Teams, and Coordinating Committee. These meetings were designed to ensure the ongoing implementation and integration of restorative justice practices across OYA facilities. Just Outcomes consultants facilitated these sessions, providing subject matter expertise, creating agendas, and guiding discussions to promote effective collaboration and decision-making.

2. Advisory Council Meetings: The national Advisory Council met bi-annually with the Steering Committee to review documents and activities, providing feedback and oversight to hold the project in alignment with restorative justice principles and values.

3. Recommendations for Expansion and Sustainability: A recommendations document, prepared by Just Outcomes and endorsed by members of the Advisory Council, was developed to provide strategic guidance for OYA's leadership in sustaining and expanding restorative justice. The recommendations emphasized the integration of restorative justice into the agency's systems, policies, programs, and culture.

phase 4
Evaluation

Evaluation Outcomes

An evaluation workgroup was initiated in the early stages of the implementation project and included experts such as members of OYA's evaluation team and Advisory Council members who specialize in evaluation. This workgroup identified five focus areas to measure the efficacy of restorative justice implementation: Safety; Consistency and Alignment of OYA Structures; Positive/Healthy Relationships; Youth Skill Development; and, Staff Competency. Specific indicators were established for each area to measure progress and support the overall implementation of restorative justice practices across OYA facilities.

Data Collection Strategy

A data collection strategy was established within OYA's tracking system to measure progress and assess the effectiveness of restorative justice practices in facilities. Clear processes were created for data entry, and staff at each facility received training to ensure consistent and accurate input.

in
Summary

The multi-year partnership with OYA was a meaningful and transformative journey, marked by both successes and important learnings. As with any systemic change, the process involved challenges and the need for course corrections. However, by aspiring toward alignment with restorative justice values and principles, the project achieved meaningful outcomes and tested what we believe is a replicable framework for implementation.

While each implementation effort was different, this approach provides a tested foundation for others to build on. The implementation guide, shaped by the learnings from OYA, offers a practical structure to help organizations and agencies align their culture, systems, and practices with restorative justice values. It serves as both a reliable and flexible framework—one that can guide future efforts while allowing space for adaptation and growth.