

Executive Summary

Colorado Restorative Justice in Juvenile Diversion

Since 2014, the Colorado Restorative Justice Coordinating Council (RJ Council) has overseen the development and implementation of a statewide juvenile restorative justice program funded by House Bill 13-1254. The program began as a pilot focused on programs serving youth in pre-file juvenile diversion and transitioned to a grant program in July 2016 to fund additional restorative programs to serve youth in diversion.

OMNI Institute (OMNI) led the evaluation of the juvenile restorative justice program since its inception and focused on services provided to youth in the diversion program and youth referred as a result of a school-based offense that could otherwise have resulted in a charge. Data in the full report reflects data collected from 2014 through May of 2020, including information on youth background and demographics; short-term psychosocial outcomes, satisfaction of victims, offending youth and community members, and recidivism rates. Highlighted here are key findings and recommendations as they relate to the outcomes prioritized in the legislation.

Key Findings

 1,226 youth were referred to RJ from juvenile diversion.

99% of youth reached an agreement during their RJ process.

91% completed their RJ agreement.

 Participation in RJ was reported as having improved participants' experience with the justice system.

Youth, Victims, and Community Members reported high levels of satisfaction with RJ.



Of youth who successfully completed RJ, only **8.6%** recidivated with **91.4%** staying out of the justice system.



Theft and offenses against a person made up nearly two-thirds of referrals to RJ.

Youth completing the evaluation demonstrated improvement on all measured short-term outcomes; connection to family and non-family adults, sense of accountability, remorse, locus of control and empathy.

Key Recommendations

- ✓ As referral sources and priorities within the justice system shift, the RJ Council may seek new opportunities to advocate for restorative justice and practices among educators, law enforcement, judges, and others who work with justice system-involved youth.
- ✓ Standard eligibility, suitability and acceptance criteria should be established to ensure equitable access to restorative justice programming among youth involved in the juvenile justice system. To understand if the youth referred to restorative justice are demographically reflective of the justice involved youth in the communities in which the programs are working, deeper examination of the referral process and overall diversion referral data is recommended. The RJ Council should work with the State Court Administrator's Office and the Division of Criminal Justice to identify whether an appropriate comparison dataset can be accessed.
- ✓ Discussions with grantees have indicated variability in how they define common restorative processes such as "circles" and "conferences." The identification and adoption of standard definitions of restorative processes are needed to encourage consistency across practitioners and ensure messaging and implementation are comparable across programs. Such consistency and continued evaluation of data can assist the restorative justice field identify best practices with confidence.