

The Restorative Justice Framework For Fresno

Progress Report

Executive Summary

- The public version of the Restorative Justice Framework was published and disseminated in February 2001.
- The Framework Committee has met regularly during 2001 to disseminate, educate, and encourage community leaders to endorse restorative justice principles.
- A Restorative Justice Assessment Instrument was published.
- Meetings with community leaders, led to responses ranging from signed endorsements to cautious support.
- Several large restorative justice programs and projects began in Fresno County.

The Restorative Justice Framework Committee

The Restorative Justice Committee, composed of Ron Claassen (Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies), Charlotte Tilkes (Fresno County Sheriff's Department), Phil Kader (Fresno County Probation Department), and Douglas E. Noll, Esq. (Attorney-Peacemaker) met regularly during 2001. After release of the public draft of the Restorative Justice Framework, in February 2002, the committee focused its efforts on meeting community leaders and disseminating the Framework throughout Fresno County. In addition, the committee prepared a Restorative Justice Assessment document to assist organizations in assessing the degree to which restorative justice principles are in current use. In addition, the assessment measure organizational change as restorative justice principles are implemented and practiced. The assessment can be found on the web at www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs.

The committee sees its role as an agent of change from the outside to cajole, persuade, and encourage the community to adopt principles about how to relate to offenses, disputes, and conflicts within the community.

Contacts

From March 2001 through February 2002, the committee met with the following community leaders to present the Framework and solicit its endorsement.

- Richard Pierce, Fresno County Sheriff
- Ed Winchester, Jerry Dyer, Tom Frost, Fresno City Police
- ADR Oversight Committee, Fresno County Courts

- Santiago Wood, Ph.D., Superintendent, Fresno City Schools
- Bart Bohn, Chief Administrative Officer, Fresno County
- David Dent, Chief, Fresno County Health and Human Services
- Larry R. Price, Chief, Fresno County Probation
- Roger Palomino, Executive Director, Fresno County Equal Opportunities Commission
- Deborah Nankevil, Executive Director, Fresno Business Council
- The Fresno Bee Editorial Board

Endorsements

Reaction to the Framework is best described as cautiously supportive. The endorsement commits organizations to examining how restorative justice principles are currently met both in services and in internal management. It also commits organizations to taking on a project or program to test the efficacy of the principles. To date, Fresno Pacific University, the Fresno County Probation Department, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department, and the Caruthers School Board have signed the endorsement with others promising to sign the endorsement. Several organizations have expressed concern over the financial and administrative burdens potentially implicated by the Framework. Others have expressed concern whether Fresno is ready for such a far-reaching philosophy. The committee members have emphasized that the Framework implies systemic change through progressively incremental steps. Change must start somewhere and is never easy for those comfortable with the familiar ways of doing business.

Projects and Programs

Several projects and programs have begun, in part from the efforts of the Framework Committee. They are as follows:

- Sheriff Pierce has committed to having every deputy sheriff and correctional officer receive 8 hours of restorative justice training. This is to be accomplished within three years. Training started in November 2001 and is on-going.
- The Fresno County Courts ADR Oversight Committee has approved a demonstration project involving adult first time offenders. Under this project, two criminal court departments would be trained in restorative justice principles. Approximately 12 cases would be sent to a restorative justice process over the next six months and tracked for outcome.
- The Caruthers School District, in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Club and the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific, has embarked on a project to implement restorative justice principles systemically throughout the community and the school district. This project was funded by a grant from

the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act through the Fresno County Probation Department.

- The Fresno County Unified School District is, in an educational and listening mode, committed to moving restorative justice principles into its operations and educational programs.
- The Restorative Justice Framework was presented at the Annual Restorative Justice Conference held at Fresno Pacific University in June 2001.
- The Restorative Justice Framework was presented at three major probation conferences by Phil Kader. These conferences were the Probation Business Managers Association Annual Conference in South Lake Tahoe, the National Council for Children Conference in San Diego, and the National Community Sentencing Association Conference in San Francisco.
- The Framework document has been distributed to every chief probation officer in California and has been presented at several probation conferences.
- Several community leaders from Denmark visited Fresno as a direct result of their exposure to the Restorative Justice Framework.
- Ron Claassen has been invited as a keynote speaker to present Framework at the first Restorative Justice Conference in Israel. The conference is sponsored by the Tel Aviv University Graduate School of Social Work, Law School, and the National Mediation Association.

The Future

In 2002, the committee intends to keep on its mission of dissemination, education, persuasion, and support. Because of the growing administrative burdens on the four committee members, the committee is seeking funding for a full time administrative assistant position.

The committee will be seeking appointments with a broader group of community leaders to present the framework and encourage its endorsement. As programs and projects are initiated, the committee will provide training support and publicize the programs throughout the community.

Comments, support and criticism, and participation in the committee's work are welcome. Please let us know what you think of this project.

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Ron Claassen Charlotte Tilkes Phil Kader Douglas E. Noll, Esq.