



Juvenile Community Conferencing Program

What is Juvenile Community Conferencing?

Juvenile Community Conferencing Program (JCCP) is a restorative justice process that has been developed by Safe and Sound and the District Attorney's Community Conferencing Program. The conferences provide a victim focused experience for young offenders charged with offenses such as burglary, theft, vandalism and drugs. Moreover, it allows other community stakeholders to have input into the harms resulting from their crimes.

Through a circle process, the young offender is brought face to face with trained representatives of the community. They include community volunteers, block club captains, police, youth workers, community organizers, teachers, but perhaps most importantly, their trained youth peers.

How does Juvenile Community Conferencing work?

Conferences are coordinated by the District Attorney's Office and typically involve multiple facilitators and three to five juvenile offenders. A "surrogate victim" begins the process by telling their personal story of victimization, setting the tone and focus of the conference. Additionally, eight to twelve community members have the opportunity to tell their stories and ask questions of offenders. Conferences last two to three hours, providing time for reflection on the victim's story, time for offenders to share their own story and perspectives, as well as a group discussion on how their crimes have impacted their direct and indirect victims, including themselves, their family, and the community.

Participants overwhelmingly express satisfaction and a feeling of better understanding after the conferences. Worksheets are completed by the offenders and letters of apology or reflection are written. It is an important healing experience and, unfortunately, without the conference many offenders will see themselves as the victim, and have little regard for the harm on their direct and indirect victims.

How can you get involved?

Individuals who wish to be involved with the JCCP can do so in two ways. They can become community member participants or facilitators. Community member participants go through two to three hour training, while conferencing facilitators must go through a two-day training and a background check by the District Attorney's office to become a facilitator. A consent form is required for all participants under the age of 18.

In either case, the training provides volunteer participants with an overview of the process and several role playing examples as a means of learning how to constructively express the impact of crime through stories and experiences and identify broad reaching effects in different scenarios. The session also provides insight into the principles of restorative justice and what elements are largely absent from the traditional



criminal justice process. The overall goal of the training is to teach participants how to be an effective community conferencing member and what is expected of them in actual conferences.

If you would like to learn more or be part of these restorative justice efforts at Safe & Sound please contact us at 414-221-6700, e-mail safesound@milwaukeehidta.org or visit our website at www.safesound.org.

What are the benefits of participation?

The benefits for offenders, victims and community members are undeniable, and many participants find the process meaningful for everyone involved.

1. Increased community involvement and ownership of their neighborhood from youth and adults
2. Increased youth leadership development through becoming a trained community member
3. Increased peer-on-peer mentoring leading to increased accountability among peers
4. Decreased crime involvement of youth participating as community members
5. Promotion and increased participation at Safe Place (offender’s awareness of opportunities)
6. 80% of offender participants do not re-offend, while victims have been overwhelmingly positive about their interactions in the CCP.

