

# RESTORATIVE RESPONSES TO HARM OR CRIME (RRHC)

## *PROGRAM OVERVIEW*



### **Community Justice Initiatives**

Waterloo Region  
85 Edwin St  
Kitchener, Ontario  
N2H 4N7



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### What is it?

Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime (RRHC) is a program run by **Community Justice Initiatives (CJI)**, a nonprofit restorative justice agency in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. Our program serves **both adults and youth**.

We work alongside the court system and other partners to offer **flexible, individualized, trauma-informed** pathways to addressing harm and crime. Our goal is to support individuals who have experienced harm as well as those who have caused it, helping participants find meaningful ways to **build understanding, explore needs, take accountability, and repair harm**.

The majority of our referrals come from the **Crown Attorney's Office**. However, referrals may also be initiated by others, including victim services, defense, police, or the individuals directly involved in an incident. Participants may come to RRHC at a variety of entry points, from **pre-charge to post-sentencing**. In cases involving someone who has been charged, participation in RRHC is shared with the court and **may impact the legal outcome**.

Every RRHC process is free of charge, facilitated by trained staff or volunteers, and **shaped by the needs** of the individuals involved. All processes are **entirely voluntary** for all involved, and anyone can withdraw at any time.

**For more information, please contact the RRHC Service Coordinators at 519-744-6549 ex 250 or [rrhc@cjiwr.com](mailto:rrhc@cjiwr.com).**



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### What to Expect: Initial Referral

When a case is referred to RRHC, one of our service coordinators will review the referral to determine **whether it appears to be a good fit**.

If so, a coordinator will reach out to **each person** involved to offer an initial phone call. (If you are a **youth**, you may choose to have a caregiver present during this call.)

Any personal details you share **will be kept confidential**, with rare exceptions for safety purposes (see **FAQs** later in this booklet).

In this call, we will:

- Explain the program in a **general** way
- Hear more about your **needs, hopes, and concerns**
- Explore questions of **accountability** (if applicable)
- Talk about **options and preferences** for participation (including your **right to decline** at any time)
- Consider any **support persons** you might invite into the process
- Check in about **logistics** (e.g., scheduling, accessibility)
- And most importantly, simply **see how you're doing** and whether any additional services might be helpful.

You **don't need to decide** if you'd like to participate during this call - there's always time to reflect before moving forward.



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### What to Expect: **First Meetings**

If our program feels like a good fit and you're interested in participating, you'll be connected to one or two **trained facilitators** from CJI for an introductory meeting.

The role of our facilitators is to **walk alongside all participants**, helping each person explore what resolution, healing, or accountability could look like for them. They are not there to judge, take sides, or make decisions on anyone's behalf.

Everyone starts with at least one **individual meeting** with the facilitator(s). These meetings are a chance to:

- Share **your side** of the story
- Reflect on how the situation has **impacted** you
- Talk through possible **next steps**
- **Ask questions** and plan for what comes next

There are many different types of processes that may follow, depending on what has been discussed in intake and what comes up in these early meetings (see **Process Options** later in this booklet for more details).



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### What to Expect:

### Direct & Indirect Communication

In some situations, participants choose to have some form of **direct or indirect communication**. We use a **co-facilitation model** for these processes to ensure they feel as balanced and safe as possible.

These two facilitators will collaborate with you and others involved to design a process **that best fits your needs** - including format (i.e. in-person or virtual), meeting location, timing, conversational structure, and who is present (e.g. support persons, others impacted).

**Indirect options** (e.g. letter-writing) are also available when face-to-face conversation isn't possible or preferred. (See **Process Options** later in this booklet.)

Any communication between participants only happens after a period of **individual preparation** with each party. We do not move forward until we see that 1) there is some degree of **alignment in participants' goals** for the conversation, and 2) all parties feel **comfortable and prepared** to proceed.

**You're never locked into the process.** Anyone, including the facilitators, can choose to take a break or stop at any time. If that happens, we'll follow up and talk through options for next steps.



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### What to Expect: Agreements & Reporting

Sometimes, participants make **voluntary agreements** as part of the process - for example, to repair or pay for damage, engage in counselling or community service, or take other specific actions. These are sometimes called **Memorandums of Understanding** or **MOUs**.

MOUs are:

- **Not legally binding**, but can be meaningful and impactful
- **Shared with the court**, if everyone consents
- Sometimes supported by a longer court timeline to allow time for **follow-through**

Before an accused participant's next court date, RRHC will also send a **simple report** to the Crown with basic facts like the number of meetings and the type of process used. We may also include whether specific outcomes were met (e.g. restitution paid).

**We do not share personal or subjective details in our reports.** If there is anything of this nature that we believe may be helpful to include, we always ask for participants' permission to do so.



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### What to Expect: After the Process Ends

After the process is complete, a coordinator will **follow up** with you by phone. This usually happens within 1-2 weeks after the RRHC process or your court matter has ended.

The purpose of this call is to:

- **Check in** on how you're doing
- Offer additional **referrals or supports** if needed
- Invite **feedback** on the experience
- Discuss any **next steps**

In some cases, participants may choose to continue a process with one of CJI's **partner programs**. These programs include:

- **Elder Mediation:** Offers conflict resolution and educational services for older adults (55+) and their family, friends, and service providers.
- **Identity-Based Harm Services:** Extends culturally-competent services to people who have experienced and/or caused identity-based harm.
- **Family Conflict Coaching & Dialogue:** Assists youth and families in building conflict resolution and relational skills.

For more information on our partner programs, please visit <https://cjiwr.com>.



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### Process Options

Our restorative processes are flexible and designed in collaboration with the people involved. What the process looks like will depend on your needs, goals, comfort level, and the specifics of the situation. **There is no one-size-fits-all approach.**

Here are just a few **examples** of the types of processes we may offer. These may be offered either individually or in combination, depending on the needs of participants and/or the referral source. **This is not a complete list.**

- **Direct dialogue:** A conversation between the person(s) who caused harm and the person(s) affected, supported by trained facilitators.
- **Indirect dialogue:** Exchange of letters or messages, or virtual or shuttle mediation (where participants are in separate physical or virtual rooms but connected through facilitators).
- **Surrogate dialogue:** When direct contact is not possible or appropriate, a participant may meet with someone who has experienced or caused similar harm.





## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### Process Options (continued)

- **Circle processes:** A facilitated group experience involving multiple people, which may include: the person(s) who caused harm; the person(s) who experienced harm; personal, community and/or professional support persons; others impacted.
- **One-on-one or group conflict coaching:** Focused on helping people (usually those who have caused harm) build self-awareness and develop tools for navigating conflict in everyday life.
- **Joint Conflict Coaching (JCC):** A specialized process for youth and caregivers, where each person participates in one-on-one conflict coaching, focusing on tools tailored to their relationship. They then come together in session, practicing the tools they learned, followed by a shared meeting to reflect on their learnings.



## Restorative Responses to Harm or Crime

### Process Options (continued)

- **Reflective writing:** Writing a letter or statement with the support of facilitators to process thoughts, feelings, or learnings related to the incident - not necessarily intended to be read by anyone else involved in the incident.
- **Individual meetings with facilitators:** Some participants may simply meet with facilitators to reflect, process, and plan for next steps, without continuing on to dialogue or other processes.
- **Referrals to ongoing support:** In some cases, a process may include or lead to connections with other resources - such as counselling, housing or employment agencies, culturally specific programs, or one of CJI's partner programs.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What happens if the other person doesn't want to participate?**

Restorative processes require informed consent, which means everyone is offered choice and the right to decline. If the other person decides not to participate, we won't leave you hanging. There are other meaningful options that we can talk with you about and help you consider (see Process Options earlier in this booklet).

If you are an accused person, we would connect with the Crown to explore whether an alternative process might be possible and keep you informed of next steps.

### **How does confidentiality work?**

Staff, students and volunteers of CJI are committed to keeping what you share with us confidential, unless you give us permission to share something. The only exceptions are:

- If we believe someone is at immediate risk of serious harm (including you)
- If we're legally required to report something (e.g. a child may be experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse)

We don't share personal details with the court or anyone else without your consent. We do send a simple report back to the referral source, including only basic and factual information. We'll talk with you about exactly what will or won't be shared, and you can ask to review anything before it's sent.

## **How do I know the process is safe?**

We understand that this can be a daunting idea for many people. Our facilitators are careful to explore each person's personal needs around physical, emotional, and cultural safety, including the possibility of bringing in support persons. Additionally, while we can't guarantee an exact match, we will give you a chance to share any preferences you may have about the characteristics of facilitators (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, personality).

For all cases involving communication between parties, we carefully screen for safety concerns before any dialogue takes place. Ultimately, we do not go ahead with a meeting if the participants do not feel safe.

## **How long does the process take?**

It depends - every situation is different. Some processes take just a few weeks, while others may take longer, depending on how many people are involved and what kind of process is taking place. We'll always check in regularly and do our best to move at a pace that feels manageable and respectful.

## **Is this therapy?**

No. This is not therapy, and our facilitators are not trained therapists. Rather than delving deeply into participants' personal histories or mental health concerns, our focus is on addressing a specific incident of harm or conflict - within a structured, time-limited process.

That said, many participants find it helpful to engage in personal therapy either alongside or following their RRHC process. We're always happy to help connect you to these supports if you are interested. (See Additional Resources later in this booklet.)

## Whose side are you on?

Our role is not to take sides, but to support everyone involved in finding a way forward that feels meaningful and fair. That said, we are human beings, so rather than striving for “neutrality,” we aim to be “multi-partial” - meaning we’re committed to hearing and supporting everyone in the room with care, dignity, and respect.

We recognize that each person’s story matters, while also honouring that this process exists because harm has occurred. For this reason, one of our requirements is that a person who has been charged must be willing to take some level of responsibility for their actions and how others may have been impacted. Thus, this process is not the right fit for participants who believe they have been wrongfully accused or do not have a role in the harm caused.

## What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice (RJ) is an approach toward justice that focuses on how people have been harmed and what is needed for healing and justice - as opposed to focusing on what laws have been broken and what punishment is appropriate.

RJ recognizes the importance of human dignity, relationships, and the ripple effects of harm. It is an approach that seeks to empower all parties involved (those who have been harmed, those who have caused harm, and the wider community), while upholding accountability. In this way, RJ also takes a more holistic lens than a traditional retributive approach - taking social and cultural contexts, and the impacts of trauma, seriously.

All our programs at CJI are rooted in RJ principles. To learn more about RJ, visit <https://cjiwr.com/about-us/what-is-restorative-justice>.

# Additional Resources

Many people find it helpful to connect with other supports before, during, or after their participation in RRHC - or if RRHC isn't the right fit. Below are some resources you can contact directly, or we can help you connect if that's easier.

Mental Health & Wellbeing		
Service Name	Contact	Description
HERE 24/7	1-844-437-3247  here247.ca	24/7 hotline providing intake, assessment and referrals for most government-funded addictions and mental health services across the Waterloo Wellington region. Also offers immediate crisis intervention.
Front Door to Child & Youth Mental Health	519-742-8327  frontdoormentalhealth.com	Works with parents/caregivers, children and youth (up to their 18th birthday) who are struggling with emotions, behaviours, relationships and mental health. Does NOT offer individual counselling services.
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)	1 844-264-2993  cmha.ca  cmhawwselfhelp.ca	Full care system for adults, youth and seniors, including services for addictions, mental health and developmental needs. Also offers a wide range of monthly self-help and peer support groups.
Camino Wellbeing	519-743-6333  caminowellbeing.ca	Collaboration between Carizon, KW Counselling and Monica Place. Services include family, child, couples and individual therapy; community and youth development; and family supports. Also offers Wayfinding team to assist with finding the appropriate service.

# Additional Resources

Victim Services		
Service Name	Contact	Description
Victim Services of Waterloo Region	(519) 585-2363  (519) 570-5143 (after office hours)  vswr.ca	Community-based service offering assistance to victims of many types of crime. Services provided include safety planning, referrals to community resources, and 24/7 crisis intervention.
Child Witness Centre	519-744-0904  childwitness.com	Provides free services for young people who are victims or witnesses of crime. Services include crisis intervention, safety planning, emotional support, court accompaniment, helping parents be more effective at supporting their children, court preparation and debrief.
Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region	519-742-5894 (Kitchener)  519-653-2422 (Cambridge)  wcswr.org	Operates emergency shelters in Kitchener and Cambridge for women and children experiencing domestic violence. Also offers Engaging Men program, addressing gender-based violence and male accountability through counselling and education.
Sexual Assault Support Centre	519-741-8633  sascwr.org	Offers a 24/7 hotline, counselling, groups and workshops, advocacy, accompaniment, and family court support for individuals who have experienced sexual assault and/or family violence. All services are free.

# Additional Resources

Housing, Community & Legal Supports		
Service Name	Contact	Description
House of Friendship	519-742-8327 houseoffriendship.org	Services include supportive housing, men's shelter, emergency food hampers, low income support, community centres, family outreach, and specialized services for pregnant and parenting women.
Waterloo Region Community Legal Services	(519) 743-0254 wrcls.ca	Free legal support for NON-criminal matters to low-income individuals. Common areas of support include tenancy/housing, Ontario Works/ODSP, employment insurance and immigration law.
Legal Aid Ontario	1 800-668-8258 legalaid.on.ca	May pay for your lawyer if you have been charged with a crime for which you could be sentenced to jail time, and you qualify financially. Can also provide in-court assistance, such as advising you on your rights and helping with guilty pleas.
The Working Centre	519-743-1151 theworkingcentre.org	Houses the Job Search Resource Centre, which provides employment counselling, skills training and newcomer supports. Also offers supportive housing and emergency shelter, a medical and dental clinic, and support with tax-filing and budgeting.



# Additional Resources

Cultural & Identity-Based Supports		
Service Name	Contact	Description
Hope for Wellness	1-855-242-3310 hopeforwellness.ca	Offers immediate, 24/7 mental health counselling and crisis intervention via phone and online chat to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Services available in Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway.
Kind Minds Family Wellness	226-336-1988 kindmindsfamilywellness.org	Offers culturally-grounded counselling, educational support groups, system navigation services, and career support for Black adults and youth. Some services may be free of charge.
Trans Lifeline	877-330-6366 translifeline.org	Anonymous and confidential hotline operated by trans and nonbinary individuals. No nonconsensual active rescue (i.e. calling 911). Also offers a resource library on topics including gender transition, surviving violence, and allyship.
Spectrum	226-779-9695 ourspectrum.com	Hosts more than 30 different monthly groups and activities for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, including transgender peer support groups, games nights, SPECTRUM Prime for 50+, and Rainbow Newcomers Connect. Also offers population-specific counselling and Rainbow Pages Directory.