



SENTENCING CIRCLES

WHAT IS Sentencing Circles?

Sentencing Circles is a process which allows youth an opportunity to accept responsibility for their crime or behavior in a safe and constructive environment. The MRJC facilitator guides the juvenile, their support members, victim (if any), and community volunteers through a restorative dialogue which addresses the harms. The Circle can be used as a diversion process within the criminal justice system.

The Who: Youth (ages 11-17) offender

- Support People
- Community Volunteers, training available

The Benefits:

- improves community relationships
- addresses the harms/impacts of all parties involved
- reduces recidivism
- develops actionable plans
- increases community involvement
- emphasizes accountability

The Goal: identify who was harmed by the offense, how they were harmed, and how the youth can repair the harms.

Why Should I Volunteer?

- assist youth in accountability of actions
- be an active voice in your community
- respond to crimes in a positive and restorative way

Interested in Volunteering?

CONTACT US:

Website: mrjc.us

MRJC Main Office: 828-264-3040

WHY IS Sentencing Circles AN EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION?

Sentencing Circles is a tailored service that emphasizes the importance of the youth:

- taking responsibility for their actions and feelings
- participating in discussions and the resolutions of their own negative behaviors
- being held accountable for their actions by having to face the person(s) or community with whom they are in conflict
- being diverted from the school-to-prison pipeline
- completing the tasks agreed upon by the Circle participants in the Plan of Action

EXAMPLES OF REFERRALS

- Possession or Use of Prohibited Substances
- Trespassing
- Campus/Community Disturbances
- Undisciplined/ Disorderly Conduct

- Underage drinking on school property
- Bringing weapons on school property
- Defiant student
- Resist, Delay, or Obstruct LEO

- Fighting
- Communicating Threats
- Harassing Phone Calls
- Breaking & Entering
- Larceny
- Vandalism



WE CAN RECEIVE REFERRALS FROM:

- DJJ
- School systems
- Law enforcement
- DSS
- Parents and/or Guardians

WHERE WILL the Sentencing Circles TAKE PLACE?

Sentencing Circles services will be provided at private, confidential, and accessible locations such as the MRJC offices, in the courthouse, or any public school when appropriate. Meeting over video conferencing is prioritized and is available.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

MRJC's programs are based on the principles of "restorative justice" — to rebuild and restore, rather than simply to punish and obtain retribution.

Restorative Justice asks the questions, "What harm was done?" and "What are the needs of the parties involved?" It helps both parties move forward, repairs the harm, rebuilds (or appropriately dissolves) relationships, and also humanizes participants beyond their "labels."

These benefits lead to a safer and more connected community, fosters reintegration, and creates resiliency.

