

## **GUIDE FOR Implementing the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model**

### **Balanced and Restorative Justice Philosophy**

The foundation of restorative juvenile justice practice is a coherent set of values and principles, a guiding vision, and an action-oriented mission.

### **Principles of Restorative Justice**

- Crime is injury.
- Crime hurts individual victims, communities, and juvenile offenders and creates an obligation to make things right.
- All parties should be a part of the response to the crime, including the victim if he or she wishes, the community, and the juvenile offender.
- The victim's perspective is central to deciding how to repair the harm caused by the crime.
- Accountability for the juvenile offender means accepting responsibility and acting to repair the harm done.
- The community is responsible for the well-being of all its members, including both victim and offender.
- All human beings have dignity and worth.
- Restoration -- repairing the harm and rebuilding relationships in the community -- is the primary goal of restorative juvenile justice.
- Results are measured by how much repair was done rather than by how much punishment was inflicted.
- Crime control cannot be achieved without active involvement of the community.
- The juvenile justice process is respectful of age, abilities, sexual orientation, family status, and diverse cultures and backgrounds -- whether racial, ethnic, geographic, religious, economic, or other -- and all are given equal protection and due process.

### **The Restorative Justice Vision**

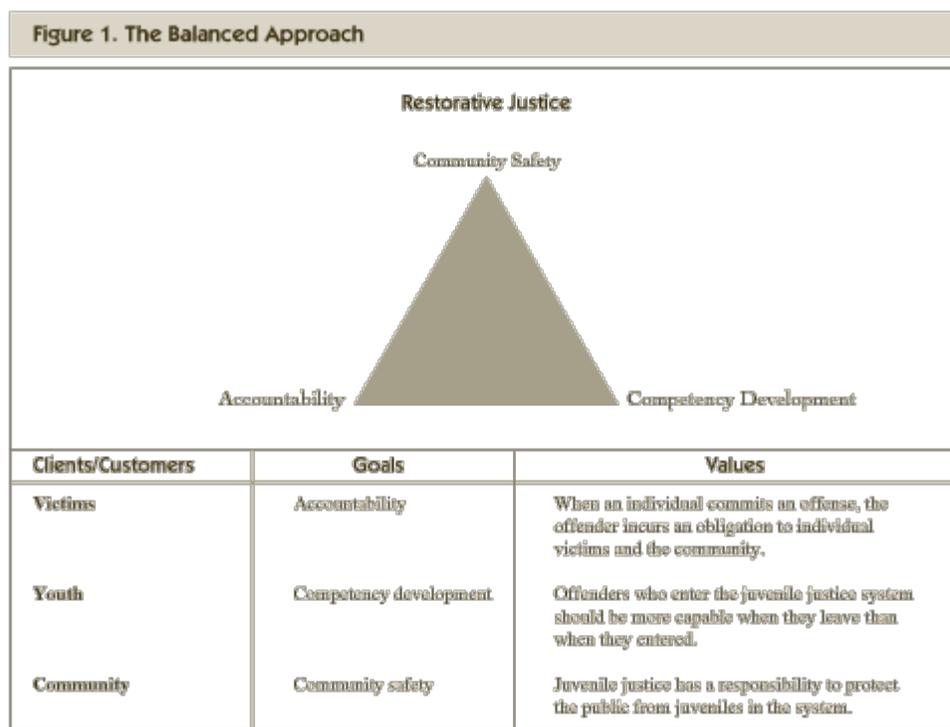
- Support from the community, opportunity to define the harm experienced, and participation in decisionmaking about steps for repair result in increased victim recovery from the trauma of crime.
- Community involvement in preventing and controlling juvenile crime, improving neighborhoods, and strengthening the bonds among

community members results in community protection.

- Through understanding the human impact of their behavior, accepting responsibility, expressing remorse, taking action to repair the damage, and developing their own capacities, juvenile offenders become fully integrated, respected members of the community.
- Juvenile justice professionals, as community justice facilitators, organize and support processes in which individual crime victims, other community members, and juvenile offenders are involved in finding constructive resolutions to delinquency.

## The Balanced Approach Mission

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the balanced approach mission.



Adapted from Maloney, D., Romig, D., and Armstrong, T. 1998. *Juvenile Probation: The Balanced Approach*. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

## Transforming the Current Juvenile Justice System Into a More Restorative Model

Juvenile justice professionals have the power to transform juvenile justice into a more balanced and restorative justice system. By developing new roles, setting new priorities, and redirecting resources, juvenile justice professionals can:

- Make needed services available for victims of crime.
- Give victims opportunities for involvement and input.
- Actively involve community members, including individual crime victims and offenders, in making decisions and carrying out plans for resolving issues and restoring the community.

- Build connections among community members.
- Give juvenile offenders the opportunity and encouragement to take responsibility for their behavior.
- Actively involve juvenile offenders in repairing the harm they caused.
- Increase juvenile offenders' skills and abilities.

### Getting Started: Steps in Organizational Change

The new roles and daily practices for juvenile justice professionals described in this Guide will be most effective if implemented as a part of comprehensive systemic change in juvenile justice. System-level leadership in organizational change will set the climate for line staff commitment to a new vision.

At the most general level, jurisdictions implementing the model need to:

- Develop consensus around common goals and performance objectives of the balanced approach mission.
- Assess current practices and policies for consistency with those goals and objectives.
- Establish action steps and benchmarks for gauging progress and ensuring movement toward the goals and objectives.
- Begin using the mission actively each day to guide decisions.

To accomplish significant reform, the BARJ Model must be understood as an alternative that replaces, rather than adds to, existing practices and policies. BARJ is a framework for strategic planning rather than a new service or program.

The following is a list of key activities that jurisdictions find necessary for implementing their desired system reforms toward a more balanced and restorative justice model:

- Identify the stakeholders in the work of juvenile justice.
- Involve representatives of the stakeholders in all planning.
- Assess the current status of the agency with respect to BARJ policies and practices by asking:
  - How are resources spent?
  - What are the current performance outcomes for agency intervention?
  - Who benefits (victims, community members, juvenile offenders, juvenile justice professionals)?
  - How do staff spend their time?

- What are community perceptions about juvenile justice?
  - What are victim perceptions about juvenile justice?
  - Who has input into disposition decisions?
  - What is the level of community involvement in the juvenile justice process?
  - What factors determine case handling?
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- Identify discrepancies between current practices and BARJ goals and objectives.
  - Identify the most promising opportunities for change.
  - Set specific goals based on the information you have gathered.
  - Create an ongoing advisory process involving stakeholders.
  - Measure results.
  - Modify plans periodically based on results.

Changes in practice must go hand in hand with changes in the value system. Implementing this new approach will be evolutionary, and some practices will look similar on the surface but will be guided by different values. Consequently, it is essential that policy and practice be tested against restorative values on a regular basis.

Frequently referring to and reflecting on the overall vision will assist in keeping changes on track. It is also important that specific implementation plans be developed at the grassroots level through a community-based process that engages all stakeholders.

There is no single blueprint for this model. For change to be meaningful, implementation of the BARJ approach should be guided by the needs of each jurisdiction and its community members. Implementation may appear different in different jurisdictions, but if the process of planning and implementation is

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