



Colorado Restorative Justice Practitioner Guidelines

*Adopted by the Colorado Restorative Justice Coordinating Council
and endorsed by the Board of the Colorado Coalition for Restorative Justice Practices (2024)*

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GLOBAL INDIGENOUS PRACTICE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Restorative Justice is deeply rooted in global Indigenous practices of peacekeeping, community building, and conflict resolution. Indigenous communities are built on the practice of living in connection and harmony with one's self, one's community, and nature. With great reverence and respect, we acknowledge that the practice of Restorative Justice today is a gift from global Indigenous practices.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

Whatever your relationship to Restorative Justice practices (RJPs), we welcome your engagement with these Guidelines created with and for Restorative Justice (RJ) practitioners in Colorado. These Guidelines are intended to be a dynamic resource to strengthen fidelity of practice and, in turn, support equitable and inclusive opportunities for interested participants to access a range of restorative practices throughout the State. These Guidelines are designed to update and replace Colorado's 2012 Standards of Practice, while advancing their original purpose to:

- Serve as a primary reference for RJ programs and practitioners in Colorado;
- Guide the training and ongoing preparation of RJ practitioners;
- Promote public confidence in restorative processes to repair harm, foster accountability and healing, and strengthen relationships and communities.

RJPs are being used in ever-growing ways, including preventative and proactive practices, as well as those designed to respond to specific conflict, harm, and violence. Within this evolving landscape are varied practice frameworks and models, as well as contexts that span from community-based to institutional and legal system settings. These Guidelines are designed to be a compass that centers core RJ values and principles broadly applicable across these multiple pathways.

Rooted in this common grounding, RJPs can be designed with fidelity in ways that best meet the needs and interests of participants and their communities. Examples of specialized guidance for specific settings and practice models – from everyday restorative practices taking root in many schools to frameworks for responding to high-impact personal, systemic, and historical harms – can be found at the end of the document. Additional background and acknowledgment regarding the creation of these Guidelines, along with a link for feedback to help inform the next iteration of this living document, can be found there as well.

These Guidelines touch on a number of foundational roles, responsibilities, and relationships that practitioners have with RJP participants, other practitioners, and within their own areas of personal growth. Significant points of intersection and reference between the Guidelines serve to weave them together and lend added emphasis to essential points of practice. For this reason, it is most useful to view these Guidelines as a whole, rather than as singular areas of guidance.

GUIDELINE 1. CREATING SPACE FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

Value: Creating spaces that center RJ values and are responsive to participants' needs is at the heart of the roles, responsibilities, and relationships held by RJ practitioners.

There are core elements to the basic container for restorative practices that are common across the models of RJP most widely used in Colorado: Conferences, Direct Dialogue, and Circles. Within this container, practitioners can work with participants to build and hold spaces in which the principles highlighted throughout these Guidelines can be integrated with fidelity. Roles and responsibilities for different stages of an RJP may vary by context; in some programs, for example, preliminary steps may occur before practitioners are assigned to a referral. Regardless of roles, it is important that all stages of an RJP embody core RJ principles, and that participant needs — starting with those who have been harmed — are centered.

1.1 Preliminary Work with Individuals

Restorative practices are grounded in relationships of trust, which begin with the following important preliminary work with individual participants:

- A. Providing Information: Provide potential participants with clear information regarding RJ values, principles, and processes, including specific RJP opportunities that may meet their personal needs for accountability and repair, and provide support for healing.
- B. Conducting an Assessment: Assess potential participants' interest and readiness including whether, when, and within what framework they may want to consider engaging in an RJP. For those who have caused harm, assess whether there is a level of accountability suitable for a meaningful restorative encounter.
- C. Ensuring Equitable Access: Inquire about any barriers to accessibility an interested participant may face in moving forward and explore ways to address those. (See Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access.)
- D. Considering the Timeline: Follow the timeline that reflects the participants' pace. Depending on various factors, the preliminary work needed prior to direct engagement between the participants may range from one or two pre-meetings to months of assessment, preparation, and wraparound services common to high-impact dialogues. If the time needed for preparation differs significantly between participants, be clear that individuals are free to choose other avenues to address the harm.
- E. Using a Surrogate: If one of the primary parties is not available or does not desire direct engagement, explore whether use of a surrogate may allow a harmed or responsible party to access a meaningful restorative process.

1.2 Engagement between Participants

When appropriate, spaces designed for engagement between those who have been harmed and those who are responsible for that harm can provide opportunities for direct personal sharing and deep listening. This includes space for:

- A. Harmed Parties: To share their experiences, the impacts of that harm, and their specific needs and questions.
- B. Those Responsible: To answer questions, and acknowledge and be accountable for the harm.

- C. Other Participants: To provide insights from support persons or representatives from the impacted community who may have joined the primary parties in the RJP.
- D. Reparative Action: To make and support commitments for reparative actions that address identified needs and provide possibilities for growth and healing.
- E. All: To explore and clarify any other matters related to mutual understandings, requests, and questions that remain for the facilitators or any of the participants moving forward.

1.3 Follow-up

Regular self-reflection by practitioners and check-ins with other practitioners and participants can help ensure fidelity of the RJP throughout the process. Follow-ups offer the opportunity to address:

- A. Integration of RJ Values: To review how the process is integrating core RJ values and principles.
- B. Attention to Needs: To center participants' ongoing needs, interests, and expectations.
- C. Process Adjustments: To respond to any needed adjustments to the process in a timely way.
- D. Follow-Through on Commitments: To assess whether participants' specific commitments related to the process and/or reparative actions arising from the process are being honored.
- E. Practitioner Growth: To gain insights from other practitioners that support learning and growth.
- F. Concerns: To be aware of any concerns or harms that may have arisen from the RJP and identify appropriate steps to address them.

1.4 Setting the Space

The following elements — which span a range of RJP models — highlight key practices found throughout these Guidelines that support fidelity to RJ values and principles within restorative spaces:

- A. Center Interests and Needs: Design and maintain a space that invites collaborative input from and centers the interests and needs of participants, starting with those who have been harmed. *(See Guideline 1 - Creating Space for Restorative Justice Practices.)*
- B. Support Self-Determination: Make ongoing inquiries regarding participants' desire for continued engagement. *(See Guideline 2 - Self-Determination.)*
- C. Provide Safeguards: Establish safeguards such as confidentiality agreements to support open and honest communication. *(See Guideline 3 - Confidentiality.)*
- D. Establish Mutual Regard and Participation: Create shared norms and expectations that uphold an atmosphere of mutual regard and respectful listening, along with physical arrangements that support the equal participation and well-being of all involved. *(See Guideline 4 - Mutual Partiality and Bias.)*
- E. Address Bias: Name and address duality of interests or power differentials that may be present between practitioners and participants and/or between participants. *(See Guideline 5 - Transparency of Interests.)*
- F. Work with Others: Create teams of two or more practitioners to strengthen and balance backgrounds, skills, experience, and identities in the RJ space and foster mutual support and accountability. *(See Guideline 6 - Fidelity of Restorative Justice Practices.)*
- G. Check In: Create reflection points with participants and other practitioners to gauge fidelity of the process and participants' ongoing needs. *(See Guideline 6 - Fidelity of Restorative Justice Practices.)*

- H. Be Trauma-Aware: Incorporate trauma-informed practices throughout the process. (See *Guideline 7 - Trauma-Informed Practices*.)
- I. Foster Inclusion: Foster space that values diverse identities — even when not fully aware of all identities present — and supports equitable access related to timing, location, language, mobility, and other identified accessibility needs. (See *Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access*; *Guideline 9 - Financial Support for Restorative Justice*; *Guideline 10 - Advancement of Restorative Justice Practices*.)
- J. Address Concerns: Acknowledge any concerns or harms that may arise during an RJP and take steps to address them. (See *Guideline 11 - Harms Arising from Restorative Justice Processes*.)

GUIDELINE 2. SELF-DETERMINATION

Value: Self-determination honors participants' autonomy and agency and upholds RJ's core values of voluntariness and choice.

The right to self-determination belongs to all who consider and/or choose to engage in RJP. This is true whether they have been harmed, have caused harm, or have otherwise been impacted or invited to fill a role in an RJP. Such agency begins with an individual's choice about whether to explore an RJP opportunity and continues through all stages from initial assessment through completion and follow-up.

2.1 Promoting and Upholding Self-Determination

The following points are a guide for fostering self-determination among participants:

- A. Introduce the RJP: Consider when, how, and by whom an RJP invitation is best extended to a particular individual and/or in a given context. Such considerations can be particularly important for persons who have been harmed. Be clear that RJ referrals are always optional.
- B. Inform Participants: Ensure as much as possible that participants are provided with reliable and unbiased information about RJ opportunities and that their choices are fully informed, without undue pressure either way from family, friends, or system representatives.
- C. Honor Decisions: Honor each individual's decisions regarding whether, when, and how to engage in RJ, including what is important to them in driving their decisions.
- D. Keep Options Open: If someone is unsure about engaging in a particular RJP, provide avenues for them to explore RJ options in the future or pursue a different process or avenue.
- E. Discuss Process Design: Confer with core participants on the purpose, design, participants, timing, location, and any other accommodations identified for the proposed process. Provide guidance on how differences regarding participants' needs can be equitably resolved.
- F. Address Concerns and Questions: Provide clear, reliable, and readily available information to those considering or engaged in an RJP, to help inform decisions throughout the process. Value and address all concerns and questions, as they arise, as fully and fairly as possible.
- G. Continue the Inquiry: As individual needs and agency may vary over time, provide regular avenues throughout the RJ process to determine whether participants' needs and expectations are being met, consider possible adjustments, and confirm everyone's choice to continue.
- H. Build Commitments/Agreements: If an RJP includes specific reparative actions and/or other commitments or agreements, help ensure that these reflect the personhood of the primary

participants who have been harmed or caused harm, and meaningfully incorporate and foster their unique needs, interests, and assets.

2.2 Acknowledging Limitations

- A. Impact of Policies on Self-Determination: Limitations on self-determination can arise when legal or institutional policies or practices impact participant options. Examples may include mandated referrals, prescribed reparative actions, or ineligibility to participate in a particular program or process due to one's status or the type of harm involved.
- B. Fostering Agency: Knowledge and transparency regarding parameters specific to a given context open up opportunities to (a) explore possible adjustments that foster self-determination and (b) consider alternate channels that may be available for participants to access a restorative process. In any event, upholding agency as much as possible within a given context remains important.

GUIDELINE 3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Value: Practitioners create spaces where participants can engage openly and honestly throughout all stages of an RJP, free from fear that information they share will be exposed or used in a punitive fashion against themselves or others.

Protecting privacy and confidentiality is an essential ingredient of spaces that encourage honesty, openness, and accountability. The confidentiality of all communications that take place — from preliminary work through any post-process follow-up — is thus a core element of creating space for restorative work. RJP are frameworks intended for personal accountability and repair, in contrast to processes designed for investigative or punitive purposes.

3.1 Commitment to Confidentiality

- A. Explanation of Confidentiality: Practitioners have a key role in explaining to potential and active participants that a commitment to confidentiality provides protection for all communications during an RJ process. This is a shared commitment that applies to all participants and to every stage of the process.
- B. Agreement to Confidentiality: A written agreement to maintain the confidentiality of all RJP-specific communications — covering both practitioners and all other participants — is an important foundation for an RJP. Exceptions identified during or at the close of the RJP can be documented to clarify participants' agreement that certain information is appropriate to be shared in specific ways and contexts beyond the RJP space.

3.2 Further Guidance Concerning Confidentiality

- A. Exceptions to Confidentiality: Legal, programmatic, or setting-specific exceptions to confidentiality may apply in some contexts. It is essential that participants are aware of these exceptions at the outset of an RJP so they can determine whether and how to proceed. In the criminal and juvenile legal settings in Colorado, for example, there is an exception for chargeable offenses that occur during the RJP. Additionally, some practitioners and RJP participants may have statutory requirements tied to their professional work which include a duty to report suspected abuse or neglect of minors or other vulnerable populations or threats

of harm. In these instances, it is important to acknowledge these requirements and clarify any impacts they could have on the RJP.

- B. Professional Sharing by Practitioners: In professional settings or public outreach where practitioners are discussing restorative practices, non-consensual sharing about a specific RJP should be anonymized and sensitive or potentially identifying details avoided.

GUIDELINE 4. MUTUAL PARTIALITY AND BIAS

Value: Practitioners uphold an atmosphere of mutual regard, respect, and desire for the full participation and well-being of all involved.

Beginning with the needs of those who have been harmed, practitioners model and strive to uphold an atmosphere of mutual regard for the dignity, humanity, and needs of all participants in a restorative process. The term mutual partiality (sometimes referred to as multi-partiality) embodies this investment in the voices and well-being of everyone in the space. The foundation for mutual partiality is inclusive and provides for an equitable balance of care and support for both those who have been harmed and those responsible for harm.

4.1 Principles of Mutual Partiality

- A. Distinctions of Mutual Partiality: Mutual partiality is distinct from both *partiality* and *impartiality*. *Partiality* involves an imbalance of favor from which bias or unfairness can arise. *Impartiality* or *non-partiality* — terms sometimes used to describe the role of an RJ practitioner — attempt to create a stance of complete neutrality. While avoiding the bias inherent in partiality, mutual partiality also frees a practitioner from the more detached and often unrealistic goal of a disinterested neutrality. Instead, mutual partiality creates a more transparent and invested foundation from which practitioners can establish relationships of trust.
- B. Support for All Participants: Through its investment in the well-being of all participants, mutual partiality allows practitioners to uphold the diverse needs and interests participants bring to the RJP space. The goal is to provide an equitable balance of care and support for both those who have been harmed and those responsible for harm.
- C. Assessing Mutual Partiality: Before beginning an RJP — and throughout the process — it is important for practitioners to assess their ability to maintain mutual partiality in the context of the specific participants and harms involved.

4.2 Acknowledgment of Biases

- A. Awareness of Biases: Everyone has biases. These may arise from one's own or others' identities, histories, and other impactful experiences. The goal is to be aware of and acknowledge explicit and implicit biases — both individual and systemic — which may affect or appear to affect a practitioner's ability to maintain mutual partiality. (See *Guideline 7 - Trauma-Informed Practices*; *Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access*.)
- B. Pre-Existing Roles or Relationships: Bias or its perception may arise from preexisting relationships or roles a practitioner may hold with one or more of the participants or within an institution or the broader community. (See *Guideline 5 - Transparency of Interests*.)

- C. Steps to Address Bias: When a practitioner is aware of factors that affect or appear to affect their mutual partiality — whether through their own assessment or through concerns raised by others — transparency is key. Being transparent provides participants with the choice about whether to proceed in the RJP with that individual or not. A practitioner may also decide to withdraw, such as when a situation touches too closely on their own history to comfortably proceed. When withdrawal occurs, a practitioner or other RJP colleague may offer helpful guidance as participants explore alternate resources. *(See Guideline 7 - Trauma-Informed Practices.)*
- D. Role of Other Practitioners: Working in a team with other practitioners can strengthen the practice of mutual partiality. Practitioners can support one another to identify and assess perceived or actual biases, broadening the identities and experiences represented in the facilitation team to help counter-balance biases.

GUIDELINE 5. TRANSPARENCY OF INTERESTS

Value: Restorative work depends upon creation of trustworthy spaces. This includes transparency from practitioners regarding interests and relationships they hold that may impact an RJP.

A potential “conflict of interest” or “duality of interest” arises when an RJ practitioner or program has or may be perceived to have relationships or interests that could compete or be at odds with those of participants or otherwise lend an air of unfairness. (See discussion of bias in Guideline 4 - Mutual Partiality and Bias.) These may be personal, financial, professional, or institutional interests. Holding competing interests can diminish participants’ trust in the restorative process and compromise a practitioner’s ability to whole-heartedly engage with participants. Differing community norms and cultural contexts may impact whether certain relationships or interests raise concerns in a particular setting.

5.1 Supporting Transparency of Interests

- A. Self-Awareness and Transparency: Self-awareness and transparency are key to identifying factors or relationships that may raise hesitations for a practitioner — on their own or others’ behalf — regarding their involvement in a particular restorative process. After such disclosures, participants’ choice to proceed or to request another practitioner can be determined.
- B. Participant Agency: Participants likewise have agency to raise their own concerns regarding a practitioner or other participants being considered for an RJP. This again calls for a process to determine whether participants are open to moving forward with particular individuals.
- C. Culture and Context: Perspectives on “conflict of interest” may vary depending on norms and traditions around boundaries and other relationship dynamics that feel expected and appropriate in a particular setting or group. In some communities, trust may more readily be placed in practitioners with close community ties, especially figures in traditional positions of respect. In other contexts, high value may be placed on clear separation between those who provide and those who receive services. Being transparent and centering participants’ needs and perceptions are key to discerning how best to balance interests in a given context.

5.2 Considering Transparency of Roles

- A. Clarity of Roles: It is important to be clear that the practitioner role remains distinct and separate from other roles one might hold. When a conflict of interest exists, the use of trained volunteers or established community-based practitioners may lessen perceptions of duality of interest for practitioners who hold mixed roles.
- B. Law Enforcement Participation: Some RJ programs and practices may closely collaborate with and regularly include law enforcement among those represented in an RJP. Others may include an officer only if that person was directly harmed or caused harm in the incident being addressed. Whatever your practice, it is important to be transparent about these decisions and to take participants' input about the matter into consideration.

GUIDELINE 6. FIDELITY OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

Value: Knowledge of and fidelity to the values and principles of RJ lie at the heart of and guide all restorative practices.

Fidelity of RJP encompasses a variety and depth of understandings and commitments that embody core RJ values and principles. Fidelity exceeds the bounds of any one training, curriculum, skill set, or practice model. It also comprises the unique personal experiences and values that inform each practitioner's sense of preparedness for restorative work in a given context.

6.1 Fidelity of RJP

- A. Foundational Guidance: These Guidelines are designed to provide foundational guidance that spans multiple practice arenas and core areas of knowledge and awareness. Overall fidelity to the values and principles within these Guidelines is an essential starting point for skillful practice.
- B. Embodied Qualities: The capacities that underlie fidelity of practice are not merely words on paper or ideas derived from a particular training. They include embodied qualities — rooted in personal values and experiences — that support a shift in one's personal and professional lives from shame-based and punitive responses to harm to frameworks grounded in relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration. (See [The 5 R's of Restorative Practice](#).)
- C. Restorative Spaces: Practitioners are called to create spaces for honest and meaningful dialogue to address (a) accountability by those who have caused harm, (b) the impact on those who were harmed (and their related needs), (c) commitments to repair harm, and (d) increased understanding and possibilities for healing for all participants. (See *Guideline 1 - Creating Space for Restorative Justice Practices*.)
- D. Training Resources: The commitment to fidelity of practice does not lend itself easily to a singular "checklist of competencies." Those seeking guidance on particular skill sets commonly taught and practiced during practitioners' initial preparation and ongoing growth are encouraged to access additional resources in Colorado and beyond, many of which have been designed for particular practice arenas and models. (See [RJColorado.org](#); [Additional Resources](#).)

6.2 Some Pathways to Fidelity

- A. Presence: An essential part of RJP is the commitment to bring one's presence into the RJ space as fully and continually as possible. It is not easy to maintain full presence, especially in the

context of what may be difficult and painful conversations. Self-reflection and self-care — before, during, and after a given encounter — support a practitioner’s capacity to attend well to the needs of each participant and the RJ process overall.

- B. Lived Experience: Lived experiences add valuable capacities to individual RJ practitioners. They also enrich the practitioner community as a whole. For example, persons who have journeyed through the impacts of receiving or causing significant harm bring important insights to fidelity of RJs, such as those arising from prior participation in an RJ or the carceral system.
- C. Growth-Oriented Mindset: The capacity of an RJ practitioner evolves along a continuum of learning and practice. While introductory and advanced training provide an important knowledge base, a variety of learning platforms are important to support ongoing growth of practice skills. These include opportunities to observe or participate as a community member in an RJ, join other practitioners to co-facilitate a process, and engage with mentors/coaches. Such opportunities for continual growth and learning remain important to fidelity of practice throughout all stages of a practitioner’s development.
- D. Opportunities for Feedback: Awareness of strengths as well as areas for improvement provide a springboard for ongoing growth in practice skills and overall fidelity to RJ values and principles. Established channels for evaluation from both RJ participants and colleagues are essential to a practitioner’s accountability and growth. Communities of practice and other networks provide opportunities for sharing and learning from wider perspectives. In addition to external feedback, personal reflection and assessment are other essential components of fidelity of practice, whether related to a specific RJ process or more generally to ongoing awareness and growth as an individual and in one’s capacity as a practitioner.

6.3 Further Guidance on Fidelity

- A. Required Training and Experience: Some practice settings may have their own measures — such as prescribed curricula or prior experience — to determine a practitioner’s preparedness. For example, more in-depth understanding of power and control dynamics may be essential for assessing and responding to certain harms. The need for added knowledge and experience may also be addressed by creating facilitation teams in which at least one practitioner has a strong relevant background in a particular area of expertise.
- B. Background Checks: In settings that serve vulnerable populations (such as minors) or operate within specific policy, funding, or insurance restrictions, all staff and providers — including RJ practitioners — may be subject to background checks. Whether and what criminal history is deemed relevant to an individual’s eligibility to practice RJ will vary by context. While balancing regard for safety in RJ processes, many settings find value, as noted earlier, in including persons with lived experience in the carceral system among their practitioners.

GUIDELINE 7. TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

Value: Practitioners understand how trauma impacts RJs, including both their own trauma and the trauma of all who are involved in an RJ.

It is important for practitioners to understand the role and impacts trauma may have on those involved in restorative spaces. Many restorative practices are designed as responses to specific harms that may

themselves embody significant trauma for those impacted. In addition, practitioners, as well those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm, may carry trauma from past experiences into the restorative space. Integrating knowledge about trauma into restorative practices guides the creation of physical and emotional spaces that can more fully support all who are engaged in an RJP.

7.1 Overview of Trauma

- A. Trauma and its Impacts: Trauma can be an event, series of events, or ongoing stressful dynamics that individuals — or a broader cultural or identity group — experience as physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually harmful or life threatening. It's "*too much too fast*." Often traumatic experiences become lodged in the psyche, body, and/or mind of individuals or groups. The impacts are wide and varied, with common responses including exhaustion, confusion, sadness, anxiety, agitation, numbness, and disassociation. Individuals tend to avoid the emotions, sensations, and activities associated with the trauma. Until the experience has been skillfully processed and integrated, trauma has lasting adverse effects on the well-being of impacted individuals or groups, as well as on future generations.
- B. Trauma in the RJP Context: As RJP are designed to respond to instances of personal and interpersonal harm, it is common for participants to have experienced related trauma. As the level of harm being addressed increases, so may the complexity of trauma experiences and the need to involve practitioners with more specialized trauma backgrounds. Both those who have been harmed and those responsible may also carry trauma from past experiences not necessarily tied directly or only to the incident at hand. The same is true for practitioners, who must be alert to how their own relationship to trauma can impact their work. *(See Guideline 4 - Mutual Partiality and Bias.)*

7.2 Integrating Knowledge into Practice

- A. Build Knowledge: It is important for practitioners — especially those whose work addresses higher-level harms — to continually deepen their understanding of culturally competent trauma-informed and responsive practices. Focused training and/or communities of practice can help practitioners remain current regarding trauma reactions and common responses relevant for their practice context. This, in turn, allows practitioners to be more attuned to ways trauma may create a sense of shame or stigma and the resulting nervous system responses (including flight, fight, freeze, and fawn) in themselves and others.
- B. Acknowledge and Normalize Trauma: Practitioners can utilize various strategies to mitigate the risk of re-traumatization. Beginning each RJP by acknowledging that a restorative process may be stimulating or triggering lays a foundation for helpful responses. Participants can be supported in their agency to manage nervous system regulation, discharge of stress, and overall well-being, including determining how far or fast they can process potentially traumatic retelling of harm. Practitioners are also encouraged to practice collective care on behalf of the group, such as by requesting shared moments of pause during restorative processes.
- C. Emphasize Needs: Through emphasizing the importance of feelings, needs, and process-related requests, practitioners can better support individual and collective needs such as time, space, compassion, and regard for physical and psychological safety. Practitioners can honor participants' self-determination by offering ongoing inquiries about their comfort level and their ability and willingness to proceed. *(See Guideline 2 - Self-Determination.)*

7.3 Providing Supports When Trauma Appears

- A. Support for Practitioners: Ongoing awareness and compassion for a practitioner's own trauma is essential, including discernment of when to refer a case to someone else. Working in practitioner teams and/or participating in regular communities of practice to discuss and debrief trauma-related issues can support practitioners' capacity for trauma-informed practice. Other forms of self-care that may feel supportive to a given practitioner — such as movement/exercise; rest; nutrition; self-reflection; creative arts; and various grounding, cultural, and spiritual practices — are also important considerations for working regularly with trauma. Such steps can lessen vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue and promote well-being, vicarious resilience, and satisfaction with the work.
- B. Presence & Support for Participants: Practitioners are encouraged to build skills for timely responses to trauma or stress that may arise during an RJP. This includes strengthening capacities to witness suffering and help others regulate through techniques such as a pause, validation, empathy, and inquiry. As appropriate to the context, grounding exercises such as mindfulness, breathwork, movement, and other awareness-building practices may also help participants and practitioners to promote regulated nervous system responses such as “rest and digest, tend and befriend.” As much as possible, practitioners can support participants to integrate and transition away from trauma- or stress-based responses, while not taking others' trauma responses personally.
- C. Connection to Outside Supports: In addition to the option for support persons to attend an RJ process, practitioners can encourage participants to identify other support measures already present in their lives to help them prepare for, debrief, and integrate potentially overwhelming subject matter. A ready list of in-person, online, and written resources to address other unmet needs can also be a helpful guide for those interested in accessing additional supports.

GUIDELINE 8. EQUITABLE INCLUSION AND ACCESS

Value: Practitioners respect human diversity and support equitable inclusion and access to RJP for all individuals and communities in Colorado, especially those that have historically been excluded or underserved.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and accessibility are all central to RJP. Within an historical context of systemic racism, economic disparities, and other persistent forms of harm and exclusion, some people and communities in Colorado have been negatively and disproportionately impacted by unjust and often punitive treatment. Fidelity of restorative practice includes a commitment to meaningful actions to counter such inequities. This spans from the welcome inclusion of persons from all cultures, identities, and lived experiences into an RJP, to the collective responsibility to expand equitable access to RJ opportunities to diverse participants and practitioners more generally throughout Colorado. (See Guideline 9 - Financial Support for Restorative Justice; Guideline 10 - Advancement of Restorative Justice Practices.)

8.1 Respect for Human Diversity

- A. Cultural Responsiveness: Cultural responsiveness embodies basic knowledge of and appreciation for the diverse cultural heritages, traditions, values, and customs present in a community or specific practice setting. This includes honoring ways of being other than a practitioner's ways or

the dominant culture's ways, along with discovering which cultural elements participants feel are most meaningful to be represented in their RJ process.

- B. Social Identities: Diverse social identities are often present in an RJP and may overlap or interplay with cultural differences as well. These include characteristics such as age; gender and sexual identity; race/ethnicity; nationality; religion/spirituality; socioeconomic and immigration status; and differing physical, neurological, emotional, and developmental abilities. Honoring each individual's identities and their intersections creates welcoming and trustworthy spaces.
- C. Lived Experience: The diversity of participants' lived experiences is also important to acknowledge and honor within the RJ space. These may include stories of significant hardship and loss, as well as those of strength and resilience. Lived experiences may also shed valuable light on ways in which many cultural and identity groups have created and preserved rich traditions to address harm and promote healing within their own communities.
- D. Resources: Resources such as the Restorative Rainbow Alliance *Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct* — one of Colorado's foundational practice documents — can provide important insights and practical guidance for increasing awareness and capacities related to welcome, inclusion, and access for diverse populations. (See [Additional Resources](#).)

8.2 Practices That Invite Inclusion

- A. Provide Representation: When possible, form practitioner teams that include persons from the cultures, identities, or lived experiences of the primary participants, to increase a sense of representation and belonging.
- B. Engage in Meaningful Curiosity: Ask questions to individual participants to discover which personal aspects of culture, identity, and lived experience matter most to them. Clarify whether and how they would like these expressed to others in their RJ process, such as preferred names and pronouns or an invitation to share specific information about themselves with the group.
- C. Respond to Needs: Design the RJ space and process in ways that are participant-centered and respond to the identified needs of all those who are involved.
- D. Honor Traditions and Beliefs: Respect participant requests grounded in cultural or spiritual traditions and beliefs, such as by incorporating rituals and other elements into the framework for accountability and repair that hold special meaning and importance for their community.
- E. Invite Difference: Even when particular cultures, identities, or lived experiences are not visible or expressed, provide a physical space, overall process design, and atmosphere that invites and accommodates human differences.

8.3 Pathways for Accessibility

- A. Adjust Practices: Beyond general inclusion, be alert to and prioritize adjustments that make RJP accessible on practical levels to all who wish to participate, taking into account factors such as culture, identity, language, developmental stages and capacities, familial commitments, and socioeconomic or immigration status.
- B. Provide Needed Supports: Inquire about and provide accommodations and supports to allow all participants to engage as fully as possible in the RJ process.
- C. Promote Language Justice: Provide access to the spoken or signed language best understood by and comfortable to each participant. If there is not a shared language, engage multi-lingual practitioners and/or interpreters as needed.

- D. Honor Other Commitments: As much as possible, the schedule for RJ processes should honor participants' diverse commitments and needs. This may include scheduling meetings at times and places that honor significant cultural, religious, or familial commitments, and more readily accommodate participant access to supports such as transportation and childcare.
- E. Plan for Mobility Needs: Ensure that RJP locations can reasonably accommodate the mobility needs of participants, such as wheelchair access.
- F. Protect Immigration Status: Honor that those who lack (or whose family members lack) legal immigration status often fear exposure. Explore ways to protect their privacy and mitigate potential negative consequences from participation.
- G. Address Economic or Geographic Barriers: Determine if there are economic or geographic barriers for a participant to access RJ services. If fees for service or other arrangements for participation are an issue, explore available options to reduce or cover costs. If someone seeking an RJP lives where services are not readily available, explore options for staffing their request with practitioners who are willing to travel to extend services.

GUIDELINE 9. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Value: Financial support for RJ services plays a critical role in ensuring equitable and inclusive access for those seeking and providing RJ services.

Financial arrangements to support RJ services vary throughout different practice arenas and settings around the State. Factors such as whether services are offered through a community-based program, an institution, or a private practitioner may impact funding options. Whether services are funded in whole or part through fees for service or other funding sources can play a significant role in the sustainability of services. It can also affect equitable access to restorative opportunities for interested practitioners and participants. Additionally, funding sources can raise perceptions of duality of interests and/or include access limitations for certain participants.

9.1 Equitable Access to RJ Opportunities

- A. Participant Access: Avenues to promote equitable access for a broader range of participants include public funds, private grants, and institutional budgets allocated to cover the cost of services, as well as fees for service that include flexible payment terms such as a sliding scale or a "pay what you can" policy. When costs are a barrier in a given context, practitioners can assist interested participants in locating more affordable or free access points. (See Guideline 8 - *Equitable Inclusion and Access*.)
- B. Practitioner Access: Practitioners invest valuable time and money to develop expertise and create frameworks for providing services. Honoring this with fair compensation is important, especially for those who are not privileged to offer volunteer, low-fee, or limited-salary services.
- C. Equitable Balance: Finding an equitable and sustainable balance of financial access for both participants and practitioners is one path to creating more diverse and inclusive practitioner communities and, in turn, greater capacity for participant inclusion and belonging. This will involve continued efforts on many levels to garner the public and private support needed to sustain RJ services for the long term within diverse contexts, communities, and the State as a whole. (See Guideline 10 - *Advancement of Restorative Justice Practices*.)

9.2 Impact of Funding Sources

- A. Balance of Interests: While maintaining reliable sources of internal and/or external funds is critical to sustain both institutional and community programs, funding sources can restrict participant access and raise perceptions of conflicting interests or bias. *(See Guideline 4 - Mutual Partiality and Bias; Guideline 5 - Transparency of Interests; Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access.)*
- B. Funding Limitations: Some funding sources limit the demographic groups eligible for services, such as minors only. Other funding sources define eligible types and levels of harm and — if legal charges are involved — whether RJ services are pre-charge only or can occur later in the legal continuum. Institutional funding for programs that address harms in which the institution itself is an interested participant may raise issues of “duality of interests” and bias. If such limitations exist, transparent communication is essential so that practitioners and participants share clear and mutual understanding of them.

GUIDELINE 10. ADVANCEMENT OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

Value: Strengthening relationships within practitioner communities and increasing understanding and support for restorative practices more broadly are key to advancing RJP in Colorado.

There are a range of opportunities through which practitioners, RJ programs, and practitioner networks can contribute to the continuing advancement of restorative practices in Colorado. Some listed below are more inward-facing — focused on ways practitioners can support one another to grow individually and as a field. Others are more outward-facing — focused on ways practitioners and practice communities can positively influence public perceptions, knowledge, and uptake of restorative practices in the State.

10.1 Ways to Strengthen Relationships within Practice Communities

- A. Foster Relationships: Take action to recognize, connect with, and foster relationships with a wide diversity of practitioners within different practice arenas and across different communities, cultures, and identities.
- B. Engage in Relational Learning: Use connections with other practitioners to build a foundation of mutual support and guidance through relational learning opportunities such as mentoring or participating in communities of practice or practitioner networks. *(See Guideline 6 - Fidelity of Restorative Justice Practices.)*
- C. Give and Receive Feedback: Be open to give and receive feedback and provide guidance or assistance when concerns, challenges, or harms arise during an RJ process or within relationships within practitioner communities. *(See Guideline 11 - Harms Arising from Restorative Justice Processes.)*
- D. Respect Culture and Identity: Be aware of the spectrum of factors that may impact or define colleagues’ cultures and identities, and take action to support inclusion and access for a diversity of practitioners. *(See Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access.)*
- E. Honor Differences: Promote deeper and more inclusive understandings of RJP through conversations that highlight differing experiences and points of view.
- F. Expand Horizons: Elevate the richness and evolution of the field through opportunities to expand knowledge about other valuable models for accountability and repair that are community-driven and may not describe themselves as “Restorative Justice.” These include

Transformative Justice practices that address systemic and community-wide harms, as well as long-standing traditions of practice rooted in specific cultures and communities.

10.2 Ways to Increase Public Support for and Access to RJ in Colorado

- A. Engage the Public: Engage diverse public sectors and communities to increase their understanding of, support for, and means to access RJ opportunities.
- B. Make Outreach Meaningful: Design education and outreach that embody RJ values; are culturally responsive; center equity; and reflect the voices, needs, and interests of specific communities.
- C. Promote Access: Provide the general public and referral sources with widely available and practical guidance on ways to identify and access restorative services suited to specific contexts and needs, regardless of their location or socioeconomic status. (See Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access; Guideline 9 - Financial Support for Restorative Justice.)
- D. Demonstrate Effectiveness: Support collective activities that demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of restorative processes, such as public events, storytelling platforms, and coordinated data-collection efforts to underscore the value of restorative practices.
- E. Be Honest and Transparent: Refrain from promotion that (a) misleads the public regarding what constitutes a restorative process, (b) overpromises expected outcomes or overstates practitioner qualifications, (c) uses non-consensual identifying information from prior RJs, or (d) otherwise compromises the integrity of restorative work.
- F. Advance Policy: Collaborate with legislators and other policymakers and advocates at State, regional, and local levels to adopt and implement public policies for RJ development and funding that align with restorative values and support equitable, sustainable RJP access across the State.

GUIDELINE 11. HARMS ARISING FROM RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROCESSES

Value: Practitioners embody RJ values by seeking avenues of accountability and repair for any harms that occur within an RJ process.

RJPs create supportive spaces for accountability and repair. While not always a comfortable process, it is important that practitioners not cause or allow interactions that break trust, re-traumatize participants, or otherwise cause harm. Insights into what due care looks like are found throughout these Guidelines. If concerns or harms occur, even if unintended, practitioners are called to hold themselves and their colleagues to the same accountability and repair expected from participants. This benefits those directly impacted and, in turn, helps promote practitioner learning and public trust in RJs. (See Guideline 3 - Confidentiality; Guideline 6 - Fidelity of Restorative Justice Practices; Guideline 7 - Trauma-Informed Practices; Guideline 8 - Equitable Inclusion and Access.)

11.1 Channels for Feedback and Accountability

- A. Continual Learning and Improvement: To elicit and respond to process-related concerns or harms, it is important that practitioners create and use feedback loops to review and evaluate RJ processes. Positive support, rather than punitive responses, can offer important opportunities for continual learning and improvement.

- B. Insights from Colleagues: A practitioner may sense or be alerted by a colleague that they have mis-stepped in handling an RJ process or interaction. Others' insights can help practitioners acknowledge and understand the behavior and its potential or actual impacts.
- C. Informal Processing: Depending on the type and depth of concern, informal processing at a collegial or program level and/or an invitation to those impacted to engage in a restorative conversation may be sufficient to address accountability and help prevent recurrence of a concerning behavior.
- D. In-Depth Processing: When feedback from colleagues or participants brings more impactful harms to light, a more in-depth process can be created to address the needs of those directly impacted, if they so desire. Resources within the broader RJ community may be available by request to help design and facilitate such a process.

11.2 Additional Considerations to Ensure Accountability

- A. Alternate Feedback Channels: A participant who experiences harm during a restorative process may not feel secure to speak up directly to a practitioner. Offering channels for written feedback, advocacy from support persons, and confidential reporting can help address dynamics that may impede harms being brought forward. It may also inform other steps needed to provide a participant with an appropriate container for support, accountability, and repair.
- B. Additional Protections: If a participant discloses misconduct by a practitioner that is highly inappropriate or abusive, it is essential to prioritize the participant's well-being and safety and support additional steps to ensure full accountability and prevent further harm.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

History and Background

Since the mid-1990's, RJ programs and practitioners in Colorado have embraced the value of mutual support and guidance. These relationships were strengthened a decade later by the formation of the Colorado Coalition of Restorative Justice Directors (CCRJD) — the predecessor to today's Colorado Coalition for Restorative Justice Practices (CCRJP) — and also the legislative creation of the Colorado Restorative Justice Coordinating Council (RJ Council). The CCRJD invested 18 months on the first iteration of statewide standards, "Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct and Standards of Training and Practice," which were adopted in 2012 by both organizations. Completed in 2024, these new Guidelines follow in the footsteps of that trailblazing work. Developed through the collaborative efforts of the RJ Council and CCRJP, they have been shaped by many contributors.

The Guidelines hold the call from Colorado's RJ practitioners for clear guidance for their work in healthy tension with a desire to honor the diversities of perspective and practice inherent in the field's expanding landscape. Guideline 6 - Fidelity of Restorative Justice Practices, for example, maps a variety of pathways for learning and growth, rather than a single route or curriculum. Key lenses such as self-determination and the impacts of bias and trauma inform the Guidelines throughout. Language updates include a shift from *code* and *standards* to *value-centered guidance*; *practitioner* has generally replaced *facilitator* as more inclusive of the variable terms used in RJ models and cultural contexts, as well as the fuller range of practitioner roles; and *victim* and *offender* have been replaced by more human-centered language of *persons who have been harmed* and *persons responsible for harm*.

At their heart, these Guidelines hold the promise that RJ practitioners will continue to grow in bringing RJ values more fully and equitably into their practices and language. Opportunities will continue to increase for practitioners to explore and incorporate important values and practices found in frameworks such as Transformative Justice and generative approaches to conflict transformation. As a living document, an avenue for feedback is provided below for ongoing insights into how these Guidelines can best be used and refined over time. Practitioners and programs in Colorado are also encouraged to create a profile of services in the Directory on the [RJ Council's website](#), and to engage in the rich networking and resources offered to members of the CCRJP.

Contributors

These Guidelines were developed over a year-long iterative process in 2023-2024, guided by a project facilitator and grounded in a wide range of contributors and collaborative input. Twelve practitioners — in varying combinations of generational perspectives and practice backgrounds that spanned community, K-12, university, workplace, and criminal legal/carceral system settings — invested in the primary work of co-creating content over several rounds of visioning, writing, editing, and refining. Both before and between writing rounds, members of CCRJP and the RJ Council were invited to provide input on the purpose, scope, and content of the Guidelines. This included an initial survey of practitioners with 36 respondents from across the State, and was followed by multiple meetings with CCRJP membership, committees, and communities of practice, as well as with the RJ Council as a whole and with interested individual members. A joint workgroup representing both organizations served as a reference group for the project overall.

Invaluable guidance was provided on the first draft through interviews with diverse community members around Colorado whose lived experiences and/or ongoing work intersect with and are directly impacted by restorative practices. This included: persons with lived experience in the carceral system and persons who work closely with those impacted by that system; those harmed and responsible for harm who have participated in RJ processes; victim/survivor providers; and RJ practitioners working in a variety of practice arenas including rural settings. Thank you to a member of the RJ practitioner community with Indigenous background for providing the Global Indigenous Practice Acknowledgment. And thank you to many others beyond the primary contributors, whose efforts supported this work in important ways along the evolving path towards the completion and adoption of the Guidelines by the RJ Council and CCRJP in 2024.

FEEDBACK ON THIS DOCUMENT

These Guidelines are intended to be a living document that grows and develops with the field. Readers are invited and encouraged to comment on strengths the Guidelines hold, and to suggest ways they can be improved. Please see the [Colorado RJ Practitioner Guidelines Feedback Form](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are many resources available in Colorado and beyond that can further inform and expand these Guidelines. A few of these are included below for ease of reference.

Colorado Guidance

The [Colorado RJ Council Website](#) contains many resources, including these additional guiding documents adopted for RJP in the State:

- *Colorado Restorative Practices in Schools Guidelines*. Specialized guidance for restorative practices implementation and training in schools. (2016)
- *Essential Points of Restorative Justice Practices in Colorado*. Highlights core elements to implement and strengthen RJP and programs. (2020)
- *The 5 R's of Restorative Practice*. A helpful primer on core RJ values. (Dr. Beverly Title, 2011)
- *CCRJD Recommended Standards for 20-Hour Basic Restorative Justice Facilitator Training*. (2019) Recommended baselines for initial practitioner skill development, applicable to many contexts.
- *Restorative Rainbow Alliance Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct*. Adds a critical LGBTQ+ lens to support and guide more equitable access and inclusion in RJP. (2022)
- *Victim-Centered Restorative Justice*. Guidance for practitioners to provide choice, safety, and support. (2021)

Primers on Restorative Justice

The Little Books series (Skyhorse Publishing) provides short, accessible, and affordable primers on a range of RJ topics, including:

- *The Little Book of Circle Processes* (Kay Pranis, 2005)
- *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice* (Fania E. Davis, 2019)
- *The Little Book of Racial Healing* (Thomas DeWolf & Jodie Geddes, 2019)
- *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Howard Zehr, 2nd ed., 2015)
- *The Little Book of Restorative Justice for Colleges and Universities* (David Karp, 2nd ed., 2015)
- *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education* (Katherine Evans & Dorothy Vaandering, 2022)

Tools for Bias Awareness and Inclusion

- Anti-Defamation League: [Personal Self-Assessment of Anti-Bias Behavior Worksheet](#)
- *Colorizing Restorative Justice: Voicing our Realities* (Edward C. Valandra & Wanbli Wap̓háha Hokšila, eds., foreword by Justice Robert G. Yazzie, Living Justice Press 2020)
- [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#)
- *Listening to the Movement: Essays on New Growth and New Challenges in Restorative Justice* (Ted Lewis & Carl Stauffer, eds., foreword by Fania E. Davis, Cascade Books 2021)
- Vermont Restorative Justice Programs: [Vermont's Restorative Justice Programs Position on Racial Injustice](#) (2021)

Tools for Trauma-Informed Restorative Justice Practices

- Center for Prevention and Restorative Justice, Boulder County District Attorney's Office: [Trauma-Informed Restorative Practices](#) (2019)

Transformative Justice and Accountability Frameworks

- adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (AK Press 2017). A guide for right relationship with change in ourselves, others, and the world around us.

- Barnard Center for Research on Women, *Building Accountable Communities*, a video series on transformative justice.
- Mia Mingus, *The Four Parts of Accountability & How to Give a Genuine Apology* (2019)
- Spring Up, *Transformative Justice Workbook*. This and other resources on transformative approaches to accountability and repair for historical, systemic, and community-wide harms are available at timetospringup.org.