Report to Colorado Restorative Justice Council

Revision of the *Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct and Standards of Training & Practice*

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to document and provide recommendations regarding the revision of Colorado's *Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct and Standards of Training & Practice.* The report outlines the revision process, lessons learned throughout the process, and recommendations for future revisions of this and other foundational Restorative Justice (RJ) documents. The Restorative Justice Council (RJ Council) has access to supporting documentation that corresponds with each of the activities listed in the table below.

Project Overview

The *Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct and Standards of Training & Practice* was originally written in 2012 and revised in 2015. It provides guidance to RJ programs and practitioners about the roles, responsibilities, and training of RJ facilitators. In March 2023, I, Kathleen McGoey, was contracted by the RJ Council as the project facilitator to guide the revision process. I began working on the project April 1, 2023. Fourteen months later, I am providing this report to the RJ Council to capture the process and lessons learned. Readers are welcome to direct questions about the report and project to kathleen@kathleenmcgoey.com.

Timeline & Key Phases

Week	Activity *[See supporting "Reference Documents" folders, organized alphabetically]*
1-4	**A. Phase 1: Research** - Review other states' guidelines and reports on writing RJ standards - Collect input from CCRJP members via committee and community of practice meetings, develop survey based on their input
5-9	**B. Phase 1: Practitioner Engagement** - Conduct survey for broad outreach to practitioners and other community members - Use survey results to inform key aspects of document, i.e. defining goals of the document, its purpose, scope, characteristics, and primary content areas - Conduct one-on-one interviews with key RJ practitioners at their request - CCRJP Q2 Presentation: Present survey results, record small group discussions

10-23	**C.**	**Equity Consultation**
	-	Apply equity strategies for engagement: Universal / Focus / Intensive
	-	Assess intersectionality of RJ and historically marginalized groups – how to include more voices in this process
	-	Strategize around goals of document – RJ Council member approval and wider public awareness
	-	Explore possible "equity checklist" for guidelines
	-	Name and develop outreach to "champions and messengers" for rollout
11-31	**D.**	**Phase 2: Writers' Group**
	-	Recruit 8 volunteers to form writers' group.
	-	Analyze sections from 2012's original standards and 2023 survey results to develop full list of sections needed in the new document
	-	Form two cohorts of writers; designate specific sections for each cohort's work
	-	Meet twice/month as full writers' group; additional meetings in cohorts (assisted by contracted Project Support person)
	-	Work through tensions around tone, framework, word choice, audience, purpose, accessibility; make consensus-based decisions
	-	RJ Council Presentation: small group feedback
	-	CCRJP Q3 Presentation: facilitate small group feedback from members
	-	Draft 1 Complete: writers' group reading sessions, discussions, edits
	-	$500 stipend offered to each of the 8 members of Writers' Group
	-	Week 21: Request amended contract – increase project facilitator's hours and extend contract deadline
	-	Week 30: Amended contract executed
31-35	**E.**	**Phase 2: Community Member Feedback**
	-	Facilitate feedback sessions with impacted community members
	-	Provide Draft 1 for their review, ask questions to collect targeted feedback on specific sections
	-	Focus groups: hold five focus group sessions involving fifteen individuals who engage with or are impacted by RJ
	-	Key RJ Council representatives: hold one meeting to meet with two key RJ Council representatives who request this level of engagement
	-	CCRJP Q4 Presentation: project status update
35-40	**F.**	**Phase 2: Integrate Feedback**
	-	Writers' group receives and integrates feedback from impacted community members
	-	Draft 2 Complete
	-	RJ Council Presentation: project status update
	-	RJ Council members give feedback on Draft 2 via two facilitated sessions

40-46	**G.**	**Phase 3: Review Team**
		- Team of four meets six times (original request was for two meetings)
		- Review Draft 2, identify tensions, redundancy, language to clarify
		- Recognize need for improved structure and sequence, decision to reference more frameworks from RJ and related fields to add clarity and credibility, guiding perspectives
		- Split up and redistribute content from Draft 2 sections into three "core categories"
		- <u>Draft 3 Complete</u>
		- CCRJP Q1 Meeting: project status update
		- $500 stipend offered to each of the 4 members of Review Team
46-49	**H.**	**Phase 3: Finalizing & Formatting**
		- Project facilitator steps in to finish incomplete work, format, write supporting sections i.e. Glossary of Terms, Acknowledgments, Frameworks, Table of Contents
		- <u>Draft 4 Complete</u>
49-52	**I.**	**Phase 3: Advisory Group Feedback**
		- Advisory group reviews Draft 4, expresses concerns
		- Meet to discuss concerns: core content of Draft 2 was carried into Draft 4, but the trajectory changed significantly. Draft 4 is not as accessible as Draft 2, deviating from the overarching purpose(s) of the guidelines
		- Feedback about the project collected from writers and review team (7 out of 11 responded. See *Feedback on Revision Process from Writers*)
53-63	**J.**	**Phase 4: Revision 2.0**
		- Team of three meets twelve times. Two of three members were also in the writers' group (Phase 2)
		- Majority of writing done during meeting time, with one member doing another 20+ writing hours outside of meetings
		- Objective is to return to Draft 2, organize, clarify, and strengthen. Draw from strengths of Draft 4
		- <u>Draft 5 complete</u>
61-65	**K.**	**Phase 4: Copy Edit, Final Review & Present to RJ Council**
		- Draft 5 sent to copy editor for iterative review (4-week process)
		- Revision 2.0 team meets twice to weighs in on questions from copy editor, integrates edits
		- Copy editor and project facilitator review and finalize document
		- Final document reviewed by RJ Council during June 2024 Strategic Planning session

Summary of Hours (Estimated)

# of People and Role	Meeting time	Writing time	Admin time	Total (per person)	Total (per group)
1 Project Facilitator - Contracted	98		72 (incl. writing)	**170**	
Writers –11 Volunteers	29	Avg. 30 [10-50]		**59**	**649**
1 Project Support - Contracted	25	2 (formatting)		**27**	
1 Equity Consultant - Contracted	13			**13**	
Revision 2.0 – 3 Volunteers	24	Avg. 11 [3-20]		**35**	**105**

Challenges & Recommendations

1. Address tensions around singularity: *Who are we writing this for?*
   At the onset of this project, we hoped to develop one set of guidelines (standards) that spoke to many audiences, i.e. one document that could be used to inform practitioners/facilitators, participants/community, and criminal justice/other systems partners. Over the course of this project, I received feedback that this was an unrealistic goal. Also, RJ is currently being practiced in multiple arenas, i.e. criminal justice, schools, workplaces, communities, families. Trying to account for the differing expectations, freedoms, and limitations of RJ practitioners in each of these arenas added a layer of complexity to this project. The original standards document was written primarily for the criminal justice arena.

   Due to the current expansion and depth of RJ practice in CO, it is no longer realistic to rely on one document to meet the range of needs and expectations of diverse audiences and arenas. I recommend that a future approach envision development of multiple documents, each with specific objectives and intended audiences, that interact and relate to each other. One priority raised by multiple stakeholders is for a concise, accessible information sheet specifically geared towards participants in RJ processes.

2. Create clarity around ownership/oversight of the document: *Who are we writing this to?*
   The standards documents have historically been approved by the RJ Council and hosted on the RJ Council's website. This current revision project was made possible by RJ Council funding. However, the fact that the document, which establishes guidelines for RJ practice, would be evaluated for approval by some folks who are not RJ practitioners contributed to uncertainty in the writing process. Writers were challenged by how much to weigh and consider the interests, values, and lenses of RJ Council members who might evaluate the

document with differing values and priorities. This created confusion for the writers as they considered how to orient their writing and whose approval they were ultimately working toward. This uncertainty hindered decision-making about language, content, and tone. Toward the end of the project, an advisory group member suggested that the CCRJP might take on oversight of future efforts to write or rewrite statewide documents that impact practice.

3. Establish realistic expectations around time required
    a. Front end: The questions I sought to answer in Phase 1 were quite broad (See *B. Presentation Survey Results*). Input from CCRJP committee meetings and the survey were a good starting point, but the project would have benefited from taking the survey results and then narrowly defining the purpose, scope, intended audience, etc. before initiating the rewrite. It would have been helpful to define decision-making protocols, i.e. outlining who and how difficult decisions will be made and documented, beyond a loose consensus-based approach. From there, it would have helped to design a detailed process plan that accounted for an iterative process, including community feedback sessions. I recommend developing a more detailed plan before initiating the next revision, to provide guardrails that keep the various phases of work on track and act as a map that the advisory group can use to evaluate the evolution of the document.

    b. Mid-process: As the writers' group began their work in Phase 2, they identified the importance of collecting feedback from community members whose personal and professional lives are impacted by RJ. This community feedback stage had not originally been accounted for in the project plan. I recommend more thoughtful planning and development of this stage of work to improve efforts to recruit diverse voices to contribute feedback, and increase representation from historically marginalized groups in this pool of contributors.

    c. Campaign and rollout: From the beginning of the project, equity consultant Taishya Adams and I discussed how to increase awareness and buy-in of the new guidelines once they were complete. (For one phase of this effort, see *C. Initial Plan > Advisory Tab; C. Michael Dougherty Meeting*). I was not able to conduct outreach and engagement with the key stakeholders, beyond Phase 2. To maximize the reach of this document, and optimize its impact, I recommend prioritizing the development of a campaign and rollout strategy.

4. Develop comprehensive plan
    a. Define the role and involvement of the advisory group: For some members of the advisory group, the work completed during Phase 3 deviated from the overarching purpose and tone of the document. The frameworks introduced in Draft 4 were intended to add structure and improve the organization and sequencing of the values-based guidelines. However, some members thought Draft 4 lost the clarity and accessibility that had been established in Draft 2. The impact of this deviation was extra time, a loss of impact of the review team's work, and a significant rework that

extended the project 3 months beyond the original deadline. As facilitator I might have headed off these impacts by requesting the advisory group's approval of the changes made in working Draft 3 before finalizing Draft 4. I recommend designing a plan and expectations for all advisory group members to review and assess each stage of work while in progress. I also recommend a more interactive approach with the writers. Facilitating regular discussions between the different groups of writers throughout all stages of writing could create more clarity about the intent and decisions made at each step.

b. Intentional assembly of writers and reviewers: The writers and review team members who worked on Phase 2, 3, and 4 were individuals who volunteered for these roles. It should be noted that these folks did amazing work and gave generous contributions of their time. However, these phases of writing and reviewing were heavily influenced by which individuals happened to come forward, their perspectives, backgrounds, and personal experiences with RJ. It could be useful in the future to form these writing and review teams through a more deliberate process that takes into account the various identities, backgrounds, and contexts that need representation in the document.

c. Proposed contracted professionals
    i. Copy editor: Tasks such as formatting and eliminating redundancy bogged down the volunteer writers' and reviewers' progress. I recommend contracting a copy editor to add efficiency throughout the development of the document.
    ii. Translator: Writers and reviewers were concerned about trying to use a writing style that would result in the most accurate and culturally responsive translation to Spanish (and other languages). I recommend developing a plan for translation at the beginning of the project, so a translation professional can consult throughout the revision.

d. Format & accessibility
    i. Format/Hosting: The writers' group recognized that their approach to writing was impacted by how the guidelines would be formatted and hosted. Historically, these guidelines and other statewide documents have been formatted as pdfs and hosted on the RJ Colorado website. The static nature of a pdf limits the documents' design and how they cross-reference each other. During the writing process, we discussed formatting options but did not have a clear direction about what the final formatting would allow. I recommend getting clear on the format and hosting at the beginning of the process so the writers can orient their work with the final format in mind.
    ii. Length/Accessibility: During Phase 1 practitioners offered many suggestions for improving the use and accessibility of the document, including developing both a short and long version, integrating infographics, and producing webinars or short video tutorials to accompany the document. However, we did not have a plan in mind for how to accomplish the additional work that these options would require. I recommend exploration of these options –

including the human and financial resources required – as a key component of a detailed project plan.

e. Future revisions
Throughout the project, practitioners made several suggestions for how future revisions of this document would be managed, and by whom.

    i. Collect feedback: Include a QR code that links to a standardized feedback form (I am developing this as part of the current project). The feedback form will include designated fields for each section, request specific kinds of feedback (edit/addition/remove), and a field for gathering resources (links to articles, books, videos, etc.).

    ii. Develop a cycle for review: One recommendation was for a CCRJP committee to review the feedback form quarterly, and make changes once or twice a year. A second, more realistic recommendation was for a committee to review the feedback form every two years, or annually at most. The review cycle needs to take into consideration the role of the RJ Council's endorsement.

    iii. Identify who is responsible for participating in the review cycles: One suggestion was for a CCRJP committee to be responsible for this review process, possibly the "Communications" committee. This committee also needs to take into account representation, as noted in 4.b. above.

    iv. Refer to Draft 4: Draft 4 can be utilized as a resource for future revisions of the guidelines. It provides helpful insight into the frameworks that are currently influencing the shape and future of RJ.

f. Response to harm caused by RJ practitioners/process
Writers identified the importance of including a section in the guidelines that describes a response to harm(s) caused by RJ practitioners and the RJ process itself. CCRJP members echo the importance of this section. At the time of this report, we are unclear about what that response entails and who is responsible for developing and managing it. I recommend that discussions already underway about this topic be prioritized in the near future, so they can be included in the guidelines, even as a link to a separate "response to harm" document.