

SPOTLIGHT: Des Moines, IA Affiliate's Restorative Justice Programs



The NCADD Affiliate in Des Moines, IA, Employee & Family Resources (EFR), offers Restorative Justice (RJ) programs which provide a community-based alternative to the traditional criminal justice system for youth and young adults.

Restorative justice principles focus on accountability for one's actions, identifying harms that are caused by wrongdoing, and finding ways to repair the harms.

These programs hold youth accountable for their actions while providing a supportive learning environment to assist them in improving their decision-making skills for the future.

First-time offenders are often given the opportunity to avoid court involvement on the offense if they successfully complete all program requirements. EFR's restorative justice programs bring together youth and families, law enforcement, the court systems, crime victims, and communities as participants and beneficiaries of this process.

The current restorative justice offerings are "*ReThinking Drinking*" and "*Chance 4 Change*" which address alcohol and marijuana-related offenses.

ReThinking Drinking

The *ReThinking Drinking Program* addresses underage drinking through a combination of restorative justice and alcohol education.

Youth are referred to the program by juvenile courts, attorneys, or law enforcement when they are encountered in violation of alcohol offenses.

Parental involvement is also required, so youth and parent(s) must attend a strengths-based, four-hour, two-session workshop in which they discuss the alcohol incident focusing on accountability, decision-making, identifying harms and impacts, and ways to repair the harm(s) that were caused by the youth's choices regarding alcohol. At the conclusion of the sessions, each youth participant establishes an agreement to complete three to five items that will repair the harm

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of their offense.

Successful completion is dependent on each participant's compliance and completion of all program requirements.

Each participant is required to meet with the program coordinator within forty-five days of the workshop for an exit interview. For most referring authorities, if a youth successfully completes all workshop and program requirements within the designated timeframe, the case is closed and the no further court involvement is required.

However, if a youth is referred a subsequent time after successfully completing the program, they are considered ineligible for program participation, and the case is referred to the appropriate court system.

Chance 4 Change

Marijuana and paraphernalia possession offenses are integrated with the *ReThinking Drinking* model for those 18 and under.

Youth are similarly referred to the program by law enforcement, schools and/or parents and are generally given the opportunity to avoid court involvement for the offense if they successfully complete all program requirements.

In addition to the requirements of the *ReThinking Drinking* program, participants must also participate in an additional two-hour marijuana education class during which myths and facts about marijuana use are covered more extensively.

The program offers a meaningful learning opportunity for youth and their parents to address substance use issues before they become overwhelming chemical dependency issues.

For more information:

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