

# Facilitating Restorative Group Conferences

# RGC



## Participant's Guide Lesson 1: Introduction

Minnesota Department of Corrections  
with technical assistance from the  
National Institute of Corrections

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# **PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE – LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION**

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## **FACILITATING RESTORATIVE GROUP CONFERENCES TENTATIVE AGENDA**

### **Day One:**

- 8:00 Lesson One: Introduction
- 8:45 Lesson Two: Conferencing and Restorative Justice
  
- 11:30 LUNCH
  
- 12:30 Lesson Three: Understanding the Conference Participants:  
Victims, Offenders and Others in the Community
- 5:00 Break for the Day

### **Day Two:**

- 8:00 Lesson Four: Role of the Facilitator
  
- 12:15 LUNCH
  
- 1:00 Continue Lesson Four
- 1:50 Lesson Five: Further Development of Conferencing Skills
- 5:00 Break for the Day

### **Day Three:**

- 8:00 Continue Lesson Five
  
- 12:00 WORKING LUNCH – Begin Lesson Six: Next Steps
  
- 1:15 Continue Lesson Five
- 3:15 Continue Lesson Six
- 5:00 Training Complete

## **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define Restorative Group Conferencing.
- List the steps in the conferencing process.
- Select others in the group with whom you would like to have further discussion.

## WHAT IS CONFERENCING?

A restorative group conference is a face-to-face encounter between a victim or victims, the offender(s), individuals who support each of them, and others who have been affected by the incident.

Led by a trained facilitator, this encounter seeks to identify, repair and prevent harm, based in restorative justice values including meaningful accountability.

Participation of the victim is completely voluntary, and participation of the offender is based upon their willingness and readiness.

Restorative group conferences are incident-based, initiated in response to a crime or a dispute, and behavior-based, making a clear distinction between the harmful act and the actor.

Conferences focus on empowering the participants, looking at underlying causes and making referrals. Decisions are consensus-based and end in an agreement with which all participants can live.

Conferences are appropriate for use with adults or juveniles, and can be used at any point in the justice system or at any point in a person's life. However, facilitators who will work with *crimes of severe violence, domestic violence, interfamilial violence, or abuse and neglect issues will require additional training* beyond that offered in this curriculum. This is because the offenses involve much greater trauma, due to the type of offenses, the relationships between the victim and the offender, and/or repeat offenses.

(Two places to get additional training in Victim/Offender Dialogue are: through the Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation at the University of Minnesota's School of Social Work, 612-624-4923; and the Victim Offender Mediation Association, 612-874-0570, e-mail: voma@voma.org.)

## **TYPICAL STEPS IN THE PROCESS**

1. Initial contact with each offender to assess their willingness and appropriateness to participate and to give them information with which to decide about participating. (Typically, this is two steps, such as a phone call followed by a face-to-face visit with the offender and their support person.)
2. Initial contact with each victim to determine their willingness to participate and to give them information with which to decide about participating. (Typically, this is two steps, such as a phone call followed by a face-to-face visit with the victim and their support person.)
3. Identification, recruitment, and preparation of other supporters for each of the primary participants.
4. Identification, recruitment, and preparation of others who have a stake in the incident.
5. Conducting the conference itself, including potentially helping participants to come to an agreement if appropriate.
6. Appropriate follow up. (For some, this will involve monitoring the progress toward the completion of the agreement. For others, completing documentation for the host or referral agency. For still others, reporting to the court or another legal entity.)