



Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & COMMUNITY READINESS ASSESSMENT





Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions of the following entities:

The **Oregon Criminal Justice Commission** and the **Oregon Department of Justice (Crime Victim & Survivor Services Division)** for grants to build and implement a restorative justice option for survivors in our communities;

New York University's Center on Violence and Recovery for their expert training and technical advising;

Our local systems and community partners for their spirit of collaboration and deep commitment to the well-being of our communities.

About Six Rivers

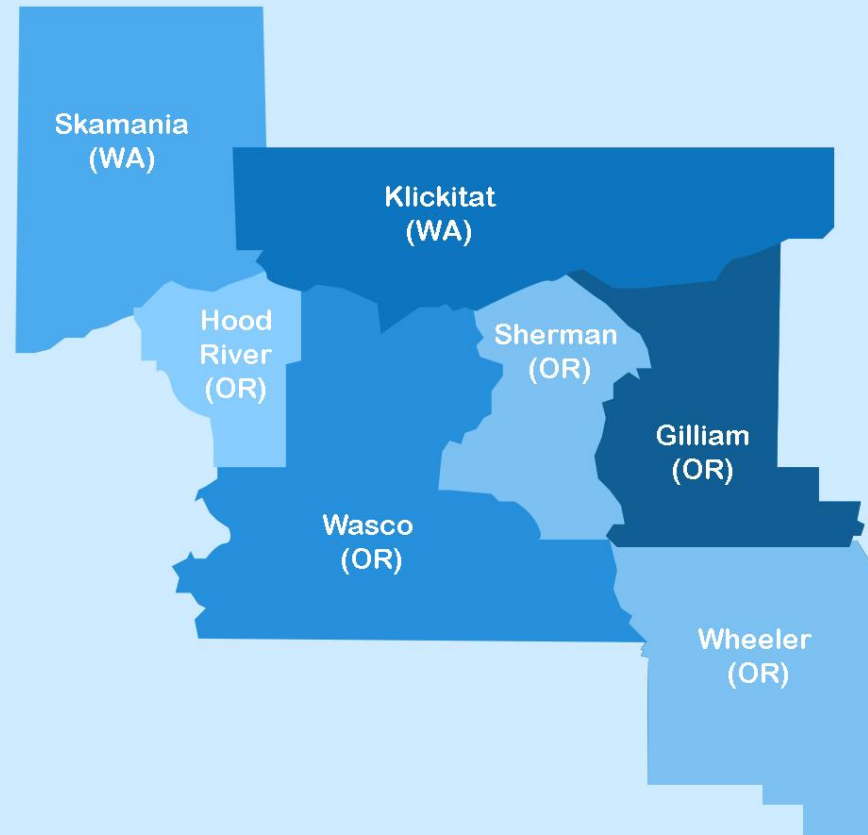
- Non-profit, community dispute resolution center, serving 5 counties in OR, 2 counties in WA, and Treaty Fishing Access Sites served by the Columbia River Intertribal Police.
- 20 years of services including: mediation, restorative practices, training and facilitation.
- Roots in Wasco/Sherman counties: In the early 2000's Wasco and Sherman Counties, and the City of The Dalles, provided financial support to get Six Rivers started.



If you live in these 7 counties,
we welcome you to use the
services Six Rivers offers!



Services: Mediation, Facilitation, Conflict Coaching, Restorative Justice, Conflict Resolution Trainings



What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice is a process that addresses acts of harm between people.

It centers the needs of survivors and impacted community members and supports **healing** and **safety**.

It encourages offenders to **take responsibility** for their actions and **to repair** the harm they caused.

It is a **voluntary, flexible** process that can be adapted to meet the needs of communities and participants.



How Is Restorative Justice a Survivor-Centered Process?

Restorative justice provides survivors a voice throughout the process.

It encourages justice and accountability that address a survivor's unique needs.

It increases safety—re-occurrence of harm is reduced.

It supports healing.

Survivors report high levels of satisfaction in the process and outcome.

History of Project

Organizational history -- Six Rivers staff has many years combined experience in restorative practices.

Summer 2021 - Spring 2022 – Oregon legislature created the Restorative Justice Grant Program (RJGP) to build and expand survivor-centered restorative justice programs across the state. Six Rivers talked with system and community partners to see if there was interest in building a program in the Gorge.

Summer 2022 - Six Rivers convened system and community partners to form a project Design Team. Began to plan and design a survivor-centered restorative justice option for survivors of harm in our communities.

December 2022 - Hired New York University's Center on Violence and Recovery as training and technical advisors.

Spring/Summer 2023 – Conducted Community Readiness Assessment to aid in program design.



Getting Community Input

Community Readiness Model, from National Center for Community & Organizational Readiness

Widely recognized as an effective tool for communities to build effective, sustainable programs to address community harms. Developed in 1994 at Colorado State University with the aim of building the capacity of communities/tribal nations so that they might recognize and build on the strengths from within to begin a healing process of healthy change.

NYU's Center on Violence and Recovery provided:

- guidance on creating our interview tool,
- training in conducting interviews and collecting qualitative data,
- guidance in adapting the interview tool into a community survey.



Interviews with Community Leadership

Interviews -- Overview

The purpose of our interviews: to assess our communities' attitudes, knowledge, efforts, and resources to address harms between people.

We interviewed 11 community leaders (the community readiness model recommends 8-9 interviews), including both high- and mid-level leadership in Hood River and The Dalles.

We interviewed leadership from four community realms: law enforcement, service providers, victim advocates, and professionals in the criminal justice system. Our interviews included indigenous and Hispanic leadership.

Interviews were confidential and lasted an hour.

Our goal was to interview enough participants to reach "saturation," when we began to hear the same information from different participants. We met our goal but plan to continue the interviews informally to continue the deep community learning.

Interviews – Key Results

Interview participants said that accountability can include things like these:

- Acknowledging the harm caused,
- Taking responsibility,
- Repairing the impacts of the harm as best as possible,
- Responding to the needs of the person harmed,
- Expressing remorse,
- Addressing the underlying issues that led to the harm,
- Preventing future harm.



Interviews – Key Results

Participants also said:

- Accountability can be highly personal. The person who experienced the harm should be the one to define accountability.
- Incarceration can sometimes be part of accountability, and sometimes it does not provide meaningful accountability. Sometimes it can cause additional harms.



Interviews – Key Results

After an act of harm, a person who has been harmed needs these things:

- To be believed,
- Safety,
- Confidentiality,
- To have their wishes respected,
- Options and choices,
- Healing resources
- Accountability from the one who harmed them.



Interviews – Key Results

After an act of harm, the person who caused the harm needs these things:

- Internal motivation to change,
- Accountability to the person harmed,
- To repair the impacts of the harm as best as possible,
- To address the underlying issues that led to the harm,
- Evidence-based interventions to help change behavior,
- Social connections that encourage lasting behavior change,
- A path to re-enter the community safely.





Other Insights from the Interviews

Leaders in our community care deeply about the wellbeing of our community. They bring a wealth of experience, expertise, and dedication to their work.

Leaders in our community have become skilled at inter-organizational collaboration to solve large problems in our communities.

Promoting healthy social connections in our community strengthens the safety of our community.

Issues in our communities that contribute to harm and can be barriers to change include:

- Mental health and substance use disorders,
- Trauma, including historical and cultural trauma.
- Poverty and housing insecurity
- Racism



Other Insights from the Interviews

Leaders are open to and/or excited about a survivor-centered restorative justice option to address acts of harm in our communities. They advise these things:

- Participation needs to be fully voluntary for both parties,
- Both parties need enough information to make informed choices,
- There needs to be follow-through on repair agreements.



Community Surveys



Survey Overview

- Survey questions came from the best interview questions.
- We included both multiple choice and open-ended questions.
- Options for multiple choice questions came from the most frequent interview responses.
- We created both English and Spanish versions of the survey.
- Researchers consider the threshold for usable survey data to be 30 participants.



Where did we publicize the survey?

We asked our interviewees, project design team, and system and community partners to share the survey links with their networks.

Local newspapers --
*Columbia Gorge News &
Columbia Community
Connections.*

Wasco County Fair (and
other local events)

Facebook & Instagram ads

Our website.



Survey Results

Who did you hear from?

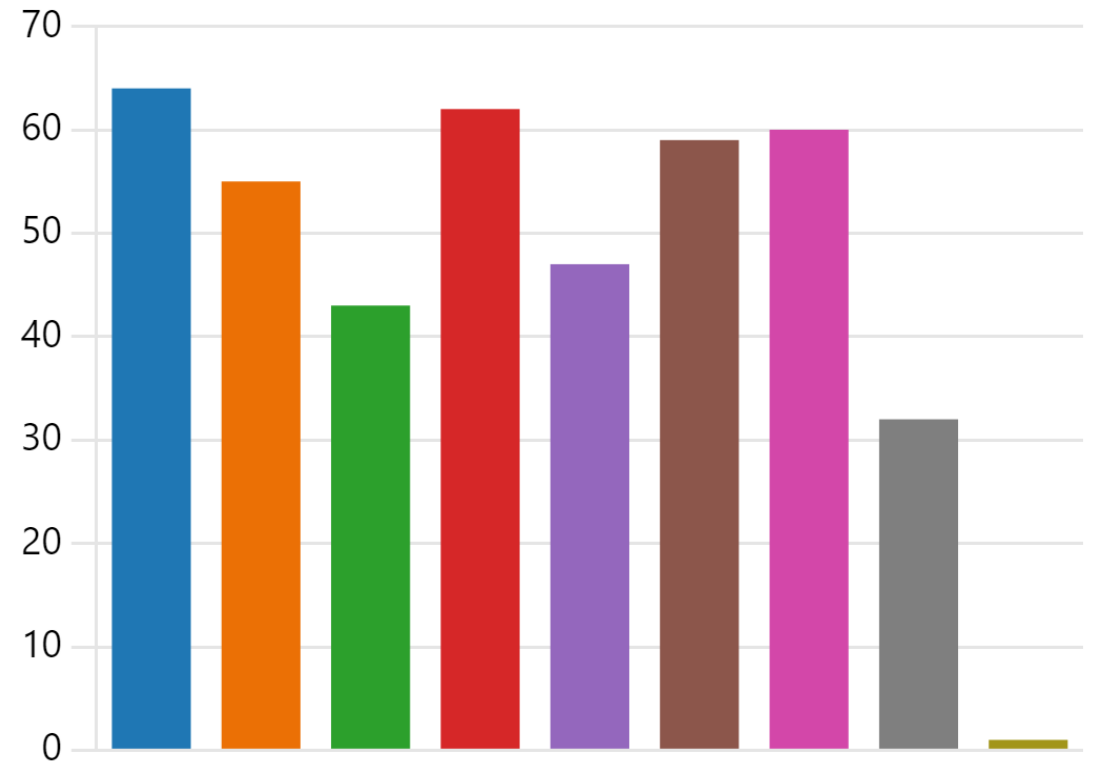
- 64 respondents, as of 9/7/2023
- Community members from all over the Mid-Columbia region, but mostly in Hood River and The Dalles
- People who cared! The survey took an average of 14 minutes to complete.

I haven't done the survey. Can I still complete it?

Yes! We'll be collecting survey results throughout our pilot year to continue our community learning.

What does accountability look like to you? Check all that apply.

- Taking responsibility for the harm caused -- 64
- Repairing the harm caused as best as possible -- 55
- Expressing remorse -- 43
- Acknowledging the harm that was caused -- 62
- Responding to the needs of the harm party -- 47
- Addressing the underlying issues that led to the act of harm -- 59
- Learning new skills to prevent future harm -- 60
- Incarceration, depending on circumstances -- 32
- Incarceration, all or most of the time -- 1





Survey Highlights – What else does accountability look like?

The responsible person needs to be honest that they did something wrong. They need to apologize and acknowledge that causing harm was a choice they made.

Accountability includes repair—and not repeating the harm.

Harm impacts the community and any effective response to harm must include the community.

Accountability goes beyond the individuals directly involved in an act of harm. It includes addressing larger systemic issues which contribute to harmful choices.

Accountability includes crime prevention.

All parties involved in harm should be respected.

Accountability – Survey Quotes

“Making sure victims are whole. Mentally, physically, emotionally.”

“Respectfully processing mistakes made and coming up with a plan that satisfactorily addresses the harm caused in order for all to find resolution and healing.”

“Sometimes accountability includes repair/apology to the greater community (for example, there may [be] one specific victim but the incident caused fear or trauma amongst neighbors as well).”

“It involves seeing the impacts of one's actions and that is best achieved by a strong community base[d] on intention, compassion, vulnerability and empathy.”

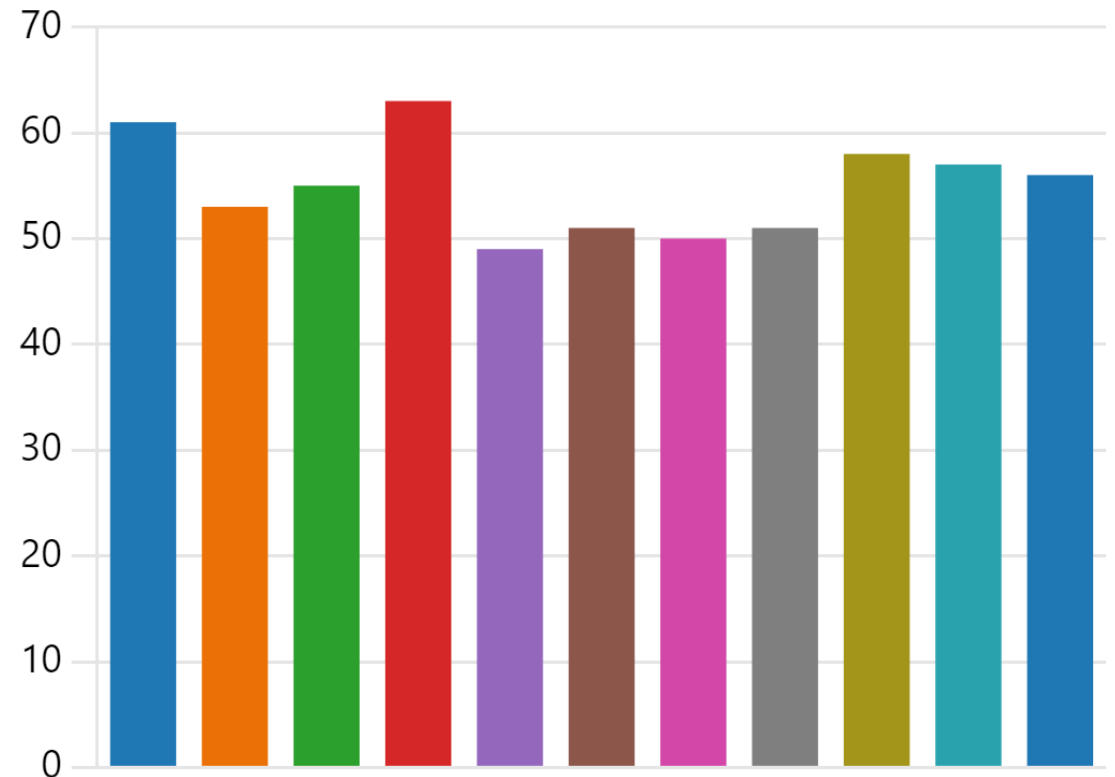
“Addressing systemic issues in community (governance, familial, etc..) that allowed this to happen in the first place.”

“I just like it when people admit that they were wrong.”



What do survivors need after an act of harm? Check all that apply.

- To be believed -- 61
- Confidentiality -- 53
- To have their wishes respected -- 55
- Safety --63
- Informal Support (peers, family, etc.) -- 49
- Support/connection with those with similar lived experience -- 51
- Accountability from the person who did the act of harm -- 50
- To resolve the impacts of the act of harm -- 51
- Trauma-informed support services (i.e. mental health counseling) -- 58
- To get basic needs met (medical, housing, food, etc.) -- 57
- Access to options and choices -- 56



Highlight: Every option received at least a 76% selection rate.



Survey Highlights – What else do survivors need after an act of harm?

The person who has been harmed needs to be believed, and their wishes need to be respected.

They need agency and autonomy.

They need choices for how to resolve the harm and move forward.

Efforts to pursue accountability should not re-traumatize or make things worse for the survivor.

The community plays a significant role in addressing the needs of the survivors.

Survivor Needs – Survey Quotes

“Choice in how they want to heal and hold perpetrators accountable.”

“Space to ask for more, fluid system navigation.”

“Minimal re-traumatization within the system.”

“To be ‘in the driver's seat’ for any restorative justice, so it is all their choice. Otherwise it can be retraumatizing.”

“To feel empowered. Often assistance can make you feel even more like a victim instead of a survivor & thriver.”

“Validation.”

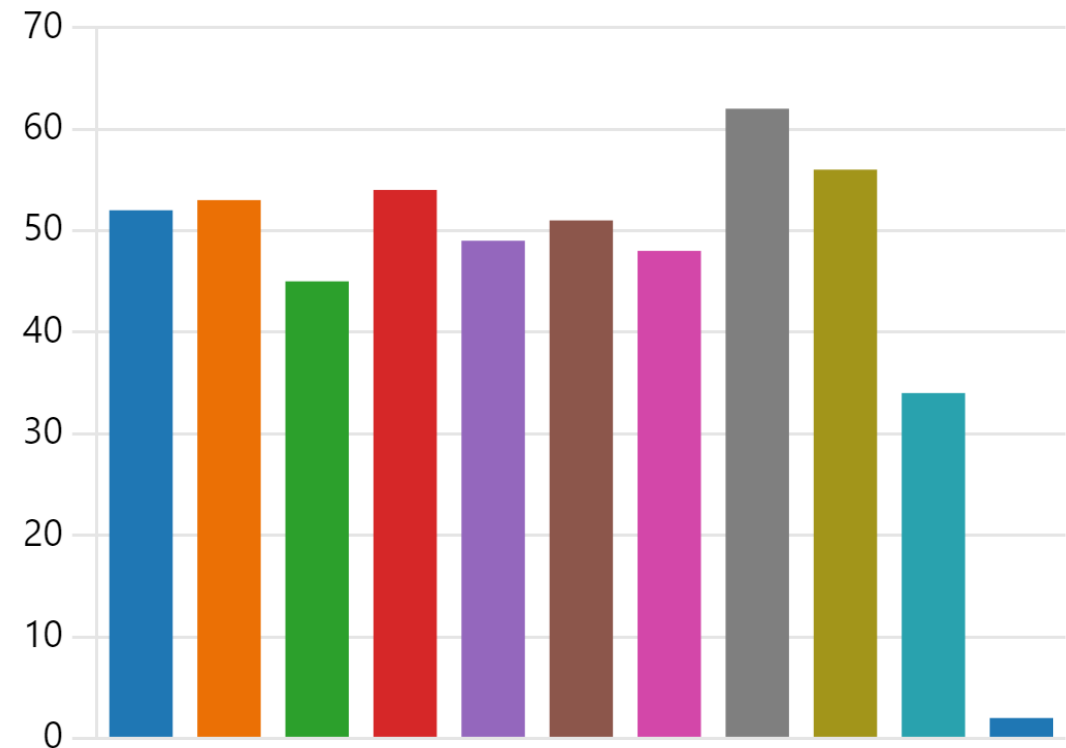
“Access to positive, joyful life experiences that can help them move on from the harm and have other emotional focuses in their life.”

“Support from their community to speak on the topic to support others who might be facing similar acts of harm.”



What do people who cause harm need after an act of harm? Check all that apply.

- Internal motivation to change -- 52
- Accountability to the person who was harmed -- 53
- To resolve the impacts of the harm -- 45
- Evidence-based interventions to help change behavior -- 54
- Informal supports (peers, family, etc.) -- 49
- Support/connection with those with similar life experience who have successfully addressed harms -- 51
- To get basic needs met (housing, food, etc.) -- 48
- Resources to resolve underlying issues (i.e. access to treatment for substance use disorder) -- 62
- A path to re-enter the community safely -- 56
- Punishment, depending on circumstances -- 34
- Punishment, all or most of the time -- 2





Survey Highlights – What else do people who caused harm need after an act of harm?

People who cause harm can change. Support to help them is necessary.

Opportunities to repair the harm they caused.

People who have caused harm must show that they have changed.

Healing past trauma -- Harmed people harm people.



Needs of People Who Have Caused Harm – Survey Quotes

“A true plan for going forward & an accountability partner for longer than the legal ramifications take.”

“May need help understanding their own trauma and experiences; opportunity to make amends to others they have harmed beyond this specific event.”

“Demonstrate how they’ve changed and what services worked for them and why.”

“This is just a note. Punishment is not something I care about as much as I care about monitored corrections to stop further harm to others or self.”

Survey Highlights – What does it take for behavior to change?

People can change, with the right circumstances.

Understanding the impact of an act of harm.

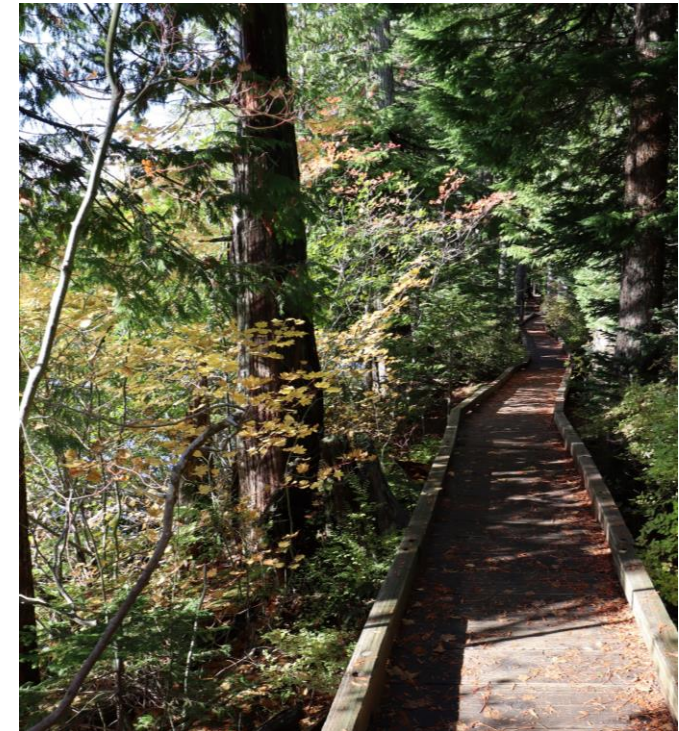
Self-motivation, personal commitment, and the desire to change.

The community must have resources in place to support change, especially mental and behavioral health. Basic needs must be addressed.

Change takes hard work and is a long-term process.

Sometimes, negative consequences may be necessary to motivate or sustain change.

Empathy and safety for the person who caused harm are important for positive change to happen.



Behavior Change – Survey Quotes

“Accountability, self discipline, self restraint, counseling, and commitment to change.”

“Intention to be a better person.”

“awareness that a change is necessary and a clear path to do so, understanding the negative impact the current behavior is causing, a desire, willingness and discipline to change (training/coaching/mentoring).”

“Internal motivation, support, education, a stable environment”

“security/safety that change is supported; understanding why past behaviors were chosen and why they don't work anymore.”

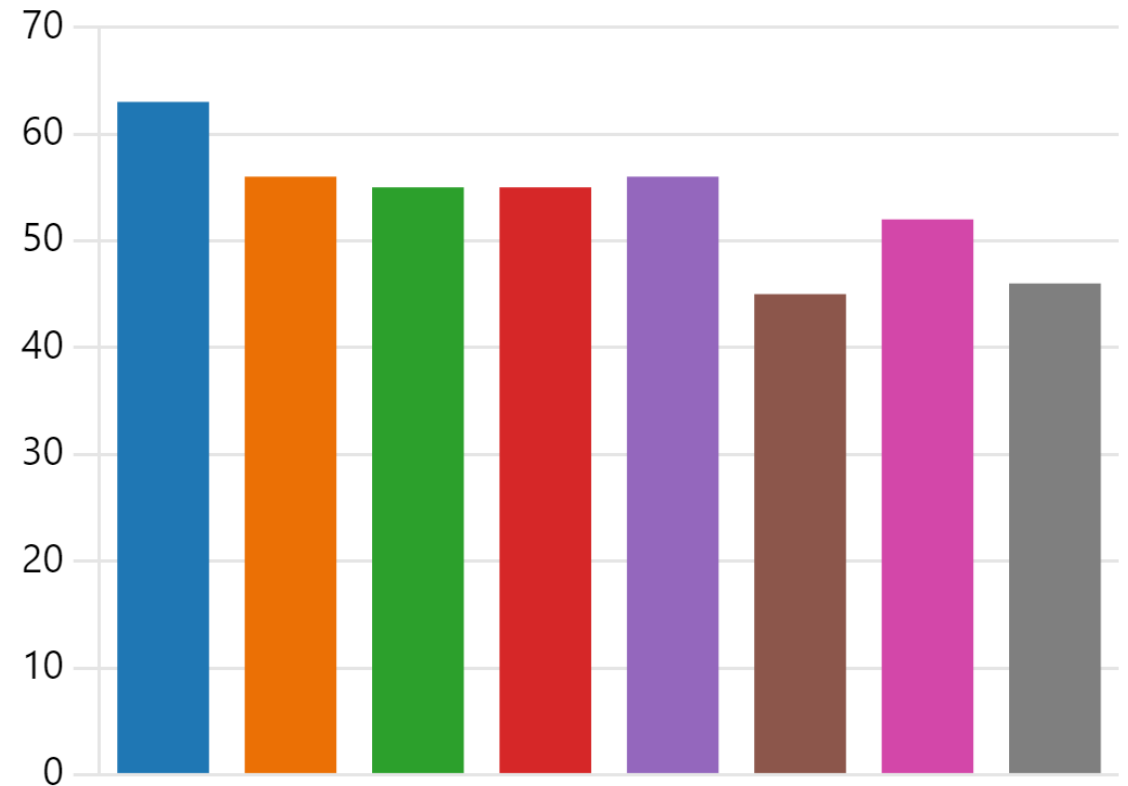
“On going support /access to resources. Offender needs to recognize what they did was abuse and they need to want to change”

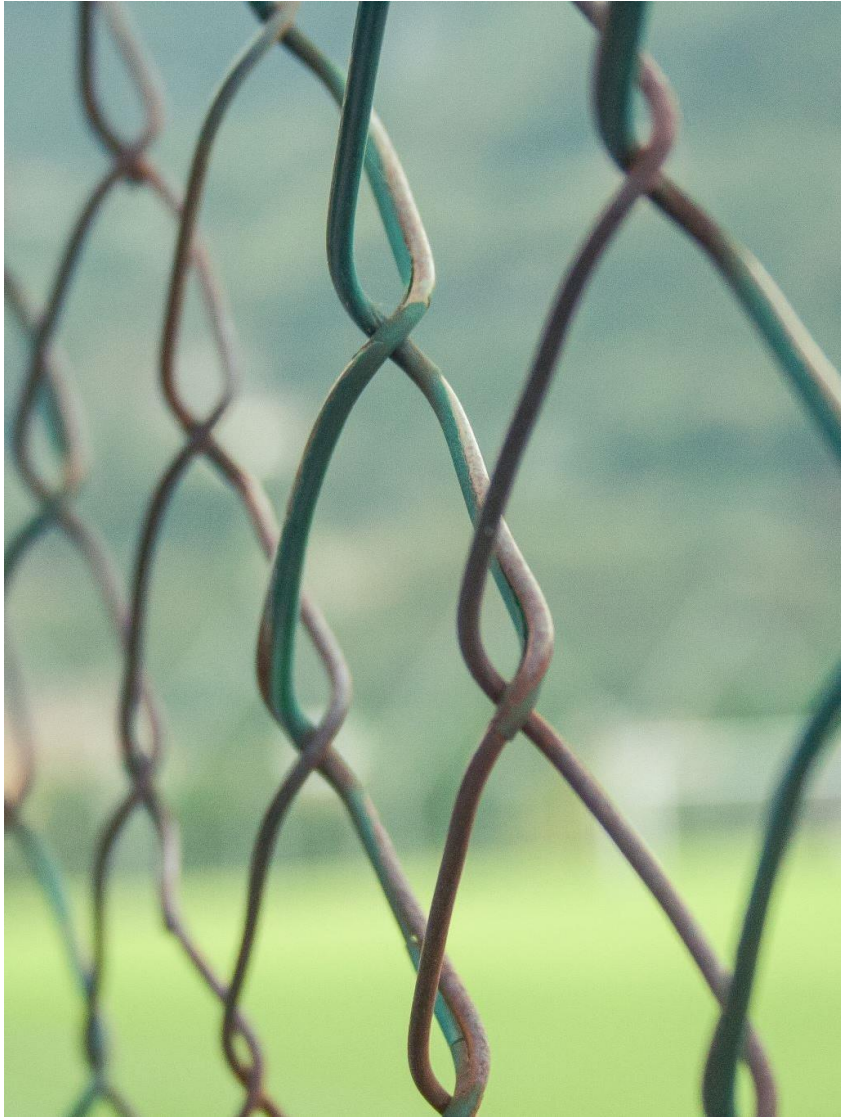
“Time, circumstance, support, accountability, patience, respect, but mostly love.”



Which areas of our community are impacted by harms between people? Check all that apply.

- The families directly involved -- 63
- Extended family -- 56
- Neighborhoods -- 55
- Schools -- 55
- Workplaces -- 56
- Faith Communities -- 45
- Cultural and ethnic groups -- 52
- Natural resources (i.e. wasting salmon or habitat destruction) -- 47





Survey Highlights – What barriers exist in our communities for families/communities to be safe?

Not enough drug treatment and mental health resources.

Poverty – people not being able to meet their basic needs, especially housing.

Lack of healthy connections and communication skills.

Racial and cultural biases.

Easy access to weapons and drugs like fentanyl.

Cultural stigmas around seeking services.

Fear or distrust of the legal system.

Barriers for Safety – Survey Quotes

“Lack of economic stability (housing, food, meaningful employment, educational opportunities) Lack of places to go to ‘escape’ a situation or take a time-out Lack of health care (of all types) and chronic pain management.”

“fear, lack of communication skills and experience with difficult conversations”

“Lack of preventative interventions for youth/families within the community. Complicated pathways for support services. Bias and judgment by people of the majority privileged population.”

“Lack of affordable housing, lack of dependable public transportation, dangerous drugs like Fentanyl”

“Cost of services, easy access to drugs and alcohol, as well as weapons. A culture of acceptance for violence.”

“Social acceptability, people’s health outcomes are influenced by the conditions in which they live and are called social determinants of health. Systemic racism, bias, and discrimination; economic instability; concentrated poverty; and limited housing, education, and healthcare access drive health inequities, such as violence.”

Community involvement is an important part of the Circles of Peace restorative justice program. How interested are you in being involved in the Circles of Peace program at Six Rivers?

Very interested	14
Interested	23
Neutral	13
Not interested	5
Unsure	7



Highlight: 58% of respondents are either interested or very interested in being involved in Circles of Peace.



Conclusion

Summary

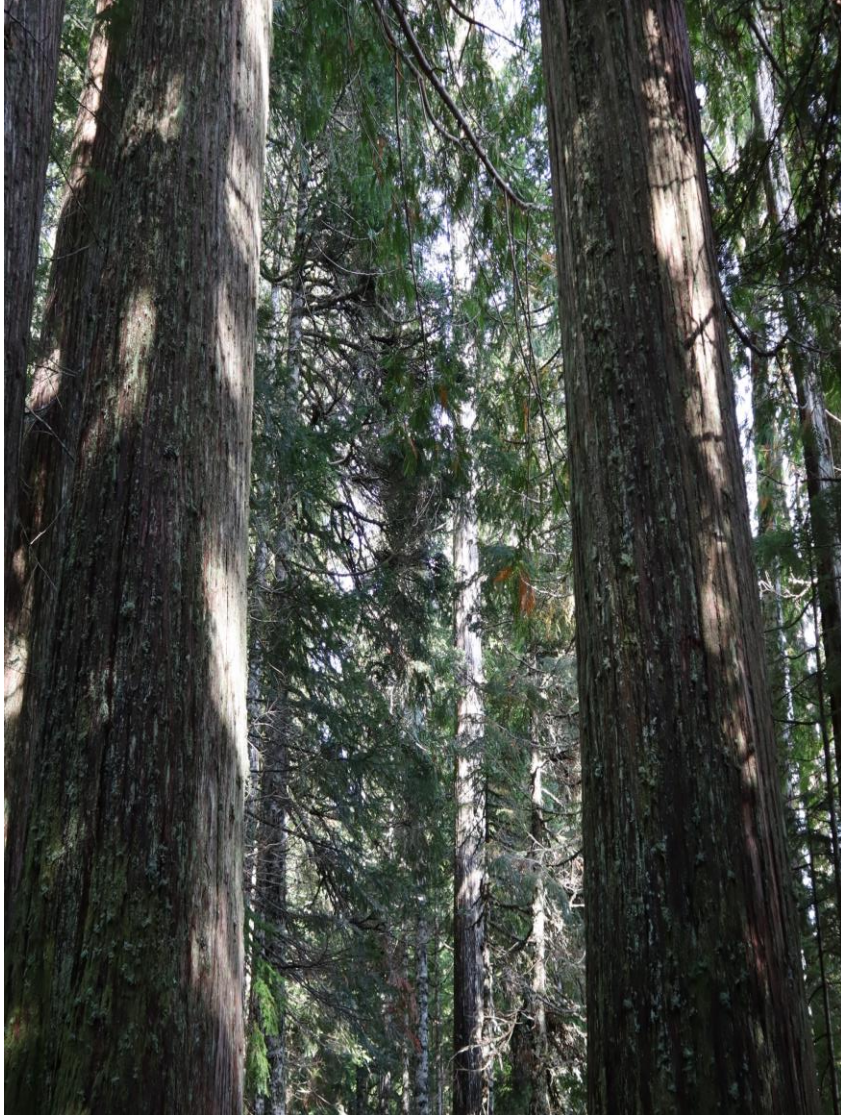
Results from the community survey closely match results from our interviews with community leadership. Researchers call this “triangulation,” and it is an indication of reliable results.

Community values around accountability, survivor needs, safety, and behavior change are in alignment with core restorative justice values.

Participants in both the interviews and community survey welcome additional resources and choices for those who have experienced harm.

There is support within this community for this pilot program.





Next Steps

Circles of Peace – Pilot year 2024

- Community-led
- Twenty years of proven safety and effectiveness
- Established programs in Arizona, Utah, Washington DC, Vermont
- Seven additional programs currently being built across the country

After our pilot year, we will refine the program and seek continued funding.

For more information, contact Debra Pennington Davis at debrap@6rivers.org.