



COMMUNITY MEDIATION CENTER *fostering peace, civility & cooperation*

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June 21, 2011

To: Law & Justice Interim Committee
The Montana State Legislature

From: Connie Campbell, Executive Director, Community Mediation Center

Re: Written Testimony in support of Restorative Justice Study

The Community Mediation Center has a Restorative Justice Program for Youth. Youth Probation invited us in 2005, to form Youth Justice Councils that would provide a diversion for youth who had committed misdemeanors to complete a disposition without getting a criminal record. Since it's inception, we have had over 177 youth complete the program. An amazing 73% have not reoffended after completing their disposition.

An offender is sentenced to complete justice council where a group of community volunteers meet with the offender and their parents/guardians. The justice council works to hold the offender accountable for the crime committed and the harm caused. The victim may be invited to be part of the process, through Victim Offender Mediation, a victim-offender dialogue. The council and offender agree to a disposition that is unique for each youth. This disposition establishes the parameters to begin to repair the harm and to restore the offender to the community. This process usually takes between 3 and 6 months.

I understand that there are a variety of Youth Justice Councils throughout the state. Unfortunately, they have the same names, but do not operate in the same manner. In addition, a study based just on the programs of the Department of Corrections would not be sufficient.

Because we are committed to the principles of restorative justice, we are encouraged that the legislature is studying this important process.

I encourage the Law and Justice Interim Committee to:

- Develop an understanding of restorative justice and the local and state initiatives in Montana;
- Propose legislation to

Law and Justice Interim Committee Meeting
June 21, 2011

Connie Campbell, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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- strengthen the ability of a judge to sentence an offender to a restorative justice program for adults and youth;
- permit both diversionary and non-diversionary restorative justice programs for youth and adults;
- ensure that the community corrections legislation reflects all courts and local communities;
- Support the Attorney General's Restorative Justice Program to co-ordinate restorative justice activities in the state and to hold restorative justice conferences.

Thank you for your consideration of this written testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,

Connie Campbell
Executive Director
Community Mediation Center



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