

MEETING SUMMARY

REGIONAL LAW SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 26, 2015

7:30 – 9:00 A.M.

Seattle City Hall, Bertha Knight Landes Room
600 4th Ave., Seattle, WA 98104

Theme:

This meeting included a presentation and interactive role-play on restorative justice from Polly David and Marcus Stubblefield. Sue Rahr then presented on the innovative approach being implemented at police academy to train law enforcement officers to be “guardians”.

Restorative Justice:

Polly Davis, King County Alternative Dispute Resolution

Marcus Stubblefield, King County Juvenile Systems Integration Coordinator (PSB)

Marcus Stubblefield and Polly Davis presented on Restorative Justice efforts in King County and led a role play exercise to demonstrate the process of a Restorative Justice circle. (Note: Restorative Justice and Transformative Justice generally refer to the same practices.)

Restorative Justice is an alternative to the typical practices of conflict resolution, including the court system and school-based discipline. It is not a new concept, but it's new to the system. Practices come from various indigenous traditions of resolving conflict, including the Maori. The practice is an alternative way to achieve the goal of safe communities. It is a community-based process and in implementing Restorative Justice projects, it's important that the “system” does not overwhelm community processes already in place.

Restorative justice is a process of repairing harm that was done to a relationship – and is not limited to Criminal Justice. The process allows individuals to connect and examine the “why” of an incident in a respectful way and come to an agreement (even if it's an agreement to disagree). When people are punished they're sent away and when they come back they're not welcomed back. Restorative Justice gives people the skills to repair relationship and communicate effectively.

Examples of implementation within King County include programs at Garfield to implement talking circles and internal management systems within the classroom that address issues without excluding kids from learning. At Walker High School, every week begins with a talking circle where students discuss issues from the weekend. Teachers report that even in early implementation, the approach is having

a positive impact because after airing the issues, students can put them aside and focus on learning. There is now a desire to introduce the concepts earlier, in middle schools.

In the Criminal Justice System, the Restorative Justice pilot program provides an alternative for a limited set of crimes. The circles will include the juvenile, the person harmed, an adult mediator, and a peer/student mediator.

Talking circles and other Restorative Justice tools can also be used to resolve workplace conflict. In some situations, a labor investigation may remove an employee from the job temporarily. If there is no finding and the employee returns to work, reentry circles can help reintegrate someone into the workforce.

While there has been some concern that Restorative Justice is “soft” on crime, the current system does not actually provide any skills to change behavior. While Restorative Justice takes time to get results, those results can be much more significant than in the traditional justice system.

Ms. Davis and Mr. Stubblefield led a role-play exercise to demonstrate a talking circle, which allowed all those involved to speak without interruption through the use of a “talking piece” and led to an outcome and action steps that were agreed upon by all. Contrary to the traditional Criminal Justice system, Restorative Justice gives everyone responsibility, rather than setting up a perpetrator to fail. The action steps are written down so that everyone has a common understanding of what was agreed to within the circle.

There are a range of activities within Restorative Justice and the best tool can be selected depending on the situation. Mr. Stubblefield and Ms. Davis encouraged the group to take action by talking to colleagues, doing research on Restorative Justice efforts, experiment with the techniques, and attend a circle. The process may not really make sense until it is seen in action. [The Center for Ethical Leadership](#) provides training and is a good resource for additional information.

Training the Guardians of Democracy: Transforming the Culture of Policing in Washington State

Sue Rahr

Executive Director, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission

Sue Rahr opened her presentation with a short video from King 5 news profiling the recent changes in curriculum for Washington State law enforcement officers.

[Link to video](#)

When Ms. Rahr began her position at the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, she found that the training curriculum was run similar to a boot camp and taught recruits through humiliation stress, memorization, and the fear of getting

cut from the program. While these techniques may work well in the military where following orders is key, in law enforcement officers must be confident in making their own decisions.

The term “guardians of democracy” describes the new approach, which connects law enforcement with a higher purpose of honor and responsibility within a democracy. This improves job satisfaction and retention, particularly among millennial employees who want to do something that matters. The approach teaches cops self-regulation, provides motivation for performance, and better matches the policing needed in a democracy. The approach is based on what works for teaching adults, it develops decision-making skills, and instills values to improve public trust in officers.

The training curriculum for new law enforcement recruits was modified and new symbols and rituals (such as handing out a copy of the constitution) were introduced. Instead of memorization, recruits are taught critical thinking. Training still contains components to test physical and mental stress. Emphasis on Defensive Tactics and Firearms training has actually increased and now includes components based on behavioral science. Previously, situational tests would evaluate the ability to make a physical arrest, but now recruits are taught to de-escalate and a satisfactory outcome may not include a physical arrest. Officers who are confident in defensive abilities are able to use these skills more wisely in the field. The guardian role does not eliminate the role of the warrior, but warrior becomes only one dimension of the ideal officer.

About 15-20% of the recruits are military veterans and the values of defending the constitution resonate particularly well for those who may have lost friends in the military. Ms. Rahr shared a story of a military veteran who explained he was done being a soldier and that’s why he became a cop. The emphasis on law enforcement’s role and responsibilities in a democracy instill an appropriate level of gravity.

In addition to the new recruit training curriculum, a variety of other efforts apply similar behavioral and social science evidence:

- “Blue Courage”: a motivational program to develop healthy habits and reinforce the honor of the profession. This includes a greater focus on academics, not just physical skills.
- Crisis Intervention Training: trains officers to approach the situation in order to understand and address the real problem in contrast to “hook ‘em and book ‘em” mentality
- “Justice Based Policing” (procedural justice principles – LEED(Listen and Explain with Equity and Dignity)): is based on evidence that shows an individual’s perception of law enforcement is based more on how they are treated than the on the practical outcome of the interaction. Simple adjustments such as not handcuffing people in front of their children can make a big difference in the interaction.

- “Respect Effect”
- “Tactical Social Interaction” (from DARPA project)
- “Bias and Perception” (under construction)

The new curriculum is being evaluated in a 5-year longitudinal study to measure the actual impacts. While many law enforcement agencies across the state are already applying the principles, efforts are underway make it available across the state.