COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNMENTS IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Restorative Justice

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Purpose

- This presentation focuses on collaborative relationships between restorative justice (RJ) programs and governments.

- It discusses why collaborative relationships are important and how they can be developed and maintained.

- This will help groups with the challenging and exciting process of working more collaboratively if they wish to do so.
Why Should We Think About Collaboration?

- RJ programs often involve collaborative relationships, and there is lots of interest in working “collaboratively” or “in partnership.” It’s important to consider:
  - Why this could be beneficial
  - What it means to have genuinely collaborative relationships
  - What kinds of values and skills are required

- As will be discussed later, many benefits can result from working collaboratively. For example, collaboration can increase the ability of groups to take action and make better decisions together.
Roles of Community and Government

- Communities and governments can work together to address justice issues effectively.

- Both communities and governments have unique roles, distinctive strengths and limitations.

- Groups need to find ways to be flexible and work together while respecting each others’ independence and mandates.
What is RJ?

- There are many definitions of RJ. It is hard to find one that reflects all the ways it is understood.

- For the purpose of this presentation, RJ in the criminal justice context is:
  
  “An approach to justice that focuses on addressing the harm caused by crime while holding the offender responsible for his or her actions, by providing an opportunity for the parties directly affected by crime – victim(s), offender and community – to identify and address their needs in the aftermath of a crime.”
RJ programs in the criminal justice sector are often delivered by community-based organizations, faith groups, and Aboriginal organizations. They may be supported or delivered by governments, and often involve justice agencies.

Schools, universities, business associations, and other groups and organizations are also involved in many RJ programs.
What are Communities, Governments and Partnerships?

- The term “community” is used broadly to refer to the various ways it is understood in RJ. For example:
  - A geographic location
  - People who belong to an organization or cultural group

- “Governments” includes municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments. For the purpose of this presentation, it also includes justice agencies.

- “Partnerships” involve working together over a period of time and sharing responsibilities for goals and services in the justice field.
What is Collaboration?

- A type of relationship that is ideally based on:
  - Trust
  - Respect
  - Mutual commitment to the relationship
  - Mutual accountability
  - Openness to hearing each others’ perspectives and ideas

- A collaborative relationship should exist for a specific purpose.
Who Might Be Involved in these Collaborative Relationships?

- RJ programs
- Community groups
- Justice agencies
- Government officials
- People from health, education, social services, recreation, and other sectors
- Businesses
- And many more!
What Does Working Collaboratively Mean?

- Respecting the mandates and capacities of each member of the group.

- Understanding that some decisions will be made together and others will be made separately.

- Members of the group can disagree while maintaining positive, respectful interactions.

- Groups that work collaboratively often make decisions by consensus. This means that members have the opportunity to share their perspective, feel they were heard and can support the resulting decision.
How Can We Work More Collaboratively?

- Collaboration is hard work! It requires a set of values, principles and skills.
- Groups may have to change their organizational culture(s) and their way of working together.
- They may need to learn new skills and develop new processes.
Values that Support Collaboration

- Collaborative relationships in the RJ field are closely connected to values such as:
  - Inclusivity
  - Responsiveness
  - Shared responsibility
  - Mutual accountability
  - Integration
Principles, Skills & Strategies

- Develop positive relationships between community members and government officials.
- Demonstrate commitment to restorative values and use RJ processes in everything the group does.
- Develop the capacity and expertise to support collaboration.
Principles, Skills & Strategies continued...

- Develop a shared vision and clear goals and objectives for the group.

- Develop clear boundaries about the kinds of decisions, actions and processes included within the collaborative relationship.

- Be open to shared ownership (this means finding ways to make decisions and deliver services together when appropriate.)
Benefits of Collaborative Relationships

- Expanded leadership
- Enhanced problem solving
- Enhanced capacity to take action
- Increased accountability between group members
- Improved public confidence
- Improved public safety, crime prevention, and justice efficiency
- More sustainable programs
Challenges to Collaboration

- Historic roles and responsibilities (we’ve always done things this way – why change now?)
- Misunderstanding about the nature of consensus and collaboration
- Lack of buy in, positional thinking or unwillingness to relinquish control
- Lack of time, skills and resources
What Can Result from Working More Collaboratively?

- More stable, committed, trusting relationships
- A broader perspective
- More innovative ideas
- The ability to access resources from a wider range of sources
- Better integration
- Better outcomes, since learning from and about each other may lead to better services
How Can We Get Started?

- Work through the discussion questions on the next slide
- Discuss the ideas in the Collaborative Assessment Guide
- Find some resources, such as those listed at the end of this presentation
- Involve people with experience and skills in working collaboratively
Discussion Questions

- What are some things we do well in terms of working collaboratively?

- What things are challenging for us in terms of working collaboratively?

- Are there ways we could or should work more collaboratively? If so, how?

- Do we need help to work more collaboratively? If so, where can we get it?
Some Resources

- Collaborative Assessment Guide