



# Community Restorative Court 2023 Annual Report

Dane County Department of Human Services  
Prevention & Early Intervention



## Who We Are

Community Restorative Court (CRC) is a pre-charge program offered as an alternative to the traditional criminal justice process. CRC uses a restorative justice model that includes Respondents (those who committed the offense), Victims, and volunteer community members known as Peacemakers who partake in a structured process to repair the harm caused by the offense. This holistic model gives everyone a voice, ownership and a sense of community through the resolution process.

CRC receives referrals exclusively from the District Attorney's Office and law enforcement agencies in Dane County. If a Respondent chooses to participate in the program, an intake and a Restorative Justice Circle are held where the Respondent, the Victim (if they choose to participate), a CRC facilitator, and the Peacemakers agree upon a Repair Harm Agreement. Once a Respondent meets all the terms of the Repair Harm Agreement, their case is closed. If they choose not to participate, do not engage with CRC, or do not complete the terms of the Repair Harm Agreement, their case is sent back to the referring agency.

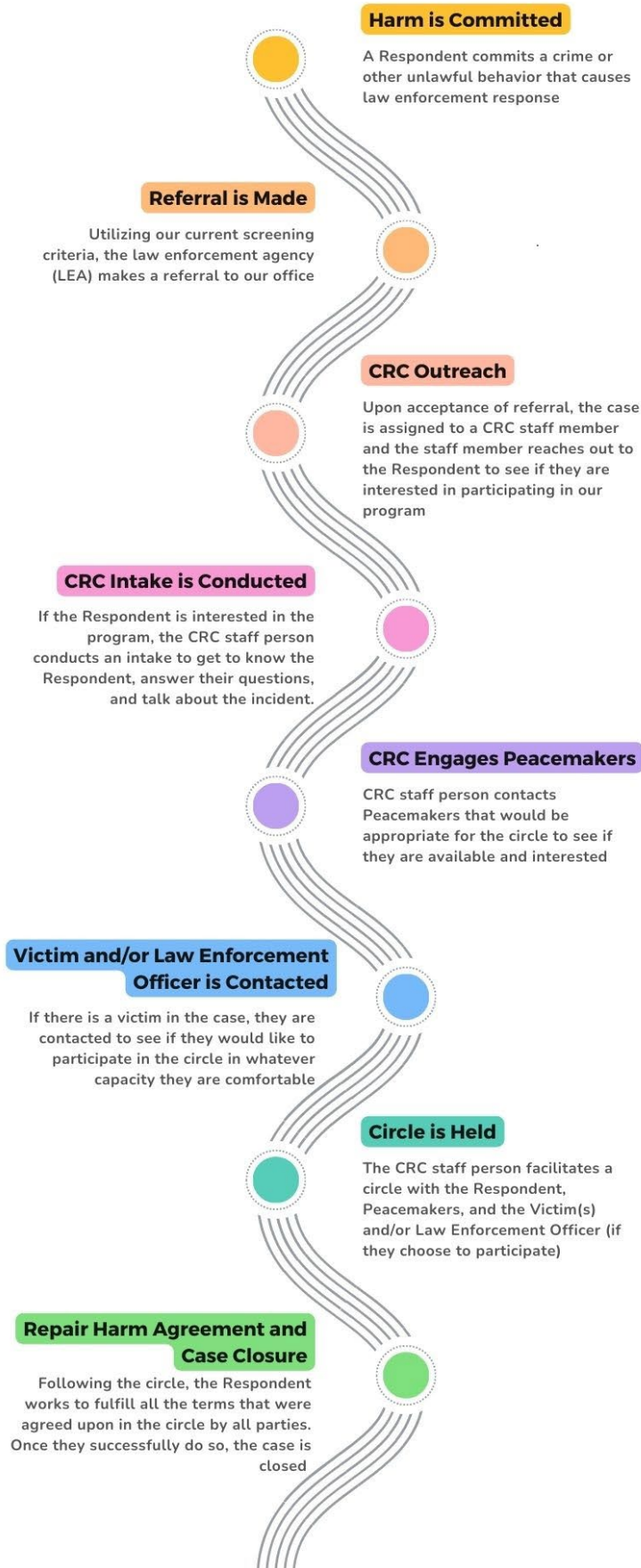
### Who Do We Serve

- 17-25 year olds that accept responsibility for their actions and do not have a severe or violent criminal record
- DA Referrals (pre- and post-charge): any misdemeanor or felony cases they deem eligible IF the victim agrees to CRC
- Law Enforcement Agency Referrals: municipal citations for battery, disorderly conduct, obstructing/resisting an officer, theft, criminal damage to property, trespassing

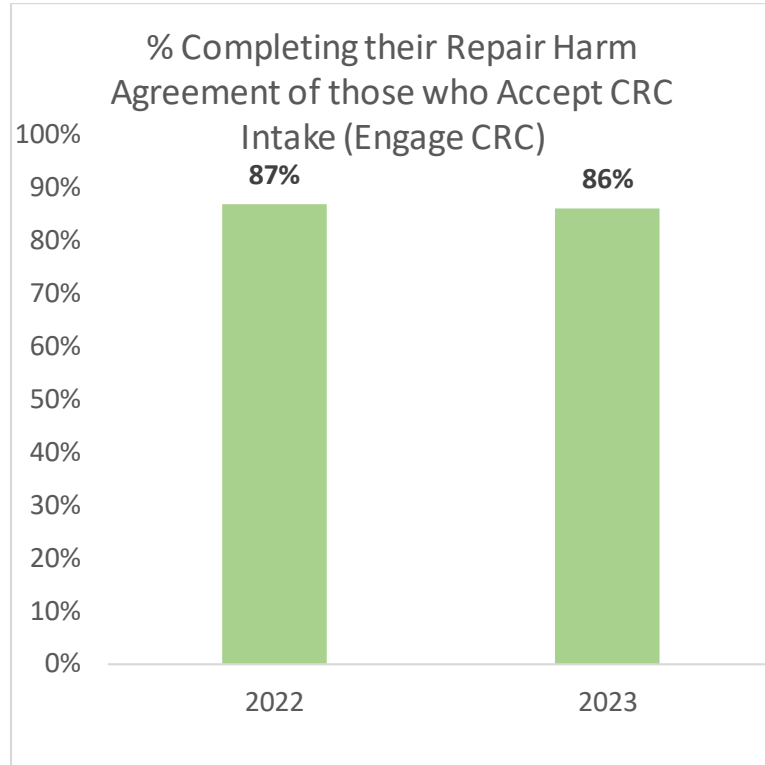
### Benefits of CRC

- Free, voluntary program
- If a Respondent successfully completes all of the terms of their Repair Harm Agreement:
  - Municipal citations are dismissed (do not have to pay)
  - Formal charge is either not filed (pre-charge) or is dismissed (post-charge)
  - No CCAP entry for the offense
- Offers the victim the opportunity to share their experience

# CRC PROCESS



## CRC's Data



CRC's Success Rate was consistent between 2022 and 2023. Success is when a Respondent meets all of the terms of their Repair Harm Agreement. Once the terms are met the citation(s) or charge(s) is forgiven, and the Respondent's case is successfully closed. The citation or charge will not appear on their record, and they have a second chance at accomplishing their goals without having their mistake affect those goals.

In 2023, 53% of successful completions occurred within 3 months and 87% within 6 months.

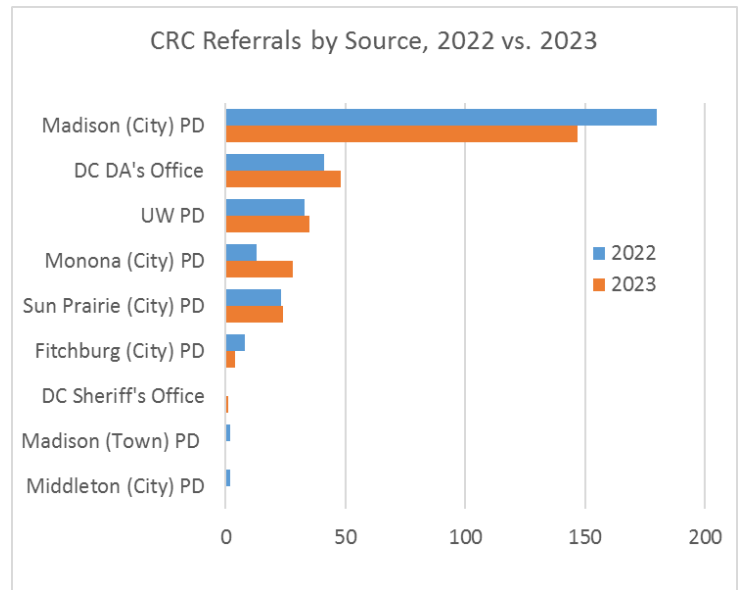
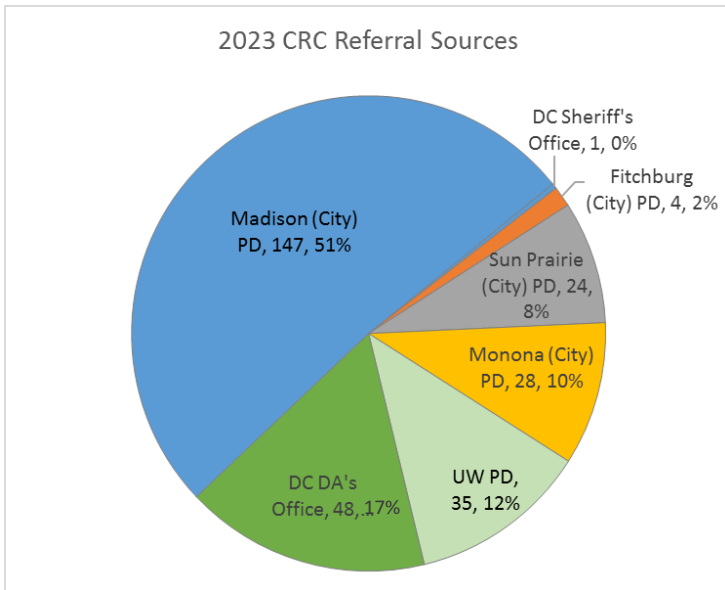
What is included in a Repair Harm Agreement? The conditions of a Repair Harm Agreement are discussed and determined during the Circle by the Victim, the Respondent, and the Peacemakers. Some frequently identified conditions include:

- Write a letter of responsibility/acknowledgement/amends to whom?
- Write a reflection paper
- Attend therapy
- Complete community enrichment
- Pay restitution

## CRC'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

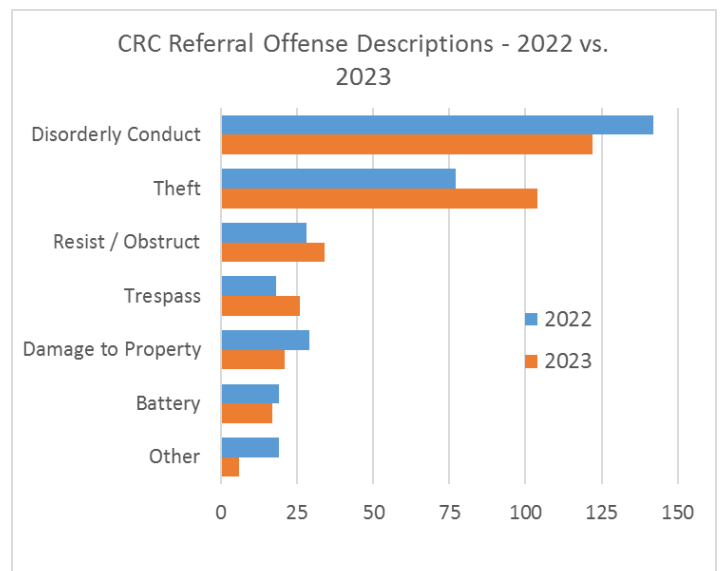
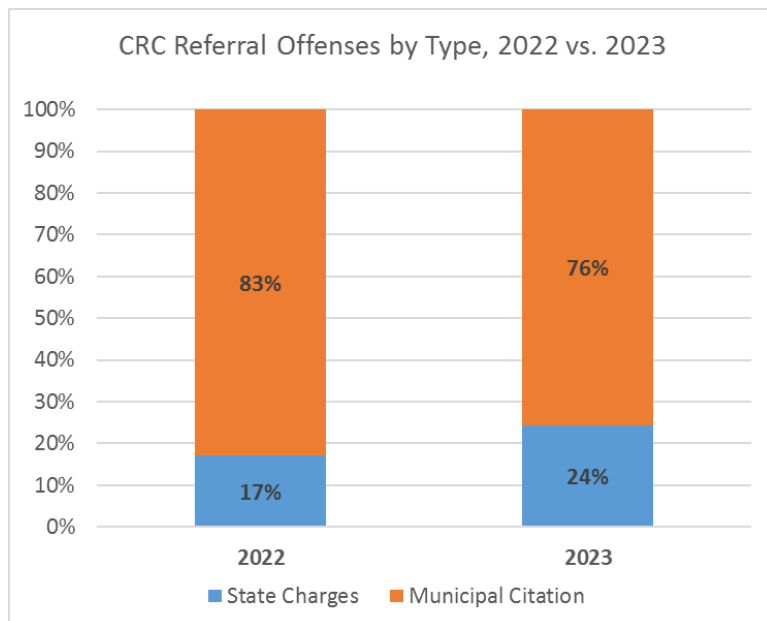
**Victim-Centered, Respondent-Focused, Community-Driven**

## Who makes referrals to CRC?

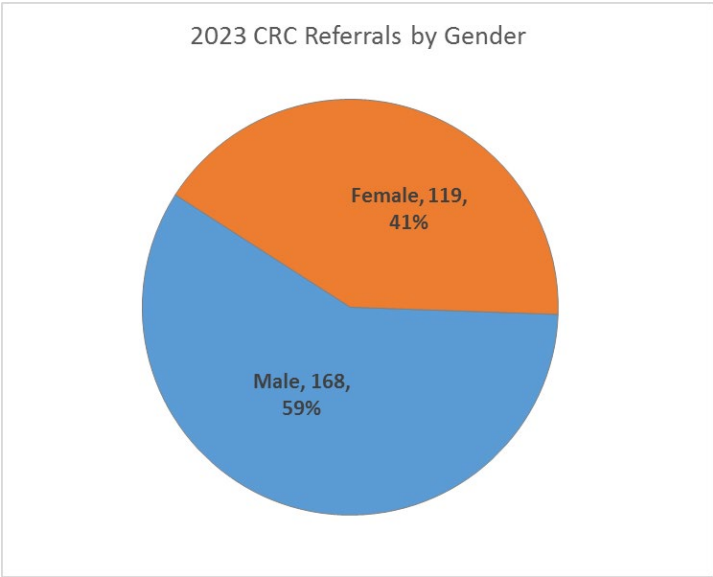
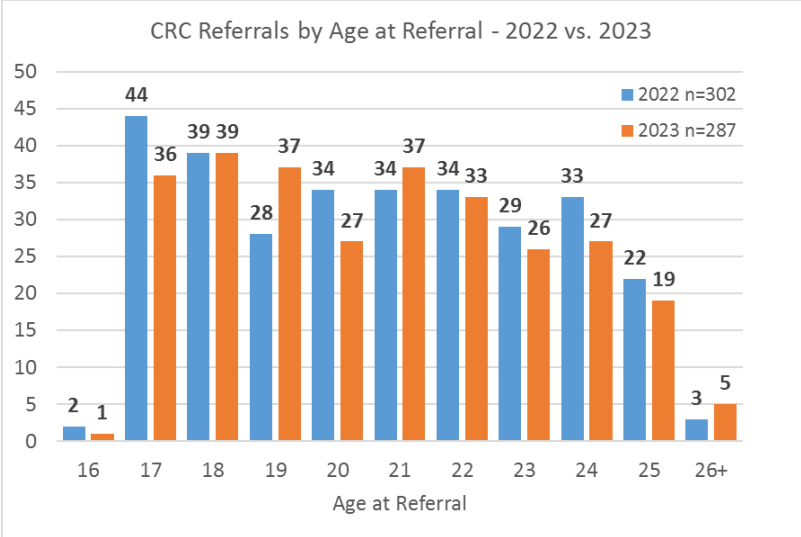


CRC maintains positive working relationships with local law enforcement agencies and appreciates their confidence in the program.

Below summarizes information about the referrals CRC receives. In 2023, state charges increased by 7%, with a decrease in Disorderly Conduct and Damage to Property, and more Theft, Resist/Obstruct, and Trespass.

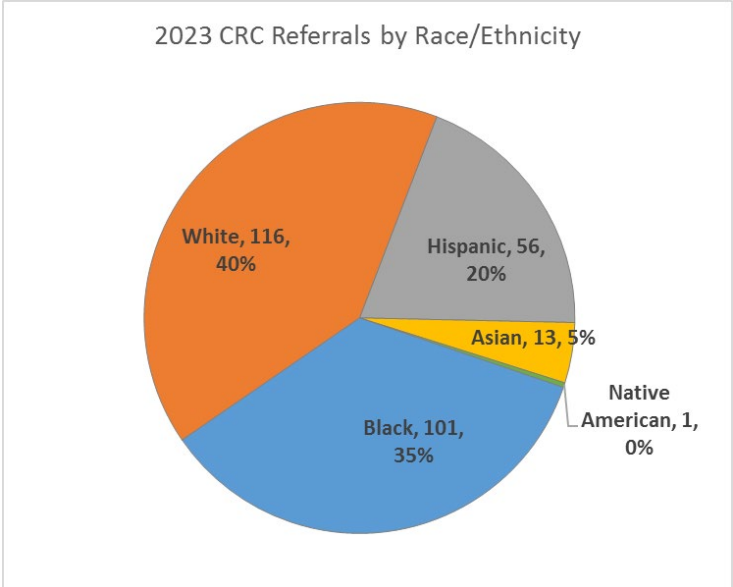


It is clear that 17-19 year olds in our community need a second chance.



Referrals in 2023 were slightly more male heavy than 2022, increasing from 53% in 2022 to 59% in 2023.

The referrals in 2023 were less likely to be Black/African American (41% to 35%) and more likely to be Hispanic (14% to 20%) than in 2022.



## Successful Cases

CRC worked with a 17-year old man from a local high school. He was cited for brandishing weapons at school. This young man experienced a lot of trauma in his personal life with an abusive parent. He was being bullied at school and eventually acted out physically. Not only was he suspended, but there was consideration for expulsion. After the first meeting, CRC could see that he needed additional support. CRC partnered with Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) and the school to set up a team meeting in order to have an onboarding plan in place before he returned to school. After several meetings, it was determined this young man would be better served in a different setting. He was enrolled in Operation Fresh Start. He has since graduated from the program, is working a full time job, has obtained his driver's license, and is preparing to attend college in the fall. This young man is thriving and his participation in CRC was a part of his journey.

Two teenage boys were referred to CRC by Sun Prairie PD. They were cited for theft and criminal damage to property after they stole a construction work trailer and repainted it in an attempt to personalize it and make it into their 'man cave'. Concerned citizens noticed the young men working on the trailer on a dead end street and called law enforcement.

CRC was able to speak with the Victim in this case who shared how he and his company were affected by the loss of the trailer. The young men completed their CRC intake appointment followed by their circle, where their Repair Harm Agreement was determined and some agreed upon conditions included attending therapy, writing a letter of apology to the Victim, writing a reflection paper about this incident, and paying restitution. They completed the conditions of the agreement, which included paying close to \$3,900 in restitution, which was used to repair and repaint the trailer. Had they not been referred to CRC, they would have had some hefty fines to pay, but no obligation to right their wrong, pay the restitution, and make the Victim feel whole.

A sixteen-year-old young man was referred to CRC by the District Attorney's Office. He was bored late one night and took his brother's car without permission. After driving around town for a few minutes, the police started following him because he failed to stop at a stop sign. He panicked when he saw the police behind him and did not pull over. Officers had the car's license plate so they did not continue their pursuit. Upon contact, the Respondent admitted to being scared and fleeing when the officer was attempting to pull him over.

He participated in CRC, and his Repair Harm Agreement included writing a letter of apology to his dad and brother, in part touching on rebuilding their relationship. It also involved writing a letter of gratitude about receiving the opportunity to participate in CRC, and a reflection paper addressing how he would keep himself and the community safe when he does get his license.

Without the referral to CRC, the Respondent would have had a felony charge on his record, which would have drastically changed the trajectory of his life. Because he successfully completed the program, the charge was not filed.

## Respondent Testimonial

*“I was one of the many wonderful people to be chosen to talk about CRC. Even though I don’t know what CRC stands for, the people I met and the help I got I understand. When I was in a very sticky situation, Miss Donnetta Foxx was able to help me understand what was going on. She helped me be heard and get a great support team that I still have now 1 year later. I’m truly grateful for all the help. Even now she still comes over to check on me and wants to hang out with me, and that bond is truly amazing – wanting to stay with someone even after completing the program and seeing it as more than a job.”*



Created by Akbar  
from Noun Project



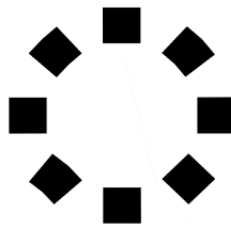
## Peacemaker Testimonials

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*“As an African American male who has spent 24 years working with incarcerated people, I was only afforded the ability to see the after effects of the gavel slam. The CRC gave me the opportunity to become a Peacemaker and work to turn the tide of people who would otherwise be incarcerated. Participating in this process helps me to witness the participant recognize the ripple effect of their actions and commit to change before they receive their incarceration number. This is a powerful organization and process. I hope to continue to be a Peacemaker for a long time.”*

*- Clinton Bryant*

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Created by José Manuel de Laá  
from Noun Project

*“I have been a Peacemaker with the CRC since October of last year. Since then I have sat in a number of circles. Each circle is conducted with care, compassion, and accountability. I am a firm believer that people are imperfect and deserve a second chance when they make mistakes. The CRC staff takes great care in getting to know the incident that brought the parties to the CRC, but also in getting to know the parties on a personal level. The program gives me the opportunity to connect with my community, and invest in the next generation. Each circle is a new story with a new lesson, but most importantly, each circle is a chance to wrap our arms around this community and remind them that we care. I cannot begin to express how much I love this program. It makes me a better parent and gives me so much pride to support these young people as they navigate this crazy world. Thank you CRC staff. The experience is truly a blessing.”*

*-Dustin Arnold*

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## Where We Are Going in 2024

In 2023, The County Board approved [Resolution 094 – Allocation of Criminal Justice Reform Initiatives Funding](#). A portion of this funding was dedicated to CRC. Because of that Resolution, CRC is fully staffed! One Program Leader transitioned to full time and a new full time Program Leader was added. These changes allows CRC to take more referrals, reaching new levels, and has provided the opportunity to accept more complex cases.

CRC is committed to providing the best services possible by educating its staff, regular case consultation and reflection, taking on new challenges, and being data driven in its decision-making and program evaluations.

Resolution 094 support also afforded CRC staff the opportunity to attend the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice 9<sup>th</sup> National Conference in Washington D.C.! This experience provides CRC with the most current understanding of restorative principles, additional tools and greater knowledge to address complex cases, repair harm and support community members who could benefit from it the most.

CRC will support Respondents in overcoming the basic need and other barriers that contribute to their choices leading to their system involvement, with the goal of reducing their risk of recidivism. CRC Respondents consistently report struggling with rent, transportation, food, bills, childcare, hygiene products, and other means to survive. By supporting those who offend, we show them that they belong, and when someone feels they belong to a community, they are far less likely to harm that community. Additionally, CRC will allocate funds to utilize persons of lived experience to improve engagement with Respondents and to better support them and Victims to heal and be successful.

Finally, CRC is active in connecting and engaging with the community and its referral sources, and educating anyone that is interested in Restorative Justice and the work that we do. We are consistently seeking opportunities to host more trainings and events to educate the public, obtain more Peacemakers, and further strengthen the trust we have built with our referral sources and the community.

### CRC Goals

- **Increase referrals** to CRC through outreach and regular meetings with law enforcement
- Develop strategies to conduct community outreach to **improve engagement rate**
- Continue with **Peacemaker trainings** for community members
- **Expand network of mental health providers** to provide additional options for Respondents

## GLOSSARY

**Respondent** – A person responsible for an offense who accepts responsibility for their actions.

**Victim** – A person harmed because of a crime.

**Peacemaker** – A community volunteer that has been trained in restorative justice practice.

**Repair Harm Agreement** – An agreement outlining the steps the Respondent will take to repair the harm.

**Successful Completion** – All repair harm conditions have been completed and the case was closed with the referring agency.

**Termination** – Respondent does not complete the repair harm agreement and is referred back to the original agency and continues in the traditional system.

**Community Enrichment** – Respondent performing volunteer service in the community.