



NATIONAL CENTER ON  
RESTORATIVE  
JUSTICE



# NATIONAL CENTER ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

## IMPACT REPORT

### 2023



# CONTENTS

- **Public Education Overview:** *page 3*
  - **Restorative Justice Institutes:** *page 4*
  - **Training Division Highlights:** *page 5*
  - **Public Education Initiatives:** *page 6*
  - **Communicating Restorative Justice:** *page 7*
- **Higher Education Overview:** *page 8*
  - **Expanding Access to Restorative Justice Education:** *page 9*
  - **Higher Education Collaborations:** *page 10*
- **Research Overview:** *page 11*
  - **2023 Research Highlights:** *page 12 and page 13*

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The National Center on Restorative Justice (NCORJ) improves criminal justice policy and practice in the United States through supporting education, research, and training to further restorative approaches. The NCORJ is a partnership between Vermont Law and Graduate School, the University of Vermont, the University of San Diego, and the U.S. Office of Justice Programs. The NCORJ is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to educate and train the next generation of justice leaders and to support and lead research focusing on restorative justice and addressing social inequities to improve criminal justice policy and practice in the United States.

The National Center on Restorative Justice is supported by Grants No. 2020-MU-CX-K001, 15PBJA-20-GK-00035 and 15PBJA-23-GK-01578-NCRJ awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view, images, or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION OVERVIEW



*NCORJ team members at the Equitable Systems Design for Restorative Justice Institute  
at the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco*

Expanding the implementation of restorative justice in the criminal justice context hinges on greater buy-in from 1) the general public to increase popular support for alternative approaches and 2) justice system actors, including police, judges, lawyers, and probation/diversion officers, who have the power to refer cases to restorative justice processes.

The NCORJ draws on a national network of restorative justice practitioners and advocates to find the most effective voices to include in our events, trainings, and coaching program.



# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INSTITUTES

From 2021-2023, the National Center on Restorative Justice hosted restorative justice institutes each year, aimed at learning from experts in a specific area about how restorative justice is being used successfully and how effective models can be replicated in different community settings. These institutes were designed to educate juvenile and criminal justice practitioners in restorative justice principles, current research, and applications. The institutes were geared to justice professionals, such as law enforcement, correctional officers, social service providers, educators, clinicians, judges, prosecutors, defenders, and more.

## Highlights from the Equitable Systems Design for Restorative Justice Institute (March 2023)



As a time to “think and do,” a central focus of the institute was to concretely and constructively promote equal access to restorative justice and dismantle structures that perpetuate disparities in criminal legal systems.

On March 31, 2023, the NCORJ, in partnership with the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco, hosted an institute on equitable systems design for restorative justice. The institute invited practitioners, academics, advocates, system-impacted people, and professionals at the intersection of criminal legal processes and restorative justice to participate in think tanks on various critical issues related to equitable systems design and to attend a screening of the short film *Sippin’* by Artist-in-Residence for the event and the film’s director Rosa Navarette. View the recording of the morning sessions [here](#).



Founder and President of the New Breath Foundation Eddy Zheng shared his own powerful story to highlight the importance of community-owned and driven, culturally responsive restorative justice practice. Eddy urged attendees to remember the centrality of CHI—culture, history, and identity—to collective healing.



The event featured a panel presentation by Professor Deborah M. Weissman, Dr. Darryl M. Heller, Professor Lydia Nussbaum, and Professor Eve Hanan, moderated by Alysyn Martinez. Read the special issue of the *Hastings Journal on Gender and the Law* & *Hastings Race and Poverty Law Journal* to which they contributed [here](#).



# TRAINING DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



Vanessa Westley, Dr. Elena Quintana, Erika Sasson, Rami El Gharib, and Avery Arrington presented at the CVIPI Grantees Conference hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance National Training and Technical Assistance Center in Feb. 2023

- The NCORJ Training Division presented at the Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI) Conference in St. Louis, Missouri in February 2023. The NCORJ session introduced participants to key principles of restorative justice as a community-based framework and response tool to address violence. The session featured a panel of restorative justice practitioners and researchers and was a welcome addition to the innovative strategies to address crime/harm featured throughout the conference.
  - As a follow-up to the CVIPI conference, the NCORJ hosted a webinar on February 22, 2023 titled "Restorative Justice for Violence Prevention and Intervention." The webinar featured all the panelists from the CVIPI conference and the NCORJ Restorative Justice Research Community Postdoc Researcher, Dr. Sejung Yang.
- The NCORJ offered three in-person trainings in Vermont for groups including the Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF), Vermont Law Enforcement Officers, and Vermont Attorney General lawyers in the criminal and other divisions.

- Throughout 2023, the NCORJ Training Division hosted a webinar series titled *Restorative Justice in the Criminal Legal System*.
  - Each webinar featured a moderated panel of experts and provided helpful information for system actors, community members, and organizations looking to implement restorative justice practices. Over 900 people attended NCORJ webinars in 2023. 97% of survey respondents indicated that the webinars were satisfactory or better.

*"Sharing experiences and stories is more valuable than data in coming to recognize our own biases... This work is not for 'them' it's for all of us. We must all learn to heal so we can heal collectively!"*

- Webinar Attendee

**900+**

Total attendees for the 2023 webinar series

**97%**

Survey respondents who indicated that the webinars were "satisfactory or better"

*"Good reminder of the core values and tenets of RJ, strengthened my resolve and was inspiring. Great panelists doing good work!"*

-Webinar Attendee

Flier for the *Restorative Justice in the Criminal Legal System* webinar series. View this series and other webinars at [ncorj.org/webinars](https://ncorj.org/webinars)



## Webinar Series RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

- November 16, 2022:** Restorative Justice in the Criminal Legal System
- February 22, 2023:** Restorative Justice for Violence Prevention and Intervention
- April 26, 2023:** Restorative Justice for Police
- May 31, 2023:** Restorative Justice for Reintegration and Reentry
- June 28, 2023:** Restorative Justice for Prosecutors
- August 30, 2023:** Restorative Justice for Judges
- October 25, 2023:** Restorative Justice Education in the Carceral System
- November 15, 2023:** Healing & Accountability Dialogue in the Criminal Legal System





Judge Eric Mehnert, Robert Sand, and Armand Coleman (left to right)

## Restorative Justice in Treatment Courts

- In November, NCORJ team member Robert Sand facilitated a breakout session on restorative justice at the annual conference of the New England Association of Recovery Court Professionals (NEARCP) together with Judge Eric Mehnert, a tribal court judge in Maine, and Armand Coleman from the Transformational Prison Project in Boston. The presentation was very well received.
- Robert Sand and Marc Wennberg are working to plan a series of discussions with a mid-coast Maine drug treatment court (in Belfast, ME) and a local community-based restorative justice center (Restorative Justice Project Maine) to pilot the Maine drug court infusing restorative justice principles and practices into the program approach.



Oct. 2023 webinar on "Restorative Justice Education in the Carceral System." View this and other webinars at [ncorj.org/webinars](https://ncorj.org/webinars)



## Restorative Justice Education in Prisons

- Professor Kathy Fox finalized the curriculum for teaching restorative justice in prisons. The curriculum is currently under review by the BJA. Following approval, the curriculum will be widely disseminated via the NCORJ website.
- The NCORJ held a webinar on "Restorative Justice Education in the Carceral System" in October 2023, featuring panelists who shared their lived experiences of being incarcerated and learning about restorative justice, as well as tools for implementing and improving restorative justice education in carceral settings.



As of December 2023, 202 programs & service providers have been added to the Restorative Justice Map & Directory. Learn more about this project [here](#).



## National Association of Community and Restorative Justice Collaboration

- The NCORJ is collaborating with the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) to produce a national map of restorative justice programs. The map of restorative justice programs launched in May 2023 with a submission form for programs to add themselves to the map. As of December 2023, over 200 programs and service providers have been added to the map.
- NCORJ and NACRJ are also collaborating to facilitate a best practices dialogue. A second dialogue session will be held at the NACRJ conference in July 2024. A Vermont Law and Graduate School student has begun an independent research project doing a content analysis of existing restorative justice best practice frameworks, which will inform the collaboration with NACRJ.



# National Restorative Coaching Program

The NCORJ's National Restorative Coaching Program (NRCP) provides restorative justice practitioners with individualized support in restorative skills, frameworks, and programmatic implementation. One-on-one coaching is delivered by restorative justice leaders who have a depth of experience from a wide range of restorative justice contexts. As a continuation of formal training, coaching aims to deepen the innate capabilities and confidence of practitioners nationwide.

The NRCP's goal is to draw on the experience and knowledge of a national team of RJ coaches who partner with next-generation RJ practitioners to enhance the use of restorative justice and improve US criminal justice policy and practices. The NRCP offers restorative coaching to RJ practitioners who can benefit from thought partnership and leverage additional RJ resources to enhance or expand their RJ efforts.

*"Having a thought partner to work through the implementation of different aspects of our RJ program at my school was invaluable. This is a piece that I hold, and often hold alone, in my school community."*

-Coaching Program Participant

**40**

Restorative practitioners working in the criminal justice field and in K-12 education currently receiving coaching

**100%**

Satisfaction rate among graduates of the coaching program

*"It's helpful to have a coach who has experience and can offer feedback and support that is not only based on theory but also practice"*

-Coaching Program Participant

## Meet the Coaching Team



Kathleen  
McGoey



Haasani  
Hylton



Tarek  
Maasarani



Tanynya  
Hekymara



Francisco  
Carbajal



Demarris  
Evans



Ahjia  
Moore



Duke  
Fisher



Deb  
Witzel



Robert  
Rico



# COMMUNICATING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

During Restorative Justice Month in November 2023, the NCORJ hosted a range of offerings aimed at building greater understanding and awareness of restorative justice.

One offering of RJ Month 2023 was series two of *The Restorative Lens Podcast*, which featured interviews with some of the facilitators from the NCORJ co-sponsored institute focusing on Equitable Systems Design for Restorative Justice. The breakout sessions during the institute provided an opportunity for participants to engage collectively and critically around key themes such as procedural fairness, access bias and decision-making, cultural competency, research and evaluation, policy and advocacy, and program implementation and fidelity. These conversations provided the opportunity to highlight some of the insights, reflections, and continued questions that came out of these discussions.

The November issue of the US Office of Justice Programs newsletter, *Justice Matters*, centered on restorative justice and highlighted the work of the NCORJ. Read the issue [here](#).

## The Restorative Lens

a podcast by



NATIONAL CENTER ON  
RESTORATIVE  
JUSTICE



Communications Intern, Lyla Stettenheim, was crucial to the production of the “A Day in the Life” series

The NCORJ also produced a video series entitled “**A Day in the Life,**” which allowed viewers to meet four restorative justice practitioners, Heather Thompson, Rami El Gharib, Judge Thomas Donnelly, and Tony Hicks as they invite us into a day of their life to witness the positive impacts that restorative justice approaches can have on a diverse range of individuals and communities.



Heather  
Thompson



Rami  
El Gharib



Judge  
Thomas  
Donnelly



Tony  
Hicks

# HIGHER EDUCATION OVERVIEW



## Restorative Justice in Legal Education: A Virtual Symposium Centering Law Students' Perspectives

*Flyer for NCORJ's first "Restorative Justice in Legal Education" event, which brought together current law students and recent law school graduates to discuss the potential and benefits of incorporating restorative justice into legal education.*

The existing criminal legal system replenishes itself regularly with newly minted graduates trained in an adversarial model. Educating undergraduate, graduate, and law students in this adversarial model perpetuates its use.

The NCORJ creates change by promoting restorative justice education in undergraduate, graduate, and law programs, equipping the next generation of criminal legal professionals to bring the restorative justice approach to bear in reforming a broken system.

The NCORJ is hosted by Vermont Law and Graduate School (VLGS), the only law school with a Masters in Restorative Justice (MARJ) as well as a Professional Certificate program. The University of San Diego (USD) also offers a Professional Certificate in Restorative Justice with an emphasis on preparing students for practice and implementation. The NCORJ leverages the institutional experience and strengths of its partners to promote restorative justice education in universities and law schools across the country.

# EXPANDING ACCESS TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE EDUCATION

As a part of our mission to expand access to Restorative Justice Education, the NCORJ currently provides scholarships to the University of San Diego's (USD) Professional Certificate in Restorative Justice Facilitation and Leadership program and the Vermont Law & Graduate School (VLGS) Professional Certificate in Restorative Justice program. These scholarships are increasing access to restorative justice education for current and future justice system leaders.

## USD PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FACILITATION & LEADERSHIP

The USD team accepted 13 scholarship recipients for the sixth cohort in Spring 2023 and 10 scholarship recipients for the seventh cohort in Fall 2023.

- Beneficiaries of these scholarships included professionals in community agencies partnered with the criminal justice system, in correctional facilities, in district attorney offices, in Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) programs, and in K-12 schools working to address punitive systems of discipline.
- The program also celebrated the graduation of its fifth cohort of scholarship recipients, which included six professionals working in District Attorney offices, probation offices, and non-profit agencies partnering with criminal justice agencies.

## VLGS PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

VLGS accepted the first cohort of 5 scholarship recipients for their Professional Certificate in Restorative Justice, which included recipients working in youth justice, behavioral health within prisons, and policy advocacy for justice-impacted individuals and families.



VLGS Scholarship Recipient,  
Carole Eady-Porcher

Carole Eady-Porcher, a leader at JustLeadership, is a formerly incarcerated woman who co-chaired Women on the Rise Telling HerStory (WORTH), playing a pivotal role in passing the NY State Anti-Shackling Act and ASFA Expanded Discretionary revisions. She serves on Women's Community Justice Association's (WCJA) Justice for Women Task Force, focusing on closing the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers Island and advocating for trauma-informed justice. Carole sits on the boards of WCJA and the Center for Community Alternatives, and has received prestigious awards for her advocacy work. With a master's in forensic psychology, she teaches and speaks on issues related to addiction, domestic violence, and criminal justice. Carole's life story has been featured in books and journals, and she believes in being hands-on to truly help others, reflected in over 20 years of civil service assisting vulnerable populations.



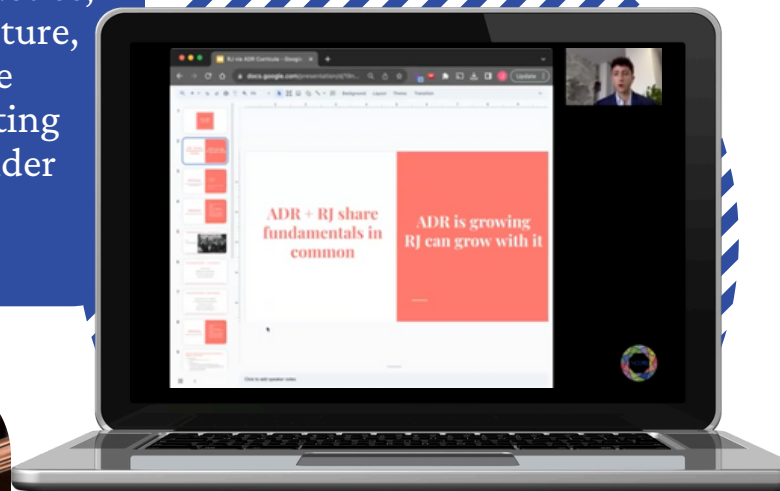
USD Scholarship Recipient, Deputy Probation Officer Casey Ryan, presents her final project on peer support circles in juvenile probation.



# HIGHER EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

## Restorative Justice Education in Law Schools

The NCORJ hosted a virtual event for law students on September 22, 2023. This virtual event included a brief introduction to restorative justice, two panels on law school curriculum and culture, breakout discussion groups, and a restorative justice career panel. A white paper documenting key takeaways from the event is currently under review by BJA prior to distribution.



Panelist Jordan Stark presents on the possibility of incorporating RJ education in alternative dispute resolution curricula in law schools. Watch the entire symposium [here](#).

CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS

## Restorative Justice in Legal Education

Selected authors will participate in a June 17-18 symposium at Vermont Law & Graduate School.

Accepted papers will be published in a themed issue of *The Journal of Legal Education*.

**Deadline:**  
March 1, 2024

**Learn More & Submit:**  
[ncorj.org/RJinLegalEd](https://ncorj.org/RJinLegalEd)



In 2023, the NCORJ began planning the first in-person Restorative Justice Education Gathering, which will take place in June 2024 in Burlington, Vermont. The NCORJ issued a call for papers for a special issue of the *Journal of Legal Education* on the topic of restorative justice education in law schools. Papers will be discussed and workshopped during the gathering in June.

## Restorative Justice Curriculum Development

In 2023, the NCORJ began building a series of curriculum resources (through Canvas Commons) for faculty who are looking to bring restorative justice education into their universities or law schools. The NCORJ also began building an Educational Resources Hub, a curated collection of educational resources including books, articles, podcasts, and videos that will be made available for restorative justice educators on the NCORJ website. Both of these key resources will launch in Fall 2024.

# RESEARCH OVERVIEW



*Attendees of the first Restorative Justice Research Community Gathering and Working Session at the Burlington, VT office of VLGS.*

The NCORJ supports a community-driven, interdisciplinary approach to research that bridges the research-practice gap, empowers diverse voices, and grows the next generation of justice researchers.

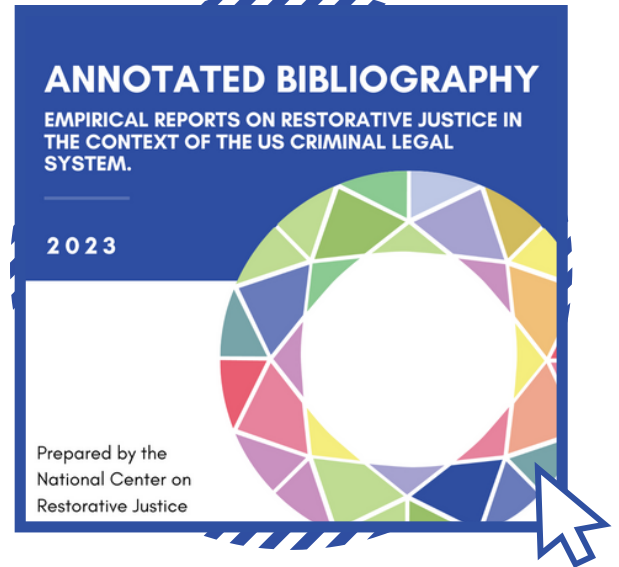
Restorative justice research has lagged behind practice. Where research does exist, it is often narrowly applicable to a specific program or context that is difficult to translate across settings. Moreover, widespread variation in shared language and definitions, practice, and implementation has made advancing research in the field a challenge. NCORJ research efforts and activities aim to understand and address these challenges.

The NCORJ established the Restorative Justice Research Community (RJRC) to support the development and advancement of a community-engaged research agenda. RJRC projects, events, and resources are intended to foster connections and creativity, bridge the research-practice gap, and grow the next generation of justice researchers.

The research core of the NCORJ is managed by the University of Vermont's (UVM) Justice Research Initiative. UVM is a National Science Foundation (NSF) top 100 public research university in the US.

# 2023 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- In November 2023, the NCORJ published a new resource to support research to advance restorative justice. This resource includes an annotated bibliography of empirical studies on restorative justice in the context of the U.S. criminal legal system, published in English in the years 2000 – 2023. Empirical studies include direct observations or measurements of restorative justice practices and programs. This list includes peer-reviewed sources, such as scholarly research publications, as well as non-peer reviewed or gray literature sources such as program evaluations, agency reports, and summaries from grant-funded RJ activities.



## RJRC

- With an intentional focus on building community and elevating practitioner voices in research, the RJRC engaged in a year-long thought partnership with the Restorative Justice Project (RJP) at Impact Justice. The goal of this partnership was to develop a plan for the RJRC to build a community-based research network and support broader synergies for the advancement of restorative justice research. The work of the RJP, as well as their research-practice partnership with the NCORJ, was featured in the BJA Justice Matters newsletter in November 2023, which can be read [here](#).

### RJRC STEERING COMMITTEE

The NCORJ looks forward to strengthening connections with this important work by extending the research-practice partnership through 2027 and transitioning the management of the RJRC. The RJRC core steering committee members include Cymone Fuller of Equal Justice USA (EJUSA), Sandra Rodriguez of The Ahimsa Collective, and Abby Crocker of the University of Vermont.



Cymone Fuller  
EJUSA



Sandra Rodriguez  
The Ahimsa Collective

*"RJ facilitators have long known that in order for researchers to truly capture the power and essence of RJ, they must see practitioners and participants not as subjects of a study but as partners in the creation and telling of a story. And just like the practice of RJ itself, the telling of this story must also be values-based, driven by those closest to the work, community-held, and equally empowering for all involved. My hope is that the RJRC can serve as an invitation to both RJ practitioners and academics to step into this paradigm shift and reshape what RJ research looks and feels like moving forward."*

-Sandra Rodriguez



# 2023 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS, CONTINUED

- The first Restorative Justice Research Community Gathering and Working Session was held on June 20-21, 2023, in Burlington, VT. The event was attended by 22 people from across 17 organizations and focused on “Growing the field of RJ research.” The event aimed to build and strengthen relationships among RJ researchers, describe the current state of restorative justice research, discuss what has shaped the field to date, and reflect to identify gaps and needs, to inform future directions.

## RJRC COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH NETWORK

To help understand the current relationship between practice and research, the team held a series of community engagement sessions with practitioners in the Bay Area CA (April 2023) and Southern Colorado (September 2023). In addition, the team attended the training “Reimagining Leadership for Health Equity: Transforming Systems and Uplifting Community” workshop at the American Public Health Association meeting in Atlanta GA (November 2023).

*“There is a need to be intentional with how research is done, who does it, and for what purpose.”*

-Engagement Session Participant

*“It was an exceptional event. I appreciated the opportunities to both discuss substantive issues and build relationships that will support our future work on RJ.”*

-RJRC Gathering Attendee



Attendees of the first Restorative Justice Research Community Gathering and Working Session in Burlington, VT.

## RESEARCH FELLOWS UPDATE

The RJRC research fellows moved into the second year of their fellowship and engaged in 4 roundtable discussion events. The roundtable topics focused on:

- Feb 2023 “Community perspectives on Research, RJ, and the US criminal legal system”
- Apr 2023 “RJ identity conundrum and co-option”
- Sep 2023 “RJ typologies”
- Nov 2023 “RJ and shifting the research question”