



NEWS RELEASE

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'Harm to Healing' Restorative Justice Program Celebrates First Graduation for Youthful Offenders

VENTURA, Calif. - The Ventura County District Attorney's Office, Ventura County Probation Agency and Interface Children & Family Services are thrilled to announce the successful completion of the inaugural Restorative Justice Conferencing, for 10 graduates. The program, titled Transforming Harm to Healing, kicked off in July 2022, and is available for non-violent offenders, ages 12 through 21.

Restorative Justice Conferencing is a program that diverts youth away from the juvenile justice system by offering the opportunity to participate in a conference with trained facilitators who connect youth to rehabilitative services. Restorative Justice Conferencing seeks justice by bringing together the youth and the victim to discuss the harm caused and, together, create a plan to move forward.

"This is an evidence-based Restorative Justice Program that reduces the number of youth who enter the juvenile justice system," said District Attorney Erik Nasarenko. "This program is victim centered, it nurtures growth and redemption, and it promotes public safety."

The Restorative Justice Program is a shift from a punitive mindset to one of understanding and support. Inclusive of not only the youth themselves but also their families, this collaborative program allows participants to gain a sense of empowerment often absent from other aspects of their lives. Simultaneously, families receive additional support and services, leading to improved family dynamics and ultimately positive outcomes for the referred youth.





“We are very proud of the graduates of this program,” Restorative Justice Program Lead Victor Juarez said. “We have seen their remarkable growth, their commitment to healing, and their unwavering dedication to becoming agents of positive change.”

Restorative Justice Facilitator Sarah Mendez added, “As we move forward, let us continue to advocate for restorative justice and to create opportunities for healing. We stand united in our commitment to building a future where compassion, understanding, and second chances prevail.”

“This graduation highlights a pivotal shift in juvenile justice, emphasizing the importance of empathy, rehabilitation, accountability to victims of crime and community collaboration,” said Probation Agency Manager Chris Modica, of the Juvenile Field Division. “Today, we celebrate not only the accomplishments of these 10 graduates, but also the resilience and potential of every young person whose lives we can positively impact through Restorative Justice Conferencing.”

The District Attorney’s Office, in partnership with the Probation Agency and Interface, brought Transforming Harm to Healing to Ventura County to keep our community safe, and to ensure that juvenile offenders are held accountable. Funding for this diversion program comes from the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act, which provides state funding for counties to implement programs that have proven effective in reducing crime and delinquency among at-risk youth and youthful offenders.



Interface Children & Family Services is a leading nonprofit organization committed to providing comprehensive support services for children, families, and communities. Director Erik Sternad shares, “At Interface, we firmly believe in the power of healing, understanding, and second chances. Our partnership with the District Attorney and Probation offices allows us to amplify our impact and create lasting change in the lives of individuals and families. By working collaboratively, we can offer comprehensive support services and foster a sense of empathy, rehabilitation, and resilience.”