



AFFORDABLE
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
OPTIONS



Support for schools using restorative practices to build
safe, peaceful learning environments



Citizens Mediation Service
Affordable. Neutral. Conflict Resolution.

Citizens Mediation Service (CMS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit dispute resolution center. The Center trains volunteers to mediate cases for the courts, businesses, schools, and individuals. It operates under the guidance and support of the State Court Administrative Office.



CMS is committed to supporting schools exploring Restorative Justice (RJ) practices to address behavioral issues on their campuses. Participation in RJ Circles can help identify and re-direct problem behaviors before they become entrenched and difficult to remedy. Trained Circle Keepers work with students who are exhibiting behaviors that disrupt learning and create fear and tension for others. Accountability and restitution are hallmarks of restorative practices. Schools are kept tightly in the information flow to assure that all available resources are brought to bear on keeping children in school.



This booklet has three options for Restorative Practices Circle strategies suitable for any grade level except Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2. Each meets Michigan’s requirement to consider the use of restorative justice when making disciplinary decisions. Our goal is to make these options affordable and available through an ala carte menu that schools can use any time, in any configuration, for your own unique needs. There is no long-term contract and no additional cost other than what is noted at the end of each option.

From the school, we do ask:

- Provide a meeting space big enough to allow a circle setup for up to 10 persons.
- Permit school staff to attend Circle Meetings when invited.
- Support restorative practices throughout the school day, including transportation, lunch rooms, and playgrounds.
- Appoint an RJ liaison to interact with the Circle Keeper. Most often that would be an assistant principal, counselor, or the principal’s designee.



Option 1: Friday Circles

Students can be referred to this group by a teacher, counselor, lunch monitor, school bus driver, or any school staff who observes unacceptable behavior sometime during the current school week. Reasons for referrals might be name-calling, being disrespectful to adults or others, taunting, frequently disrupting class, etc.

Circle meetings:

- Provide a calm, safe place for students to talk about what happened, why, who was harmed, and what can be done to repair the harm.
- Create a restitution plan that includes some tangible action intended to make things right again.
- Help children and teens take responsibility for their actions and to understand the impact of the behavior on others.

Friday Circles work best if held every week, however, schools may elect a different time schedule that fits their needs best.

Price: \$75.00 per session

Option 2: RJ Ambassadors



This approach is based on the theory that negative behaviors can be reduced and positive behaviors increased when schools make a concerted effort to implement restorative practices throughout the school environment—classrooms, lunchrooms, playgrounds, and buses.

Any teach or staff member can nominate students to become RJ Ambassadors. Up to 10 students can be selected for a six-week period. The purposes of these Circle Meetings are:

- To obtain feedback on the use of RJ practices in the school from a student perspective;
- To model Circle procedures using their own concerns or problems;
- To teach students peer mediation skills to use in situations that arise outside of Circle;
- To teach students peaceful, positive problem-solving methods to teach others or use on their own initiative.

Price: Six meetings over six weeks = \$450.00



Option 3: Suspension and Expulsion

Also known as family conferencing, this Circle intervention is used to address only ONE child who is in danger of suspension or expulsion. Parents are required to attend. Other professional such as school social worker, counselor, or community mental health worker. If there is a victim, s/he is also invited (but not required) to attend. This approach is a clear statement that the student is important enough to us that we will marshal all available resources to stop destructive patterns of behavior.

These meeting require significant preparation by the Circle Keeper, including:

- Reviewing (with parental permission) pertinent student records such as grades, disciplinary history, etc.
- Conducting pre-Circle interviews with everyone who will attend the Circle Meeting.
- Creating a Circle Plan that is unique to the child.
- Maintaining a written record of all pre-circle activities as well as a summary of the Circle Meeting.

Price: \$200 per family conference

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Contact Citizens Mediation Service to learn more
about restorative justice or to create a customized
plan for your school.

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