



Community Conferencing

A meeting among those affected by an incident or conflict

Brought to you by the Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County

The Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County (CRCMC) offers an **effective and positive approach to school discipline** through the use of Dialogue Circles and Community Conferences which use Restorative Justice principles to build empathy, connectedness and community.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is a Community Conference a Mediation?

A Community Conference is like a mediation, but usually involves more people than a typical mediation. It is a meeting of all the people affected by a difficult situation or conflict.

The Conference provides a forum where those who are affected and their supporters can seek ways to improve the situation and to prevent further harm.

The goals of the conference are for all of the participants to:

- Understand better what happened and why
- Hear how everyone has been affected by the situation
- Create an agreement that will repair the harm and create a better situation for the future

Who attends a Community Conference?

- Anyone affected by the conflict or situation. Usually this means at least the students involved and their caregivers.
- Any supporters whom the participants would like to attend. This can include school administrative staff, school counselors and others who may provide resources.
- The Conference facilitator who is formally trained and experienced.

What happens at a Community Conference?

All participants are given an opportunity to recount what has happened that brought them to this point. Those directly involved speak first. This gives the youth a space to voice their story to a larger community. The effects of a conflict can be emotional, financial, as well as physical. The group then decides what needs to be done to improve the situation and minimize further harm.

What are the outcomes of a Conference?

The immediate outcome of a Conference is the Community Conference Agreement. The terms of the agreement may include anything that can help improve the situation.

The outcomes are limited only by the group's imagination and its ability to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement.

The process is designed to achieve maximum satisfaction for all those who participate. When an agreement has been reached, it is recorded in writing and signed by all participants, who are then given a copy of the agreement.

The staff at CRCMC then follow up on the terms of the agreement to track progress.

How long does a Community Conference last?

This will depend on the circumstances and complexity of the situation, but a typical conference lasts approximately one and a half hours.

What are the advantages to this approach?

- Everyone attending gets a chance to speak
- Those who have caused harm hear how others have been affected and are held accountable for their actions
- Those who have been harmed are directly involved in deciding the outcome
- Increases chances of improving the situation
- Provides healing and closure
- Strengthens community and school relationships

What if I have more questions?

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