



COUNTY OF YOLO
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**District Attorneys Restorative Justice Partnership Program
Receives \$2.1 Million Justice Assistance Grant**
Board of State and Community Corrections approved the grant
which will sustain and expand the program

Woodland, CA – April 14, 2023 – On April 13, 2023, the CA Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) formally approved a grant of \$2,145,000 over three years to support the Yolo County District Attorney’s Restorative Justice Partnership (RJP) program. The DA’s RJP grant application ranked number one out of 10 mid-size counties competing for funding.

RJP is Yolo’s flagship prosecutor-led adult criminal diversion program and uses a facilitated conference model which prioritizes accountability and repairing harms according to the principles of restorative justice. Yolo DA remains at the forefront of the restorative justice movement and has built a track record of success over its nearly ten years of operation. The program significantly expanded eligibility criteria in 2019 and achieved the goal of diverting 10% of the County’s filed felonies. This new grant will maintain the 2019 expansion and fund additional behavioral health staff to address gaps in mental health service capacity. The new positions will serve as mental health liaisons and provide supportive case management to participants facing significant barriers to success.

Diversion provides a pathway for individuals to address criminal offenses outside the traditional court process without obtaining a conviction. An independent evaluation in 2017 found that RJP graduates were 37% less likely to recidivate, and only 5.9% of program participants were rearrested within one year of completing the program. Some of the barriers to program success that have been identified include untreated mental health and/or substance use, and socioeconomic needs. RJP participants can now receive case management services, benefits screening, and rehabilitative programming to address these barriers as part of their diversion. An independent evaluator from an academic institution is currently working on RJP Outcome Measures for the past three years.

RJP's innovative model relies on trained community volunteers who donate their time to enable the program to operate. These volunteers serve as the voice of their communities to express how they have been harmed and what is needed to make things right. They play an integral role in making criminal justice more healing and helping individuals make amends and reintegrate into the community. Program volunteer Lorna C describes the process this way: “[We] look for ways to better understand them, ways to identify, to help them understand, and also understand the myriad harms that can come to ourselves, our community, our family... And we know when done well and they are almost invariably done well, [this] will impact a person, will make a positive influence on their life for possibly years to come...”

Want to join this dedicated group? RJP will hold a 2-part volunteer panelist training this Spring. Interested Yolo residents can sign up to volunteer by emailing RJPartnership@yolocounty.org or by visiting the DA website at: <https://yoloda.org/progressive-programs/restorative-justice-partnership/> for more information.

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