

## Restorative Justice Program Secured with Health Care Foundation

**December 10, 2019** – The Cook County Minnesota Restorative Justice project (Restorative Justice) will officially become a program of the North Shore Health Care Foundation (NSHCF) as of Jan 1, 2020. At its Dec 9 Meeting of the NSHCF Board of Directors, a unanimous vote supported the adoption of the program in the new year to give the initiative a permanent home and ensure its sustainability. The fledgling program was at a critical point in development this fall requiring solid leadership, fiscal agency representation and administrative support, and a request to adopt the program was made to the Foundation from the Restorative Justice group.

“Restorative Justice programs positively change the course for many young offenders and victims,” said Inger Andress, Chair of the Restorative Justice Advisory Committee and North Shore Health Care Foundation Board Member. “This is such an asset to have in Cook County and greatly benefits the community, and the health of individuals and families. We are thrilled that the Foundation recognizes the value in this initiative and will provide the necessary leadership to help it grow and continue. We have an amazing group of 22 trained facilitators who volunteer their time for case conferencing and the reparation process, along with a versatile Advisory Committee.”

### What is Restorative Justice?

The Cook County Restorative Justice program is an approach that includes both justice and reconciliation for harms through crime or relational conflict and can be an alternative form of sentencing. The Cook County Restorative Justice program is driven by a group of compassionate community volunteers trained to help victims and offenders find solutions that promote accountability, healing, and reconciliation with a focus on of juvenile cases. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities. Restorative justice encourages meaningful engagement and accountability and provides an opportunity for healing, reparation and reintegration. Restorative Justice recognizes that crime hurts everyone — victims, offenders, families and community. It creates an obligation and opportunity to make things right. Early interventions can set a young person’s life on a more constructive path and offenders have higher rates of restitution and lower rates of recidivism. Ultimately, victims have a voice in the process and express higher satisfaction with outcomes that brings about true community healing and kids get second chances to change the course of their life. In Cook County, 80% of cases mediated to-date involve youth offenders.

The Restorative Justice Program is overseen by an Advisory Committee comprised of representation from:

- The County Attorney’s Office
- The Cook County Sheriff’s Office
- Probations
- Court Administration
- Victim/Witness Services
- Cook Count ISD 166
- Grand Portage Health & Human Services

- The Violence Prevention Center
- Victim and Participant Advocates
- The Cook County Board of Commissioners, and now
- The North Shore Health Care Foundation’s Executive Director as the program Administrator

“The Restorative Justice Program directly aligns with the priorities identified in the North Shore Health Care Foundation’s strategic plan and our values,” said Executive Director Valerie Marasco Eliassen. “We believe in the possibilities of people, organizations, businesses and governments working together to create a healthy community for all in Cook County. This is an example of evidence-based proactive programming that truly impacts youth mental health and wellbeing, relationships in the community and families, and ultimately reduces the chance of future harm. Our Board has recognized this need from the program’s beginning stages in 2018, providing grants for the first two rounds of facilitator training. We are pleased to welcome this under the Foundation’s umbrella.”

Last month, the Cook County Restorative Justice Program was awarded a \$5,000 donation from the Moose Lake Correctional Facility’s Restorative Justice program. The donated funds were raised by various incarcerated individuals through fundraisers at the Moose Lake facility.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Restorative Justice Program and the North Shore Health Care Foundation on Monday, Dec 9.

The North Shore Health Care Foundation is an independent non-profit which proactively identifies opportunities to expand equitable health care and healthy living in Cook County and champions solutions through funding, education, and advocacy. The Foundation is a registered 501©3 created in 1993. Donations can be directed to the Restorative Justice Program through the Foundation.

For more information, go to: [www.northshorehealthcarefoundation.org](http://www.northshorehealthcarefoundation.org)

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