



Community Restorative Court 2024 Annual Report

Dane County Department of Human Services

Prevention & Early Intervention



COMMUNITY RESTORATIVE COURT

*Victim-Centered
Respondent-Focused
Community Driven*

Background: Who Are We?

Community Restorative Court (CRC) is a pre-charge alternative to the traditional criminal justice process. Using a restorative justice model, CRC brings together a Respondent (the person who committed the offense), the Victim, and volunteer Peacemakers to repair harm, build accountability, and strengthen community connections.

Referrals to CRC come solely from the Dane County District Attorney's Office and local law enforcement. Through an intake and a Restorative Justice Circle, participants work together to create a Repair Harm Agreement (RHA) that everyone feels repairs the harm that was done. The goal is to ensure that all participants leave the circle feeling heard, understood, and valued. Once the Respondent has completed all the terms of the Repair Harm Agreement, their case is successfully closed. If the Respondent chooses not participate in CRC or is not compliant in completing their RHA, their case is returned to the referring agency.

Who We Serve

- Individuals ages 17–25 who accept responsibility and have no severe or violent record
- DA referrals with harmed party in agreement to CRC referral
- Law enforcement referrals for eligible municipal offenses

Benefits of CRC

- Free and voluntary
- Successful completion dismisses municipal citations and prevents criminal charges or Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (CCAP) entries
- Gives Victims a chance to share their experience and have a voice in the process

Successful Completion Rate of CRC

95% of Respondents who signed a Repair Harm Agreement (RHA) successfully completed the CRC Program and all of their referred charges were dismissed

Restorative Justice: Roots and Impact

Grounded in Indigenous Ways of Knowing

- Deepens connections among people through inclusive practices that build empathy, trust, and mutual respect
- Responds to harm by engaging all affected parties—and others as needed—in creative, collaborative processes that foster meaningful accountability through acknowledging and repairing harm
- Advances equity through a framework grounded in the belief that we are all interconnected and possess inherent human value

A 19-Year-Old Respondent Speaks: Reflections

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to CRC staff, along with the Peacemakers who played pivotal roles in guiding me through the restorative justice process.

CRC, your unwavering support, compassion, and professional demeanor have touched me in ways I cannot fully express.

Peacemakers, your insights and guidance during our meetings were instrumental in my journey toward self-discovery and redemption.

Your collective efforts have not gone unnoticed. The restorative justice circle provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my actions, confront the harm I caused, and take meaningful steps toward making amends. It helped me gain clarity on the person I aspire to be and the values I hold dear.

I am grateful beyond words for the role you have all played in my life. Your commitment to fostering healing and reconciliation has made a profound impact, not only on me but on the community at large. I will carry the lessons I've learned and the growth I've experienced with me always.

Thank you for believing in me and for giving me the chance to make amends. Your support has made all the difference.

With deepest gratitude.

Volunteer Snapshot: Peacemakers

Peacemakers are dedicated community volunteers who help transform conflict into healing. Through compassion, lived experience, and open dialogue, Peacemakers create circles where Respondents and Victims feel heard, valued, and supported—turning moments of harm into opportunities for growth and restoration.

159 Volunteer Peacemakers

70% Female 29% Male 1% Unknown	1%	Alaska Native / American Indian	CRC's Volunteer Peacemakers currently range in age from 26 to 88, with the average age being 54 years old. <small>(*based on 120 Peacemakers who reported their age)</small>
	1%	Asian	
	18%	Black or African American	
	11%	Hispanic	
	5%	More than one race	
	1%	Other	
	2%	Unknown	
	61%	White	

Community Support Makes a Difference: Two Peacemakers Share Their Experience

"I started volunteering as a Peacemaker some years back (the Ron Johnson years!) and was immediately taken with the program model and the way it brings together different members of our community. Every circle experience is different, and I have been honored to meet lots of young people who could so easily have fallen through the proverbial cracks. I truly admire the way the CRC staff puts heart, soul, and great expertise into running the circles – they both teach and inspire. I think about what might happen to the young people we sit with (sometimes virtually, to be sure) in circle if they had ended up in a traditional law enforcement interaction and am so happy that this alternative exists. As volunteers, I believe we contribute our years of experience and our commitment to a more just way of working with these young people, but I am also always energized and inspired by the circles and I know that we are learning so much each time. My experience as a Peacemaker has sparked me to more intentionally embed restorative justice into my own classroom content and I know it has impacted the way I teach as well."

- **Donna Vukelich-Selva**

"I have been a Peacemaker for about 7 years and not only do I think that this program is valuable, but I would also love to see it expand to older ages and more serious levels of crimes.

I have been a part of numerous circles and the process of listening to the Respondent, questioning, sharing, and processing allows all members of the circle to develop empathy and understanding of other people. Even if the victim is not a part of the circle, their perspective and restitution wishes are shared with all members of the circle. This process holds people accountable while giving them the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, to correct their mistakes, and to come away from the experience with a better understanding of themselves and the perspective of others. To make the Victim feel whole, for Respondents to feel heard and understood while taking responsibility for their mistakes, and for the community to have a voice in how the harm is repaired is, in many cases, a far better approach to criminal justice than our traditional model.

Being a Peacemaker is a way for me to give back to my community and to help in creating the kind of community in which I want to live. All of us make mistakes, but this program allows young people to learn and grow from their mistakes in a way that does not derail their life goals or ambitions. I am grateful to the CRC program and staff for giving me the opportunity to be part of this amazing program.”

- Carol Wilson

Positive Outcomes: Is CRC Effective

Once the conditions of the Respondent’s Repair Harm Agreement are met, the Respondent successfully completes the CRC program. CRC staff send a closing letter to the referring law enforcement agency, who then closes the Respondent’s case.

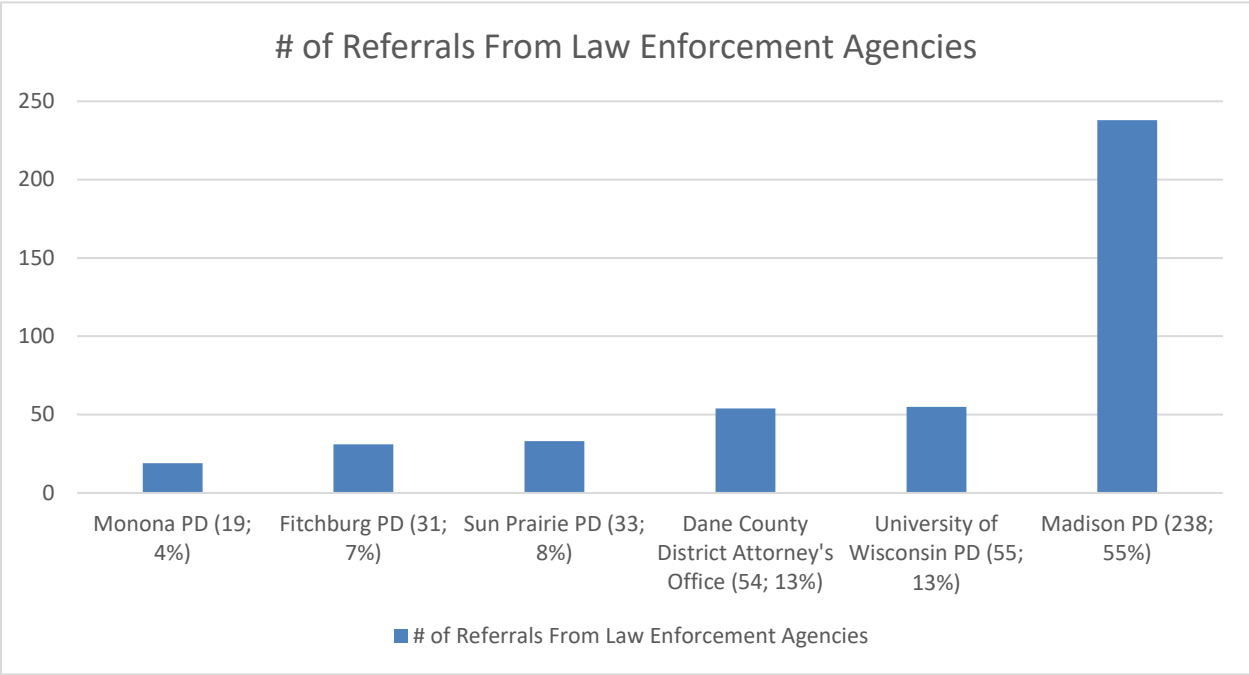
CRC strives to establish relationships and build connections with each Respondent to provide consistent support. These on-going efforts have proven to increase Respondents’ successful completion of the CRC program.

95% of Respondents who signed an RHA
successfully completed the CRC Program

Referral Sources

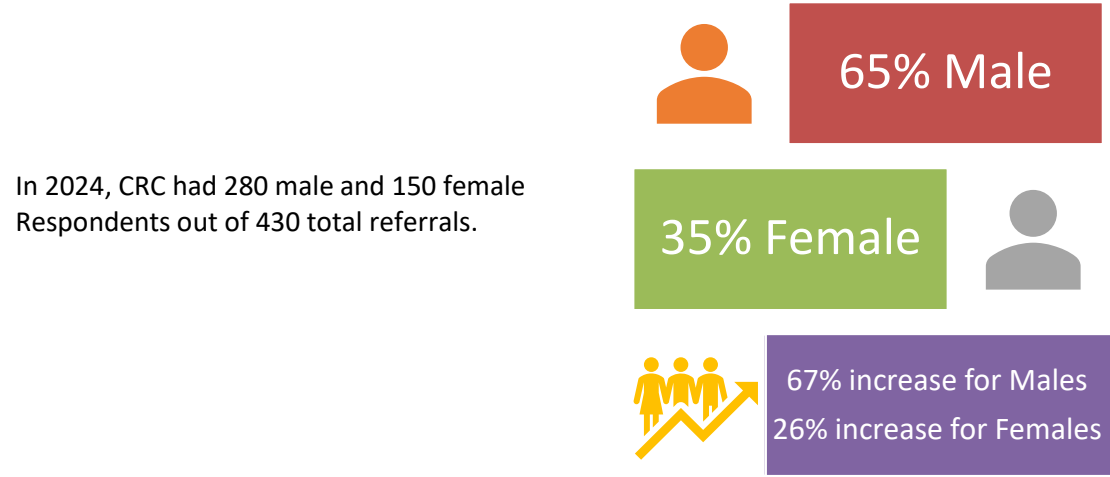


CRC received referrals from six different law enforcement agencies in Dane county in 2024. These referral sources included: Dane County District Attorney’s Office, Fitchburg PD, Madison PD, Monona PD, Sun Prairie PD, and the University of Wisconsin PD.

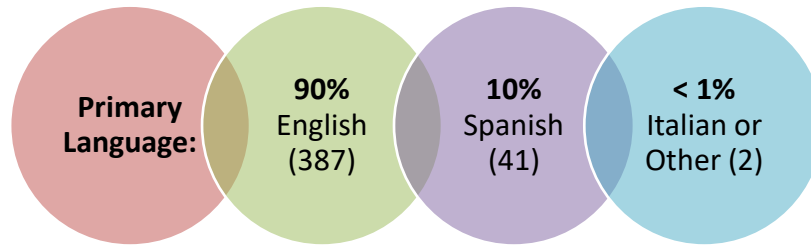


Respondent Demographics/Population Profile

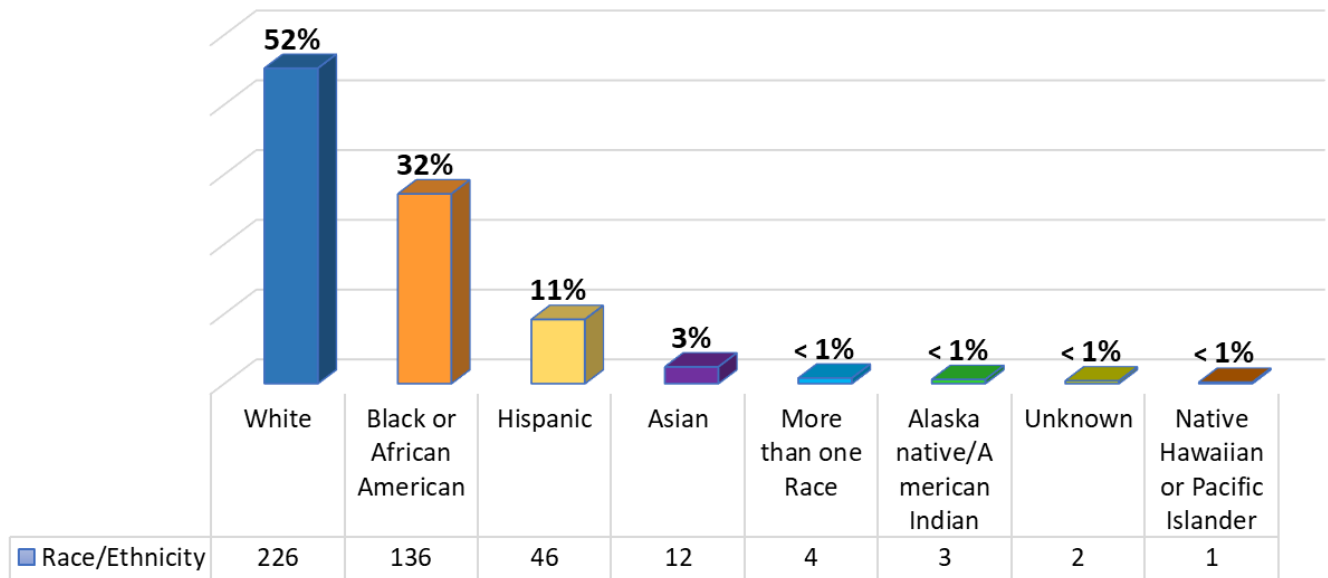
Gender Identity:



Primary Language



Racial and Ethnic Identity of Respondents

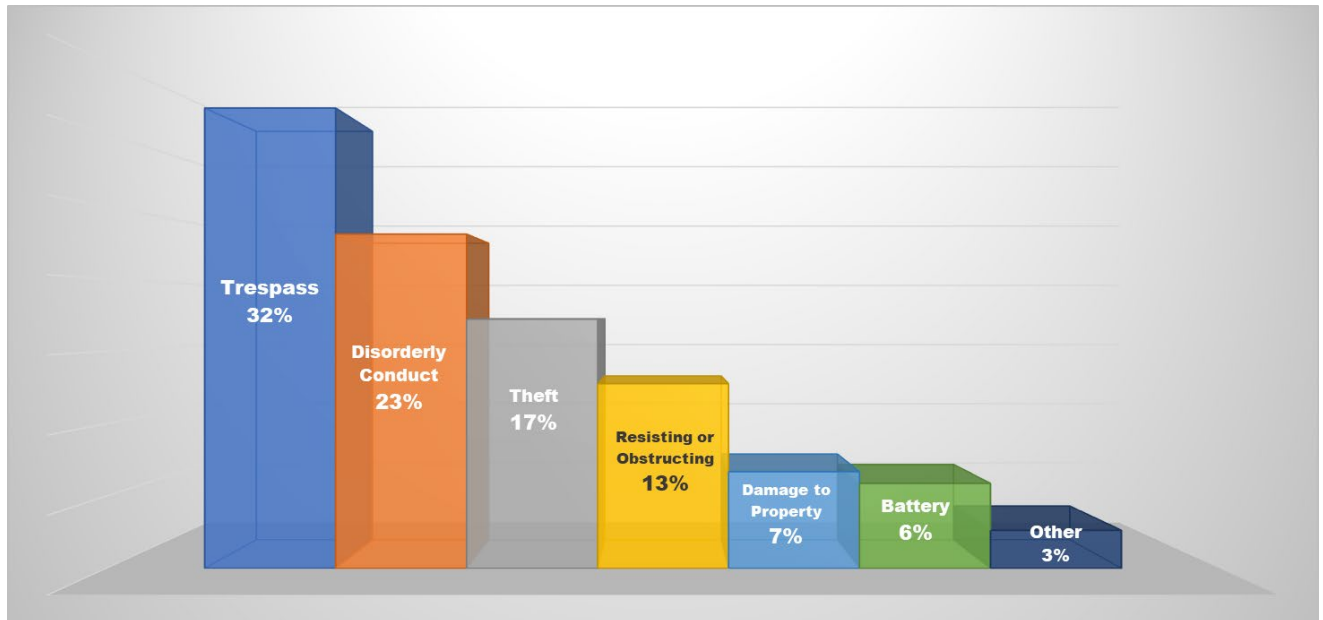


2024 CRC Referrals by Race from Referring Agency	# of Referrals	% of Referral	
Alaska native/American Indian	3	< 1%	
Madison (City) Police Department	3	100%	
Asian	12	3%	
Madison (City) Police Department	8	67%	
Dane County District Attorney's Office	2	17%	
University of Wisconsin Police Department	2	17%	
Black or African American	136	32%	
Madison (City) Police Department	81	60%	
Sun Prairie (City) Police Department	17	13%	
Fitchburg (City) Police Department	13	10%	
Dane County District Attorney's Office	11	8%	
Monona (City) Police Department	11	8%	
University of Wisconsin Police Department	3	2%	
More than one Race	4	< 1%	
Madison (City) Police Department	2	50%	
Dane County District Attorney's Office	1	25%	
University of Wisconsin Police Department	1	25%	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	< 1%	
Madison (City) Police Department	1	100%	
Unknown	2	< 1%	
Fitchburg (City) Police Department	2	100%	
White	228	53%	
Madison (City) Police Department	124	54%	
University of Wisconsin Police Department	47	21%	
Dane County District Attorney's Office	32	14%	
Fitchburg (City) Police Department	10	4%	
Sun Prairie (City) Police Department	8	4%	
Monona (City) Police Department	7	3%	
Hispanic	44	10%	
Madison (City) Police Department	19	43%	
Dane County District Attorney's Office	8	18%	
Sun Prairie (City) Police Department	8	18%	
Fitchburg (City) Police Department	6	14%	
University of Wisconsin Police Department	2	5%	
Monona (City) Police Department	1	2%	
Total 2024 Referrals to CRC:	430		

Referred Offenses

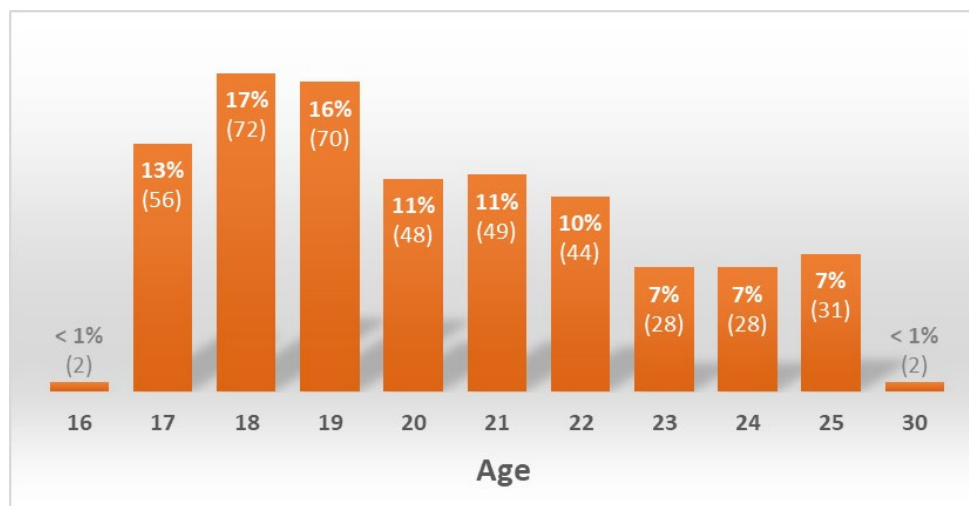
CRC received referrals for the following offense types in 2024: Trespass, Disorderly Conduct, Theft, Resisting or Obstructing an Officer, Damage to Property, and Battery. The most referred offense in 2024 was for Trespassing, accounting for 32% of CRC's referrals.

A total of 494 offenses were referred to CRC in 2024, which is higher than our total referral count of 430 due to receiving referrals that included more than one offense.



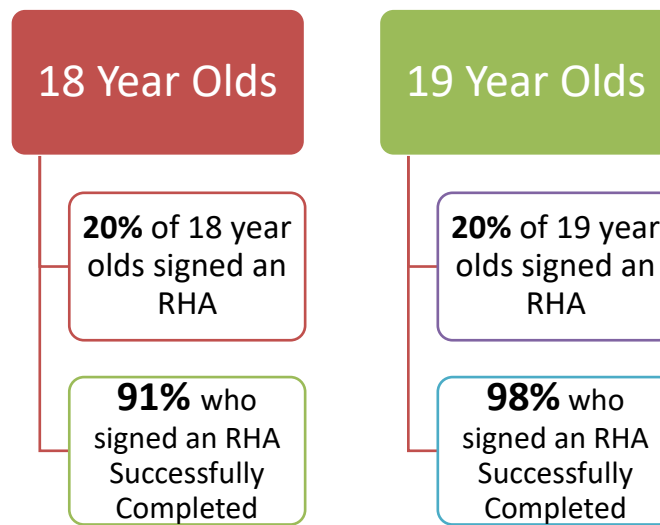
Age at Offense

The largest number of CRC Respondents in 2024 fell within the 18- to 19-year-old age range, which is the age of the Respondent at the time they committed the offense. Referrals to CRC are made at different intervals after the Respondent's offense is committed, at the discretion of each referring law enforcement agency. Using the Respondent's age at the time they committed their offense provides a more consistent way of gauging how age can affect participation in the CRC program.



Successful Completions by Age

Of the 234 Respondents who signed an RHA with CRC, 18- and 19-year-old Respondents were the largest group to sign an RHA in 2024.



Unreachable Respondents/Respondents Outside of Contact

CRC makes many attempts to contact and engage Respondents referred to the CRC program. This can include trying to make contact by mail, email, or text message. After attempts to make contact are unsuccessful, the person is then referred back to Municipal Court or the District Attorney's Office. CRC participation is voluntary, with **75% of referrals electing to engage**.

Below you will see a breakdown of what happened to Madison Police Department referrals that were returned to the Madison Municipal Court.

Of those that were unreachable:

- Race/Ethnicity
 - 60% White
 - 35% Black or African American
 - 4% Asian
 - 1% Unknown
- Gender
 - 62% Male
 - 38% Female

Of the 104 Unreachable Respondents, 76 were referred by Madison Police Department. They were referred back to the Madison Municipal Court for processing, and their plea statuses are as follows:

- 1% - Guilty
- 66% - No Contest
- 26% - Not Guilty

- 3% - Dismissed
- 1% - Ongoing Open Case
- 3% - Other

Repair Harm Agreement (RHA): Efforts to Restore and Repair

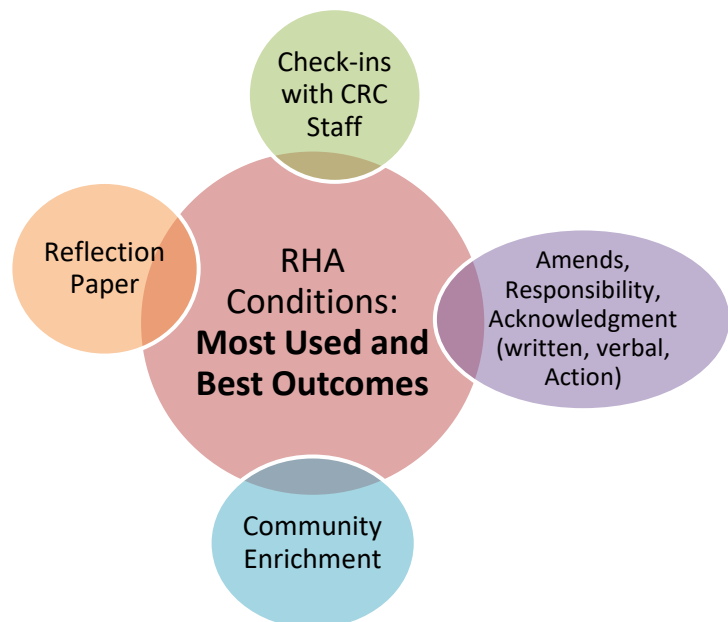
Repair Harm Agreements (RHA) are a signed agreement between CRC, the Respondent, the Victim, and the Peacemaker(s) who voluntarily participate in the Respondent's Circle. This is a collaborative plan to address the harm caused by the incident and allows for healing and accountability. The Victim(s) are invited to participate in the process in any way they feel comfortable. Options include circle participation, surrogate involvement, letters or conversations with CRC staff to share their experience.

A Repair Harm Agreement is determined during the Restorative Justice Circle process. A Circle can be completed in-person or virtually. In 2024, a total of 240 Respondents referred to CRC completed a Circle and signed an RHA. These Circles included 25% being completed in-person and 75% being completed virtually. A further analysis is detailed below.

2024 CRC Referrals - Circle Locations	# of Referrals	% of Referrals
In-Person	61	25%
<i>Successfully Completed RHA</i>	57	93%
<i>Noncompliant / Unsuccessful</i>	4	7%
Virtual	179	75%
<i>Successfully Completed RHA</i>	170	95%
<i>Noncompliant / Unsuccessful</i>	9	5%

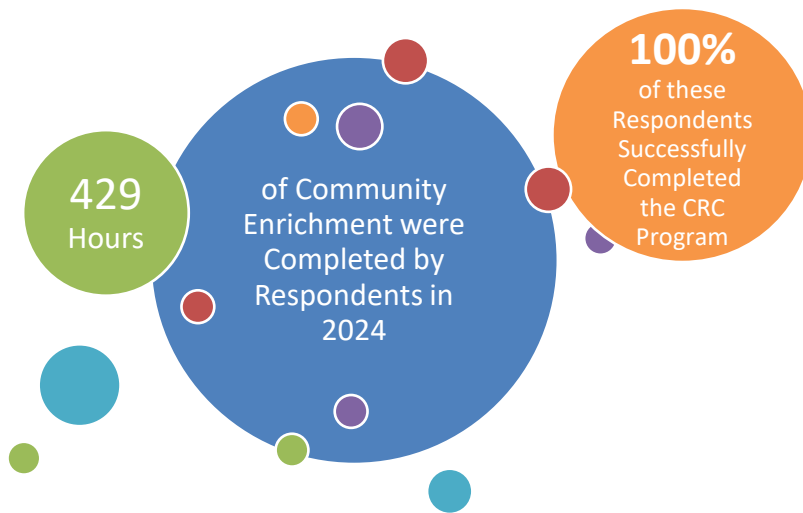
During the Circle process, conditions are determined in order for the Respondent to repair harm done, reduce future risk, and rebuild community.

In 2024, the RHA conditions that were both used most often and lead to a higher percentage of successful outcomes included: checking-in regularly with CRC staff for relationship building; making amends/taking responsibility/acknowledging harm done through written, verbal, or in action; writing a reflection paper; and by giving back to the community through community enrichment projects.



Community Enrichment

Community enrichment is the process of uplifting and strengthening a community by creating opportunities for growth, connection, and shared purpose—helping individuals and neighborhoods thrive together.



A total of 423 Community Enrichment hours for 2024 were included as a condition on RHAs.

429 Community Enrichment hours were completed by these Respondents, with another 8 hours remaining on an open/active case.

14 additional hours were voluntarily completed above those required by the RHA, contributing to the 429 hours completed in 2024.

Restitution: Making Amends Financially

Restitution is the act of making amends for harm or loss, often by restoring something to its original state or providing compensation to those affected. In a justice context, it means taking responsibility and taking action—such as repaying, repairing, or otherwise addressing the damage done—to help restore trust, balance, and healing.

In 2024, Respondents' restitution for CRC referrals totaled \$11,260:

- \$7,134 has been recovered/paid
- \$3,248 remains outstanding with open/active cases
- \$878 was not recovered, which is 8% of the total restitution obligations for Respondents referred in 2024

Facilitating Dialogue Between Respondents and Victims

A 19-year-old man was cited by the Sun Prairie Police Department for damage to property and referred to CRC after throwing eggs at a business owner's vehicle and speeding off. The Victim, standing next to his vehicle, witnessed the incident in full.

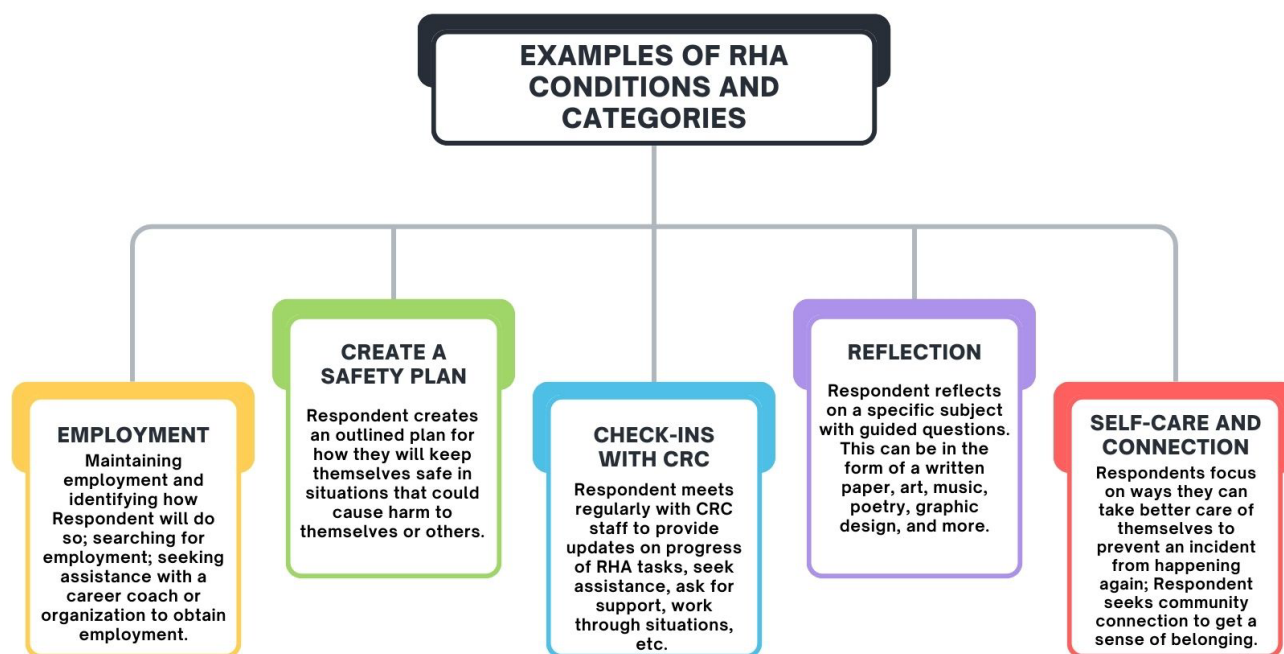
Both the respondent and the Victim agreed to participate in the CRC process. The Victim expressed strong support for CRC and chose to take part in the restorative circle.

During the circle, the Victim and respondent engaged in an open, honest dialogue about the incident and its impact. The Victim shared the financial burden, the time spent arranging repairs, the delay in fixing his newly purchased vehicle, and the stress and anxiety the situation caused him and his family.

The respondent accepted full responsibility. Together, participants in the circle approached the difficult conversation of repairing harm with sincerity and understanding. The vehicle sustained just over \$2,000

in damage, and as part of the Repair Harm Agreement, the respondent paid full restitution before the deadline.

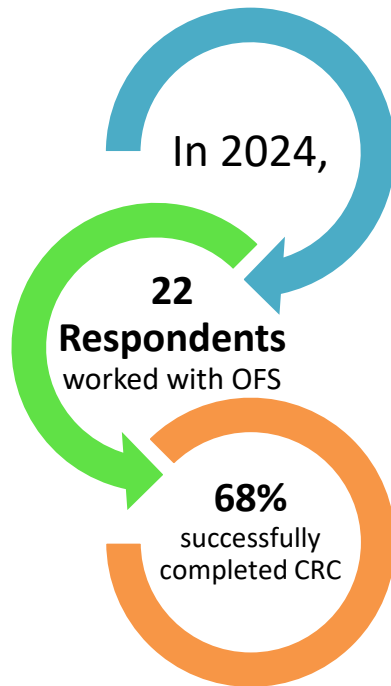
RHA Conditions Used in 2024



One of the most impactful pieces of the process is that the Repair Harm Agreement is crafted on a circle-by-circle basis, and *everyone* that is a part of the circle has a say in what goes in to the Repair Harm Agreement. The goal is that everyone in the circle agrees that the terms repair the harm that was done. CRC has the ability to be creative with these terms – tapping into the strengths, interests, and passions of the Respondent to increase Respondent investment into the task as well as increase likelihood of completion, while also ensuring that the community and the Victim feel that the harm will be repaired through these actions/tasks.

Community Partners Spotlight/Outside Organizations

During the Circle process, participants can agree to make referrals for the Respondent to work with outside organizations. This provides added supports to help facilitate a successful completion of the CRC program.



One organization CRC works closely with is Operation Fresh Start (OFS).

OFS works with Respondents through providing support for self-sufficiency through education, mentoring, and employment training.

Other organizations CRC worked with in 2024 included: Latino Academy for Workforce Development, Centro Hispano, Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), Independent Living Services (ILS), Madison College, Immigration Affairs, Joining Forces for Families, and providers for AODA Counseling/Treatment.

Jasmine Banks: Deputy Director of Empowerment Programs and Strategic Initiatives:

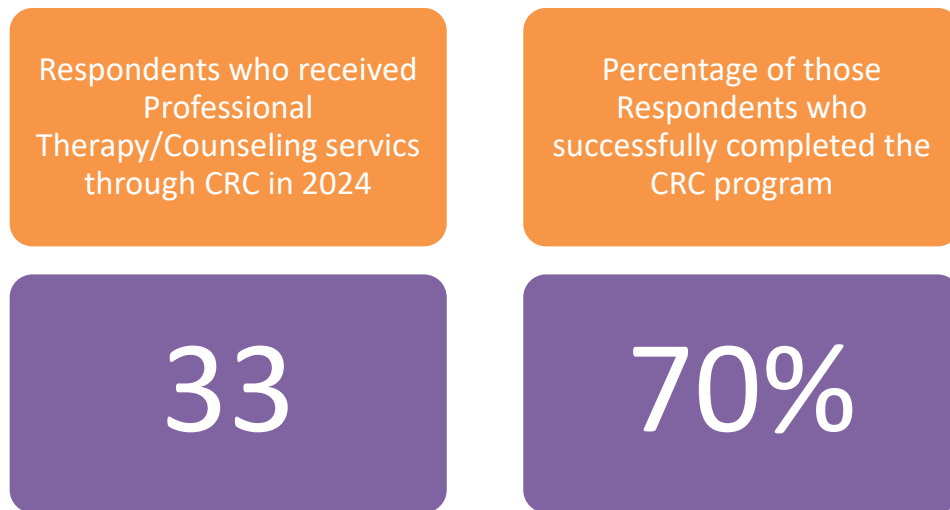
“As someone who works at an organization whose vision declares that ‘*All emerging adults ages 16–24 are assets in our community,*’ becoming a Peacemaker with the Dane County Community Restorative Court has been one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

It’s given me the opportunity to show up for emerging adults in our community in the same way I do for the young people at Operation Fresh Start by expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, and expanding possibilities.

Being part of a community committed to restoration in partnership with Dane County Community Restorative Court is something I’m deeply proud of.”

Behavioral and Mental Health Support Resources

In 2024, CRC worked directly with various mental health providers in order to provide Respondents with professional therapy/counseling services.



An additional 14 Respondents were required to establish or continue professional therapy/counseling services outside of CRC. Of these 14 Respondents, 12 successfully completed the CRC program.

CRC Celebrates 10 years!

Overview

September 2024 marked the 10-year anniversary of Dane County’s Community Restorative Court (CRC). Since its inception, CRC has played a vital role in promoting restorative justice, fostering meaningful connections between law enforcement and the community, and engaging residents as active participants in repairing harm, reducing risk, and rebuilding trust.

Event Highlights

The anniversary celebration brought together Respondents, law enforcement partners, community stakeholders, Peacemakers, and staff to reflect on a decade of growth and impact. Attendees shared stories that demonstrated CRC’s transformative influence—on individual lives and on the broader community. The event featured fellowship, food, and powerful guest speakers representing multiple perspectives within the CRC process.

Peacemakers, Respondents, and a Victim spoke candidly about their experiences. Respondents described how participation in CRC helped them move forward, pursue their goals, and see themselves as valued members of the community. Peacemakers and law enforcement partners shared how sitting in restorative circles reshaped their approach to justice and accountability. The Victim shared the deep, emotional impact of the incident, and how the restorative process transformed their anger and helped them to find peace with the situation.



Former CRC Respondents LaSheik Douglas (left), Ousainou Ibrahim (right picture, left side), and Mateo Ruiz De La Torre (right picture, right side) attended the anniversary gathering and shared their experiences.

Key Moments & Reflections

- **Community Voices:**

At the heart of the Community Restorative Court are our volunteers, our Peacemakers. As Ron Johnson, CRC's first and only Coordinator, often said, *"The Peacemakers are the backbone of this program, and we couldn't exist without them."*

Each of us has stumbled, and each of us has experienced harm. In those moments, what we need most is connection—not isolation, fear, or shame. Peacemakers bring this principle to life. They form a diverse team united by a shared purpose: to embrace community members with support, understanding, and a sense of acceptance. There are moments in the circle that words can scarcely capture—moments when a respondent connects with a Peacemaker, lowers their guard, and feels truly safe. Each circle stands as a testament to this principle, as Peacemakers transform CRC into a vibrant space of integrity, healing, and shared responsibility.

Two of CRC's remarkable Peacemakers shared their experience with attendees at the 10-year celebration. Their stories energized everyone in the room, and reminded everyone that Respondents, Victims, and CRC Staff are not the only ones that learn and grow from this work.



Peacemakers Clinton Bryant (left) and Abe Saloma (right) shared what being a part of CRC means to them.

- **UWPD Sergeant Ian Shaw's Personal Experience:**

- I had the opportunity to participate in the CRC Circle for the first time earlier this year, and the experience profoundly changed the way that I view restorative justice
- My experience participating in the circle was emotional, exhausting, honest, and ultimately full of hope. We both had the opportunity to unburden our hearts and speak our truths about life, justice, and even law enforcement's place in all of it. I had the rare opportunity to reach out my hand to someone who I had put in handcuffs, and to say "I see your struggle, I acknowledge your pain, and we want to help you chart a new path forward".
- It was in that moment that I saw the truth that restorative justice is not a privilege for those in our community who need it least, but a community of care reaching out as one to those who need it most. This wonderful group of social workers, staff, and volunteers are reaching out past the limits of a broken system to say in a clear voice that we all have a place here and that justice need not always be punitive, but rather it can be collaborative, healing, and life changing.



Impact and Future Vision

The event underscored the profound effect CRC has had over the past decade. Stories shared at the celebration reflected lives changed, relationships repaired, and a growing commitment to restorative practices in Dane County. It also served as a call to action—to continue expanding CRC's reach and deepening its impact in the years ahead.



Teresa Tellez-Giron (CRC Program Leader), Detective Gracia Rodriguez (Madison Police Department Detective) and Ron Chance (Community Programs Manager, pictured on the right) celebrated and shared the impact of CRC.

Closing Thought

The CRC 10-Year Anniversary Celebration was more than an event; it was a testament to what can be achieved when a community embraces compassion, accountability, and the power of restorative justice. The spirit of CRC's mission was evident in every story, and its future is bright.



Joe Balles (Retired Madison Police Department Captain, pictured on the right in the left picture), Jonathan Scharrer (Director of the Restorative Justice Project at UW-Madison Law School, pictured on the left in the right picture), and Colleen Clark-Bernhardt (Director of the Dane County Office of Justice Reform, pictured on the right in the right picture) were honored at the gathering for all of their support and work with CRC.

Video on CRC Anniversary & Testimonials: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM5oVeXTXao>

Summary

CRC experienced an incredibly successful year in 2024. Through the work of CRC's dedicated staff, the Peacemakers, the stakeholders, and all of the community partners, CRC looks forward to continuing to support the young people in this community, and strengthening the bonds that bring us all together.