

Vermont's Statewide Equity thru Data, Justice, Inclusion, and Education (EDJIE) Initiative Education + Training Overview | January 2024

Written by Jessie Schmidt, Executive Director, Orange County Restorative Justice Center + Member EDJIE Leadership Team

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

In Winter of 2021, all Restorative Justice Centers in Vermont signed Vermont's Restorative Justice Programs Position on Racial Injustice, which stated- "As we seek to hold ourselves accountable and move toward a justice system that brings dignity, safety and repair of harm for all, we commit to":

INCLUSION

- Prioritize diversity in all its forms (race, age, income, lived experience with the criminal legal system, etc.) when recruiting staff and volunteers for our work, with the intent to best represent the communities we serve;
- Collect and share data that will help identify inequities in accessing restorative options at our agencies for people of color in Vermont;
- Engage in at least six hours of anti-racism training annually to explore our own implicit biases and privileges, the foundation and historical roots of our restorative practices among indigenous peoples here and around the world, the roots and current forms of racism, and what it means to be anti-racist;
- Use a standing agenda item on our member agency and association meetings, at least quarterly, to examine our policies and practices in light of these commitments so we work in ways that are inclusive and equitable, respect the dignity of all, and build relationships rooted in justice and respect.

GOALS

With these goals in mind, a committee of RJC leaders applied for federal funding to further these goals, noting that there are numerous examples of areas where Vermont's criminal justice and law enforcement systems are systematically failing people in the most marginalized identity groups.

Training, education, and consistent, effective data collection tools and practices are necessary to understand and take action to address the ways Vermont's restorative justice system perpetuates the prevalent inequities in the criminal legal systems.

This 2-year grant allows the 22 state-funded restorative justice (RJ) organizations to pursue the development, delivery, and institutionalization of professional development trainings to address personal and institutional racism, implicit bias, trauma, gender equity, and general inclusivity in conjunction with parallel projects related to data collection and analysis support and equitable policy review and development. The *Inviting Possibilities: Restorative Justice As Equity* training is one outcome of seeing these goals to fruition.