



Restorative Justice Conferencing – Frequently Asked Questions

I have received a letter saying that an offence committed against me has been referred to restorative justice, what now?

The offence that was committed against you and the young person responsible has been referred to a restorative justice process. This means that the police or the court have decided the most appropriate way to deal with the offence is by giving you the chance to meet with the young person (aged 10–17 years) responsible, have your questions about the offence answered, and have a say in the outcome and what the young person needs to do to try and repair the harm caused by the offence. A convenor, who is specially trained, will run the restorative justice conference. There is no need for you to do anything when you receive the letter; the convenor will call you as soon as they can. If you wish to follow-up on the referral, call the number on the bottom of the letter and ask to speak with the restorative justice team.

I received a call from a restorative justice convenor asking me to meet with them and talk about restorative justice. Do I have to go?

No, you do not have to meet with them. A meeting with the restorative justice convenor is voluntary. However, meeting with the convenor can provide you with information about support services and the restorative justice process to help you understand your rights. From there, you can decide whether participating in the restorative justice conference is right for you.

What should I expect when I meet with the convenor?

The convenor is there to link you with support services and give you information to help you decide whether participating in the restorative justice conference is right for you. You should expect to be treated respectfully and with dignity, and for the convenor to take into account your wishes as much as possible.

The convenor can meet you at home, work, in the community, or at your closest youth justice service centre. Depending on the type of offence, you will need to be prepared for the convenor to ask you questions about what happened at the time the offence was committed, and how things have been for you since. You are not expected to talk about anything you do not want to. However, this information will help the convenor understand the harm that has been caused by the offence and consider what other support services might be available to you.

I have heard about a conference happening because an offence was committed against me, do I have to go?

No, you do not have to attend the conference. Attendance at the restorative justice conference is voluntary and you may ultimately choose not to be involved in the conference at all. Alternatively, you can choose to have a family member, friend or colleague represent you at the conference. You can also write or record a victim impact statement to be presented at the conference or choose to be represented by an organisation that works with victims of crime.



Can I bring someone to the conference with me?

Yes, we want you to be supported. The convenor will need to meet with your support person before the conference so they can participate safely and effectively.

A restorative justice agreement is meant to help repair the harm done to me. What if I cannot think about how this can happen?

Sometimes, it is hard to find a way a young person can make up for what they have done. After attending the conference, meeting with the young person, hearing their story, and sharing your own story, you may have a clearer understanding about what else might need to happen to help put things right. It is not always just about what a young person can do following a conference, but what the young person does during the conference that can help provide satisfaction for people harmed.

You are not expected to come up with agreement suggestions. The convenor will help all parties negotiate an agreement. Agreements may contain verbal outcomes such as apologies and promises towards the person harmed – sometimes these can be the most meaningful outcomes. The police or the young person's parents can also ask for certain outcomes for the agreement.

I want to go to a conference, but I do not know what I will do when I meet the young person. What should I do?

You can speak to the convenor about support services available to you before attending the conference. We will ensure your participation is safe and the process can be tailored to best ensure this. This could mean you attend but do not speak, attend select parts of the process (e.g., to have your say or to hear the young person take responsibility), participate remotely, or have your messages recorded and relayed at conference.

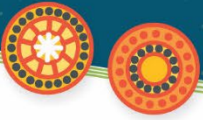
I am thinking of writing or recording a victim impact statement for the conference. How do I do this?

The convenor can provide a template with questions that may be asked during the conference, if you would like to write or record it yourself. You can also talk to the convenor about the impacts of the offence, and they can write it or record it for you.

What is it like meeting the young person who has offended against you?

A conference can be socially challenging for a young person, and they may demonstrate some difficulty in communicating initially. There are varying ways people express shame, remorse, embarrassment or feeling confronted.

Children and teenagers might find it hard to express themselves, especially if they have experienced childhood trauma. Their experiences do not excuse their crimes or behaviour, but might explain a lack of eye contact or speaking in short sentences. Often, as they gain confidence and understanding during the restorative justice process, by the end everyone is communicating more openly.



It is important to know that convenors do not coach the young person for the conference – we do not tell them what to say, how to act or what to wear; we ask them to be honest.

The young person must treat you respectfully and if they do not, the convenor will pause or end the conference. The convenor would return the referral if they believed the young person would not participate in the conference safely.

What happens if I decide not to go to the conference?

If you choose not to participate in the conference in any form, then an [alternative diversion program \(ADP\)](#) is offered to the young person instead. These are short-term intervention programs that focus on addressing the young person's underlying causes of offending and reducing their chances of reoffending. Alternative diversion programs might involve working on emotional regulation and impulse control, connecting with a positive social group, re-engaging with education or employment, working with services that address drug and alcohol misuse or family issues, or an offence-specific program like driver safety.

The option for an ADP is only available if an offence has been referred to restorative justice by the police, if the court deems that the police should have referred the offence to restorative justice (section 24A referral), or if the court decides the offence would be better dealt with restorative justice (court diversion referral) (see [referral pathways](#)). In the case of restorative justice presentence referrals or restorative justice orders, the convenor will generally ask a representative of an organisation that advocates on behalf of victims to attend in your place. This way, the restorative justice conference can still proceed, and the young person is held accountable for the impacts of their actions.

How long does a conference go for?

Conferences usually go for about 2 hours.

Where is the conference held?

The convenor will find a neutral place that works for the participants. This can be a community venue or a youth justice service centre.

When do conferences happen?

Conferences generally happen during business hours between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday at a time that suits everyone.

Where can I find support?

Please see our [victim support page](#) for further information.