



## FY23 Restorative Justice Panel Survey Data

### Background:

During FY23 (July 2022 - June 2023) the Essex Community Justice Center received **113 Restorative Justice Panel referrals** (154 in FY22) for our service area. These cases were staffed along with 34 cases that were rolled over from the previous fiscal year. Of the new referrals,

- **94% came directly from law enforcement** (92% in FY22)
- **3% came from Probation and Parole/Youthful Offender** (5% in FY22)
- **The remaining 3% came from a variety of sources** including schools, community organizations, the courts, and the State Attorney's Office

Of the cases that entered into a restorative process and completed during the fiscal year, **90% successfully completed (85% in FY22)** meaning the responsible party took accountability for their actions, had a discussion on the impact of the incident, and completed a plan for repair and skill building.

### Analysis Summary:

After every panel completion, all panel parties are provided with a survey to offer feedback. We are continually striving to increase the response rate in order to have the most data possible that will inform our work. During recent years, we implemented the following strategies to increase response rates: raising the gift card amount from \$5 to \$10, offering paper or electronic survey submission, and adding a survey for support people. This year's analysis provides additional insight into future areas of focus.

In FY23, the responses from panel surveys highlight the overwhelmingly positive outcomes of the work.

### Trends for consideration include:

- Total number of panel referrals down
- Higher percentage of responsible parties and parent/guardians completing surveys
- The affected party survey completion rate remains low creating an opportunity to further examine ways to gather feedback.
- Positive results for almost all indicators of panel impact
- Opportunities to further consider goals for responsible parties to feel more connected to community and for affected parties to feel heard. It is worth noting that conversations are underway to assess the importance of developing a common understanding of justice which may help both of these indicators.

**Below is a snapshot of the surveys collected.**

**PART 1: Responsible Party Surveys. 19 Surveys collected. (23 in FY22 and 11 in FY21 – while the number of surveys is down this year, the percentage of panel participants returning surveys is up)**

**93%** of Responsible Party respondents AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that they achieved the following through their Restorative Justice (RJ) Panel Experience (86% in FY22; 91% in FY21):

- Learned how their actions impacted others.
- Learned how to decrease the chances they would commit another offense.
- Repaired some of the harm they caused.
- Felt more connected to the community.
- Felt they were able to resolve the incident.

**98%** of Responsible Party respondents AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that the CJC Staff and Volunteers (94% in FY22; 100% in FY21):

- Prepared them for the meeting.
- Handled things fairly.
- Treated them and others were treated with respect.
- Supported them through the meeting.
- Gave them a chance to say what they needed to say.
- Gave them the information they needed.
- Encouraged them to share their ideas.

When asked to comment on what part of the process was most helpful, the answers given most frequently were:

- Writing letters of apology or gratitude (7)
- Conversation with the group/people impacted by my actions (4)
- Community/Educational activity (3)
- Writing activity (3)

**Sample of Quotes from Responsible Party Surveys:**

“Giving back to the community by doing a legal mural is very enlightening and helped me realize there are better ways to execute my art.”

“Thinking about what I will do next time was helpful.”

“Thank you for this alternative form of justice. It was very helpful.”

“I don’t want to hurt anyone again. Being able to talk about it was a resolving action. I felt repair was impacted by writing a letter (most impactful action) and the overall process was helpful.”

“I deeply regret what I did. When I was told that I had to go to ECJC, I had no idea what it was about. I was so scared and nervous. Meeting with Susanna at the CJC made me feel so comfortable. Also meeting with the panel made me see myself in a different light. They treated me with dignity and respect. They made me realize I could forgive myself, even though I hated myself for what I did. My actions impacted myself, but most of all it impacted my husband. I knew that I needed to tell him, and it was very hard to do. But I did it and everything I was asked to do. At this point I am still having a hard

time realizing what I did and cannot fully forgive myself, but hopefully will someday. Someday I would like to be a part of the panel and give encouragement to others.”

“I feel the group was a broad range of ages and that I received a good amount of feedback and questions for thought going forward. I think in the future, this process could be better had I met the group first, prior to the inclusion of the store owner. It would have given me familiar ground where I had no one walking in there that first night with everyone. Thank you to everyone there. I will not forget you.”

“I appreciated the second chance, and this most definitely helped me feel more connected to the community.”

## **PART 2: Parent / Guardians Surveys. 14 Surveys collected (4 in FY22; 5 in FY21)**

**98%** of Parents / Guardians AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that during their experience with the Restorative Justice Process: (100% in FY22)

- Their child’s individual needs were considered.
- The parent/guardian needs were considered.
- The agreement addressed the incident in question.
- They felt the incident was resolved.
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**71%** of Parents / Guardians AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that during their experience with the Restorative Justice Process: (75% in FY22)

- They felt more connected to their community.

**100%** of Parents/ Guardians AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that the CJC Staff and volunteers: (100% in FY22)

- Prepared their child for the meeting.
- Helped their child feel comfortable in the meeting.
- Handled things fairly.
- Treated their child and others with respect.
- Supported their child through the meeting.
- Gave their child a chance to say what they needed to say.
- Gave their child the information they needed.
- Encouraged their child to share their ideas.

When asked to comment on what part of the process was most helpful, the answers given most frequently were:

- Writing letters of apology or gratitude (8)
- Conversation with the group/people impacted by my actions (3)
- Thinking about alternative ways to handle situation (3)

## Sample Quotes from Parent / Guardian Surveys

“Writing the letters really helped our son to see things from others’ point of view.”

“The CJC staff and volunteers were kind and great with my grandchild.”

“I’m thankful to the program so that my child could avoid a criminal charge. The process allowed my child to open up which is not an easy task. Thank you for all you do!”

“I was worried that it would be hard for my son to be able to express himself to strangers, but they were easy to talk to.”

## PART 3: Support Person Surveys 2 Collected (1 in FY22)

**100% of Support Person Surveys collected AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that the following was achieved through the Restorative Justice (RJ) Panel Experience: (100% in FY22)**

- the needs of the person I was supporting were considered.
- my concerns and the concerns of the person I was supporting and considered.
- the agreement addressed the incident in question.
- the incident was resolved.

**100% of Support Person Surveys collected AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that the CJC Staff and volunteers: (100% in FY22)**

- Prepared the person being supported for the meeting.
- Helped the person being supported feel comfortable in the meeting.
- Handled things fairly.
- Treated the person being supported and others with respect.
- Supported the person being supported through the meeting.
- Gave the person being supported a chance to say what they needed to say.
- Gave the person being supported the information they needed.
- Encouraged the person being supported to share their ideas.
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The Support Person respondent reported the following as the most **valuable components** of the process:

- Letters or verbal apologies
- Restorative Justice Panel Meetings
- Community work

## Quote from Support Person Surveys

“You guys do great work on helping them understand what they did wrong. He learned better in a group.”

“Thank you so much for letting me be included in this process for my student. I think it was truly helpful for her to use this process to heal and move forward from the event.”

**PART 4: Affected Party Surveys. 2 surveys collected (3 in FY22; 2 in FY21)**

**50%** of Affected Party respondents AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that during their experience with the Restorative Justice Process: (67% in FY22)

- They got to tell their story and how they were impacted by the incident
- Their concerns were heard and considered.

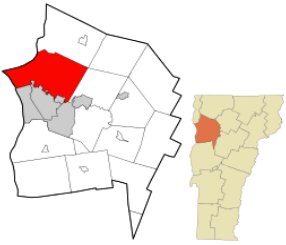
**100%** of Affected Party respondents AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED that during their experience with the Restorative Justice Process: (0% in FY22)

- The person who harmed them did something to help make things better for them.

**100%** of Affected Party respondents Agreed that the CJC staff and volunteers:

- Prepared them for the meeting.
- Helped them feel comfortable.
- Handled things fairly.
- Treated them and others with respect.
- Supported them through the meeting.
- Gave them a chance to say what they needed to say.
- Gave them the information they needed.
- Encouraged them to share their ideas.

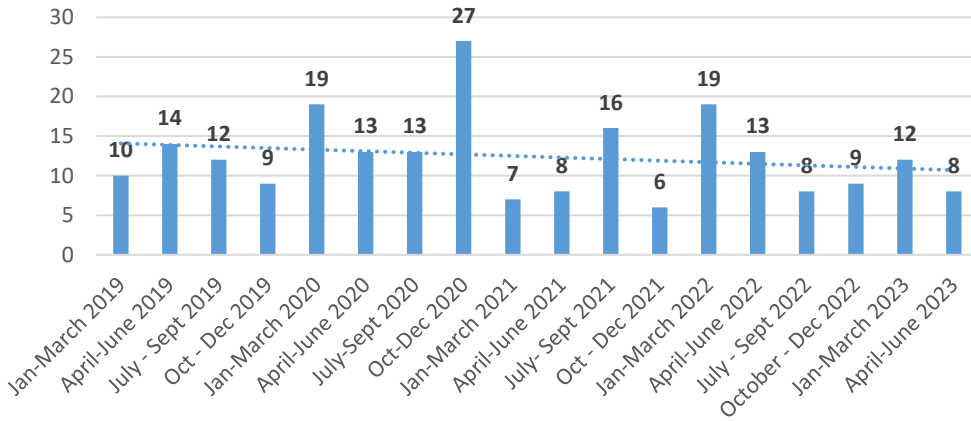
**100%** of Affected Party respondents shared that they are satisfied with the conclusion of the restorative process.



# Restorative Justice in Colchester (FY23)

Through a Pre-Charge program, the Colchester Police Department can refer cases to Restorative Justice Panels instead of court. The panels are facilitated by trained community volunteers and serve as a proven and cost-effective means to addressing low level offenses. Through a series of conversations, the panel process holds those responsible for crime accountable for their actions and provides an important opportunity for those affected by crime to share their stories and identify needs for repair.

## Colchester PD Quarterly Referrals



## Community Impact of FY23 Referrals

**29 community members affected** by the referred crimes were contacted by CJC staff to discuss the referral and how they can be involved.

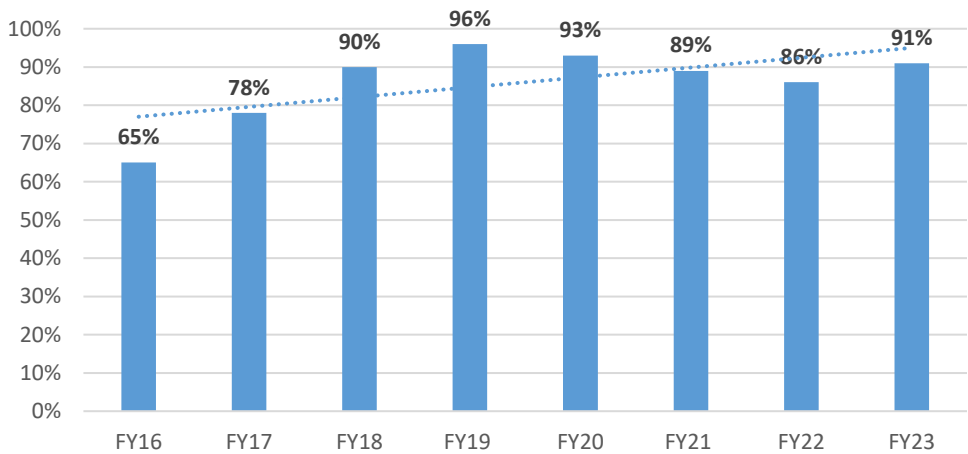
**18 affected parties participated** in the restorative justice panels involving their situation, either in person, victim statements, requesting updates, and/or restitution requests.

Colchester residents provided **180 hours of service** through the facilitation of panels in the community.

**\$1,195 in restitution was resolved** through the panel agreement process by those responsible for the crime.

**Quote from Responsible Party:**  
 "I would totally recommend this program! From the first meeting right up until the end, it was an amazingly awesome experience. I was instantly comfortable, and it was like we knew each other...I definitely felt connected to my community. It made me realize my community is a lot more compassionate and understanding than I knew. I am thankful to the Affected Party for being generous and kind with the restitution terms."

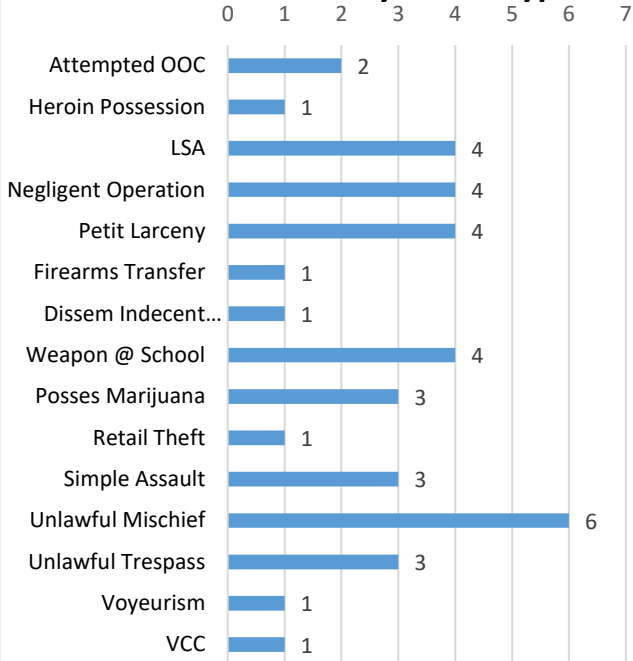
## RJ Panel Successful Completion Rate for Colchester Completed Direct Referrals



\* Of the cases that closed in FY23, 29 of the 51 responsible parties successfully completed a Restorative Justice Panel. Returned cases were largely due to an inability to contact the responsible party and several did not take responsibility for the crime.

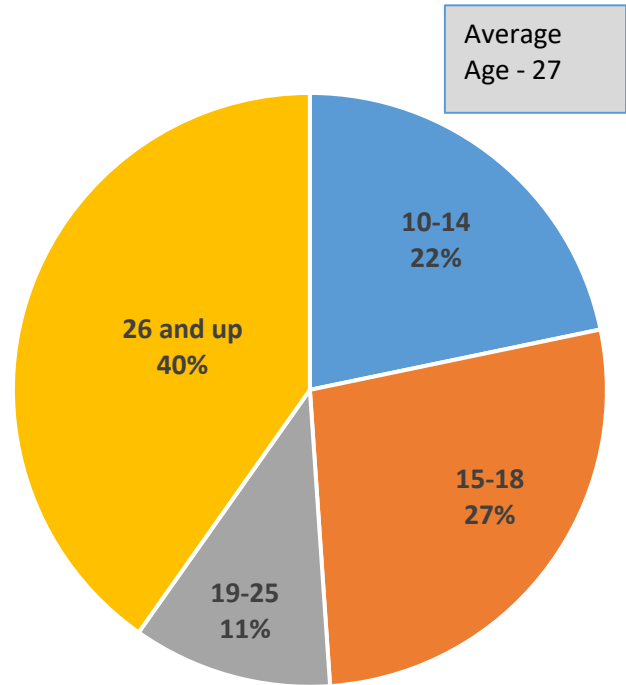


### Colchester PD FY23 Direct Referrals by Crime Type

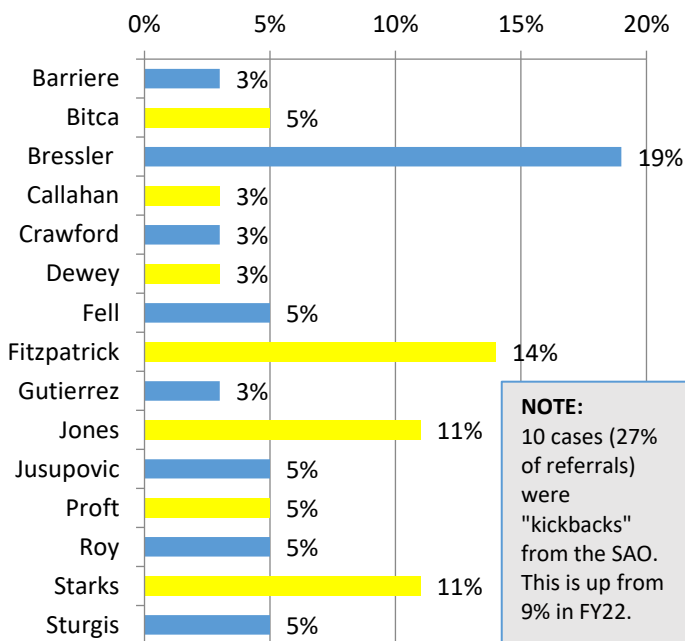


OOC = Operation without Owners Consent  
 LSA = Leaving the Scene of an Accident  
 VCC = Violation of Court Conditions  
 Note: 2 cases had more than one crime type.

### Responsible Party Ages of Colchester PD Direct Referrals FY23

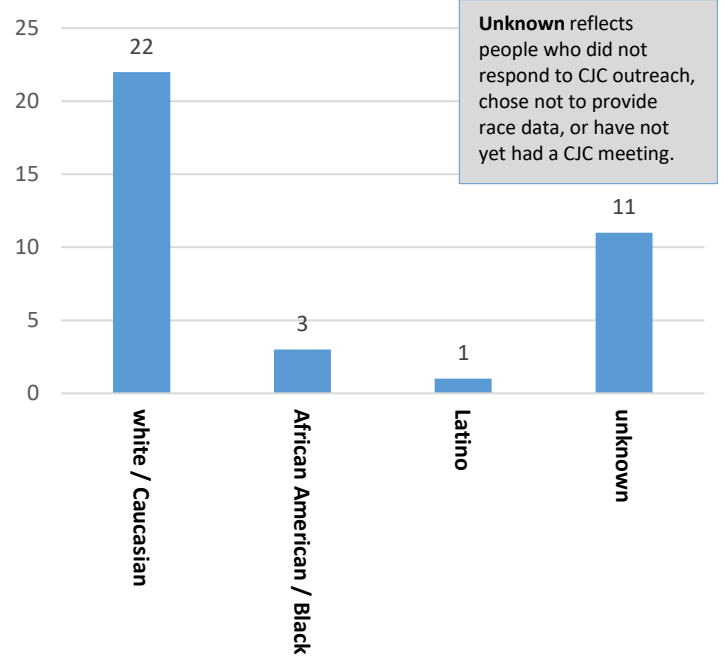


### Percentage of Colchester PD FY23 Referrals by Officer



**NOTE:**  
 10 cases (27% of referrals) were "kickbacks" from the SAO. This is up from 9% in FY22.

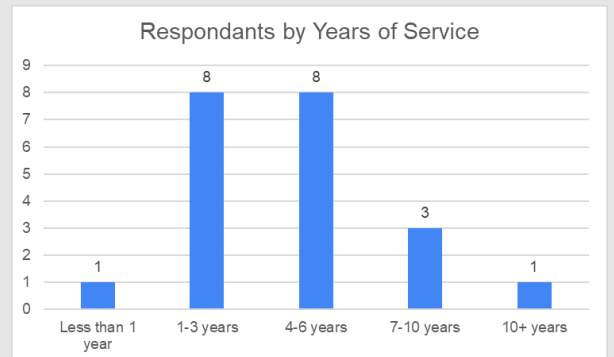
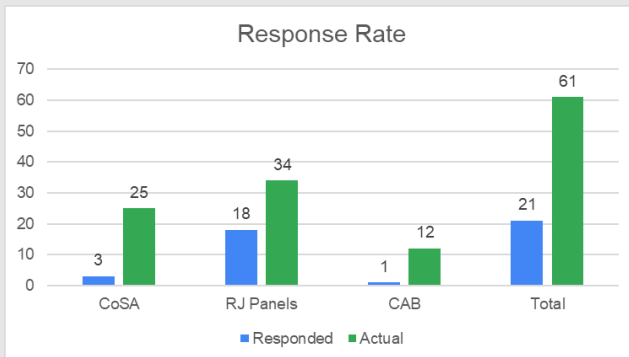
### Self-Reported Race of Colchester PD Direct Referrals FY23





# VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

2023



## WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT WE DO WELL?

- Supportive and welcoming atmosphere
- Organized
- Meeting people where they are at
- Experienced with Restorative Justice
- Open to Feedback
- Supportive
- Thorough
- Volunteer-focused
- Flexible



## IN WHAT AREAS COULD WE IMPROVE AT THE ESSEX CJC?

- Not sure/Can't think of anything
- Diversify pool of volunteers
- Create more debrief opportunity after panels
- Support and training around illiciting action rather than recommending actions for clients
- Social opportunities for volunteers and staff
- Consistent office hours
- Full caseloads
- Volunteer coaching during panel



## IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU, OR DON'T YOU, FEEL SUPPORTED?

- Initial training very helpful
- Volunteer coaching/feedback could be helpful
- Support from staff is strong and reliable
- Small gestures - birthday cards
- Always available to answer questions
- Timely and thoughtful communication
- Listening to our perspectives



## WHAT TOPICS WOULD YOU LIKE MORE TRAININGS OR RESOURCES ABOUT IN ORDER TO FURTHER DEVELOP YOUR VOLUNTEER SKILLS AT THE CJC?

- Acronyms
- Overview of chain of command
- Psychological insights regarding family dynamics and developmental delays
- Anti-racism
- Expectations when dealing with juveniles as responsible parties
- General RJ practice
- Trauma-informed practices
- RJ in schools
- Agreement items resources and referral options





# QUOTES

- Thank you for all you do for our communities!
- Feel I have grown in my understanding of my fellow humans, as well as my understanding of how the team can support each other through the process
- I learned a lot about a side of society that I really knew nothing about previously.
- The folks at Essex CJC are fabulous!
- Just that I greatly appreciate your openness to feedback and ideas. Y'all rock!
- Volunteering on a panel has given me greater appreciation for police who refer to panel with kindness and empathy; I hope that empathy encompasses diverse communities because diversity is not evident in panel affected parties
- Thank you, as always, for the opportunities!
- Great people to work with, both with the CJC personnel and the other volunteers. I have sometimes filled in at other panels or we have had "guest" volunteers at our regular panels. With the same guidelines for operation, we always seem to gel and work together well.
- It is also good that the CJC brings interns into the organization from area colleges, especially where they are working towards some type of social services area. It gives them some personal experience in the field, and even closes the generation gap with some of our responsible parties so that they might not feel like they are being lectured by their parents, teachers, or grandparents.
- Grateful to be a panel member, I have learned so much
- You are all amazing and wonderful human beings.
- I have been volunteering over six years and have always been impressed with the kindness, commitment and professionalism of the staff.
- I've been volunteering for many years with several Vermont state agencies. My favorite folks to work with include RJ with the Essex CJC.
- I find the sessions to always be interesting, rewarding and meaningful. The staff comes well-prepared and the volunteers are enthusiastic and sincere in their wish to assure that those affected by an action feel the amends are sufficient, sincere and honest.
- My experience over these many years is that volunteers and staff are just as anxious to assure that those appearing before the panel know they are respected and supported through the whole process.
- All in all I feel very supported by the staff and have the opinion that I making a positive difference in someone's life.