

What Does Balanced and Restorative Justice Mean?

Victims of crime, the community, and juvenile offenders should receive balanced attention from the Juvenile Justice System and each should gain substantial benefits from their interactions with the system.

Why Does McKean County Follow the Principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice?

With the passage of Act 33, in 1995, Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System was guided by the following purpose of The Juvenile Act at §6301:

“Consistent with protection of the public interest, to provide the children committing delinquent acts programs of supervision, care and rehabilitation which provided balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the development of competencies to enable children to become responsible productive members of community.”

If a child is found to be a delinquent child, the Court is now required by §6352 to make a disposition determined to be:

“Consistent with the protection of the public interest and best suited to the child’s treatment, supervision, rehabilitation and welfare, which disposition shall, as appropriate to the individual circumstances of the child’s case, provide balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the development of competencies to enable the child to become a responsible and productive member of the community.”

What is BARJ?

Balanced and Restorative Justice or BARJ has shifted the mission of juvenile probation from the offender centered point of view (rehabilitation) towards a model emphasizing the development of safe communities (**protection**), responsible youth (**competencies**) and victim awareness (**accountability**).

Victim Restoration—In Pennsylvania, when a juvenile commits a crime, an obligation to the victim is incurred. The goal of Balanced and Restorative Justice is to restore the victim to their pre-crime status, including but not limited to financial, emotional and physical well-being.

A juvenile may be ordered by the court to make restitution to the victim, perform community service, or write a letter of apology as a condition of court supervision.

Community Protection—The citizens of Pennsylvania have a right to safe and secure communities.

Juvenile Court ensures that offenders left in their communities are properly supervised in the community and that offenders’ time is structured in productive activities. This is accomplished through Intensive Probation supervision, electronic home monitoring, graduated sanctioning and community block watches.

Juvenile’s that are placed in secure, residential, foster care, drug and alcohol rehabilitation placements may earn home passes once they complete established goals. To ensure community protection and victim’s rights, the victim may chose to be notified at each stage by the Juvenile System Victim Services Unit.

Youth Competencies—Juvenciles who come within the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Justice System should leave the system more capable of being responsible and productive members of their communities.

Through Victim Awareness classes juvenile offenders become aware of the impact their crime have not only to the victims but also to the whole community.

In addition, youth are required to be involved in an educational program or actively seeking employment to continue to foster competency development. This also includes youth being involved in extra-curricular or community programs which provides them with skill building .

A program that exemplifies the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice is School-Based Probation. It was designed to increase communication between the school district and probation department; increase coordination among the family, school, probation department and appropriate community agencies; meet the educational and related needs of mutual clients; and provide schools with alternatives for managing students exhibiting behavioral problems.

Balanced and Restorative Justice requires staff to enlist the aid and support of community members, organizations, schools, businesses and churches to monitor youth and provide them with constructive activities. To achieve these goals, the Court has established relationships with many organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, the Salvation Army, Mental Health Facilities (The Guidance Center, Beacon Light Behavioral Health Services and Port Psychological Services), the schools in all five districts, Student Assistant Program (SAP) teams, McKean County Children and Youth Services, McKean County Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, and various other organizations for community service sites.

If you as a community member or agency are interested in learning more about the Balanced and Restorative Justice philosophy or would like to discuss ways your community can be involved in alliances with McKean County Juvenile Court, please contact any member of the Juvenile Probation Department at (814-887-3365).

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**WHAT IS
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McKean County Court of Common Pleas
Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of the Court is to justly decide the controversies presented. We do that by...

- Treating all people with dignity, courtesy, civility and respect.
- Listening carefully, considering conscientiously, and deciding wisely.
- Applying the law with impartiality and integrity.
- Providing a forum that is fair, in a setting that is dignified, safe and clean.
- Recognizing the Court's responsibility to protect the rights of all citizens.
- Acknowledging the Court's duty to encourage where possible, and to compel where appropriate, every citizen to carry out the responsibilities owed to one's family, community, state and nation.

Because ultimate justice cannot occur without eventual reconciliation, all court staff will attempt to create an environment in which reconciliation can take place.

**Published and Distributed
By
McKean County Juvenile
Probation
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Smethport, PA 16749**

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