



# Surrogates in Restorative Justice

In restorative justice (RJ) processes, a surrogate plays a crucial role when the direct victim of harm is unable or unwilling to participate in the dialogue. Surrogates are individuals who have experienced a similar type of harm or have a close connection to someone who has. Their involvement helps provide a meaningful and empathetic perspective to the responsible party, facilitating a deeper understanding of the impact of their actions.

There are several key aspects of what a surrogate does in a restorative justice process:

1. **Representation of Harm:** Surrogates step in to represent the perspective of the victim. They share their own experiences of similar harm to help the responsible party grasp the emotional and psychological consequences of their actions. This can include sharing personal stories, discussing the impact of the harm, and explaining the broader implications on individuals and communities.
2. **Facilitating Empathy and Accountability:** By sharing their experiences, surrogates help the responsible party develop empathy and a sense of accountability. This process encourages the responsible party to acknowledge the harm caused and understand the broader impact on victims and communities.
3. **Participating in Dialogue:** Surrogates engage in restorative dialogue sessions with the responsible party. These sessions can include preparation meetings, the main dialogue event, and any follow-up sessions required. The surrogate's role in these dialogues is to provide a voice for the victim's experience and contribute to the

creation of a plan for making amends and repairing harm.

4. **Support and Guidance:** Surrogates often work closely with facilitators to ensure they are prepared for the emotional and psychological challenges of discussing harm and trauma. They receive support to navigate these conversations in a way that is constructive and healing for all parties involved.

Surrogates help bridge the gap when direct victim participation is not possible, ensuring that the restorative justice process remains meaningful and effective. Their involvement emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing the harm in a comprehensive and empathetic manner.

## Community Members

In a restorative justice process, community members play a crucial role in facilitating healing, accountability, and reparation. Here are some of the key responsibilities and functions community members fulfill in such processes:

5. **Establishing Standards and Accountability:** Community members help set standards of conduct and hold offenders accountable. They participate actively in the resolution process, ensuring that the harm caused is acknowledged and that appropriate steps are taken to address it (IIRP Edu) .
6. **Providing Support and Resources:** They offer support to both victims and offenders, contributing to the healing process. This can include providing local resources for counseling, education, and other forms of support needed to help both parties recover and reintegrate into the community (University of Wisconsin Law School) (IIRP Edu) .
7. **Modeling Conflict Resolution:** By participating in restorative justice practices, community members serve as examples of peaceful conflict resolution. This involvement helps to foster a culture of dialogue and reconciliation within the community (University of Wisconsin Law School) .

8. Encouraging Participation: Community members encourage the involvement of victims and offenders in the justice process, ensuring that those directly affected by a crime have a voice and an active role in deciding how to repair the harm (University of Wisconsin Law School) (IIRP Edu).

## Time Commitment

The time commitment for volunteer surrogates and community members in the restorative justice process can vary depending on the specific needs of the case. LCSNW asks that you commit to participate in 2-4 cases per year. A case typically consists of the following components:

9. Preparation Meetings: Surrogates and community members usually need to participate in one or more preparation meetings with facilitators. These meetings typically last around 1-2 hours each. The purpose is to ensure they understand their roles, the restorative process, and to prepare emotionally and practically for the dialogue.
10. Restorative Dialogue Session: The main restorative justice session can range from 1 to 3 hours. This session involves the responsible party, the surrogate, community members, and facilitators, during which the harm is discussed and steps for repair are agreed upon.
11. Follow-Up Sessions: There may be follow-up sessions to review progress on the agreed-upon reparative actions. These sessions typically last around 1-2 hours and are less frequent, depending on the specific case requirements.
12. Total Time Commitment: Overall, the total time commitment for surrogates and community members can range from approximately 5 to 10 hours per case.

About the Surrogate and  
Community Members  
Program with LCSNW



If interested, please complete the following application: